

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Members Present: Chair Caesar Nuzzolo, Vice-Chair Amanda Moore, Clerk Renee Emkey, and Member Glenn McLeod

Members Absent: Member Brian Lehtinen

Also Present: Jennifer Warren-Dymont, Town Manager

Public Comment Participants are listed in the minutes

I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Caesar Nuzzolo called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chair Nuzzolo advised those present that the meeting was being recorded and broadcast live over the Lunenburg Public Access Channel, on Facebook Live, and would be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube Channel following the meeting. He explained that the agenda listed topics that may be discussed, but not all items may be addressed and other items not listed could be brought up as permitted by open meeting law.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chair Nuzzolo announced two items. First, the Citizens Party Caucus will be held on Monday, March 9 at 7:00 PM at the Lunenburg Middle High School Auditorium, which serves as one of two pathways to appear on the ballot for elected boards. Second, a public presentation and Q&A on the Fire Department's fourth shift proposal will be held at the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center on Tuesday, February 24 at 5:00 PM, and will be recorded by PACC for later viewing.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

No public comment was received in person or via Zoom.

Board Comment

No public comment made by Select Board members.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND SCHEDULED MEETINGS

7:05 PM Common Victualler License Application for Empire Athletics located at 308 Massachusetts Avenue

Shahid Qureshi, co-owner of Empire Athletics, appeared before the Select Board along with co-owner Nicholas Gallagher. Mr. Qureshi explained that Empire Athletics is a fitness facility with a smoothie bar and café, with its first location in Leominster and a recently opened second location in Lunenburg. Both owners are Lunenburg residents. The Common Victualler License is required specifically for the smoothie bar component of the business. Mr. Qureshi confirmed that all Board of Health and Town permits had already been obtained, making this the final required approval. Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dymont confirmed that the application was in order.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to approve the Common Victualler License application for Empire Athletics located at 308 Massachusetts Avenue. Seconded by Vice-Chair Amanda Moore. Call for Vote: Four-Aye. The motion passed unanimously (4-0-0).

V. APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

1. Acknowledgment of the retirement of Fire Chief Patrick Sullivan effective November 6, 2026

Town Manager Warren-Dyment shared that Fire Chief Patrick Sullivan, after 42 years of service, has submitted notification of his intent to retire effective November 6, 2026. The Town Manager noted that a more formal acknowledgment would be scheduled when the Chief can appear before the Board. She expressed gratitude for the long lead time, which will allow for strategic planning around his replacement. The Chair extended appreciation for Chief Sullivan's more than four decades of service to the town.

2. Ratify the Town Manager's Appointment of Kimberly Gauvin as Payroll and Benefits Coordinator

Town Manager Warren-Dyment recommended ratification of the appointment of Kimberly Gauvin as Payroll and Benefits Coordinator, with a start date of the following day. She noted that while Ms. Gauvin does not have Munis experience, she brings public sector experience from a nearby school district where she worked in a similar capacity using a Tyler Technologies product. The Town Manager indicated that a transition overlap with current contractor Rich Tomchick from Robert Half was planned for approximately one month to ensure continuity across multiple payroll cycles. The Chair expressed satisfaction that the position was finally being filled.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Kimberly Gauvin as Payroll and Benefits Coordinator. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for Vote: Four-Aye. The motion passed unanimously (4-0-0).

VI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Warren-Dyment delivered the following updates:

FY27 Budget Preparation: The preliminary FY27 budget is nearing completion and will be presented to the Finance Committee on Thursday, February 19. The Town Manager cautioned that the budget will not be balanced and will be reliant on an override, with the current projected shortfall exceeding \$3,000,000. Ongoing factors affecting the final figures include three active labor contract negotiations with the DPW, Fire, and Clerical unions; health insurance negotiations with the PEC; an 8.85% health insurance rate increase for FY27; and potential program changes such as the wind-down of TCP and modifications to the recycling program. Department presentations to the Finance Committee are scheduled on February 19 (Fire, Police, Facilities) and February 26 (School and IT).

FY25 Close-Out: The Town Manager reported that FY25 close-out is progressing well, with an extension through the end of February. Revenue and expenditure budgets are balanced, and cash reconciliation is nearly complete. Preliminary free cash is estimated at over \$3,000,000, attributable in part to a significant School turn-back and strong investment income. The Town Manager noted she will look to make contributions to the Stabilization Fund and potentially the Health Insurance

Stabilization Fund. Clerk Emkey inquired about the snow and ice deficit, which the Town Manager estimated at approximately \$300,000 currently, noting that historically unexpended funds within the current operating year rather than free cash have been used to cover such deficits.

TCP Building Wind-Down: The Town Manager reported that the Food Pantry expressed concern about a timeline misunderstanding, they had interpreted the wind-down timeline in calendar year terms rather than fiscal year terms, making the prospect of relocating before the next heating season a substantial challenge. Further conversations with the Food Pantry are anticipated. PACC, by contrast, is making more progress on relocation options, having recently met with Fitchburg Access TV to explore leasing office and studio space in Fitchburg's downtown facility.

Regional Dispatch: The Town Manager reported that the Regional Dispatch held its first-ever Tri-Board meeting, bringing together the Administrative Board, Operations Committee, and Finance Committee. The meeting addressed the disposition of \$433,000 in free cash generated by the District. The Administrative Board declined to return the funds to member communities, opting instead to retain a portion in free cash and transfer the balance to the district's stabilization and capital account, given anticipated assessment increases as grants supporting newer members Hudson and Sterling expire.

Current Recruitments: Open positions include Staff Librarian (Young Adult Department), Outreach Coordinator, Recreation Director, Special Assistant to the Assessors, and Dietary Aide. The Town Manager also announced the formation of the Cable Advisory Committee, with a public announcement forthcoming later in the week.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Vote to Declare Electric Range Stove as Surplus Property

The Select Board considered a request from the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center to declare an electric range stove as surplus property, with an estimated value of less than \$200. No questions were raised.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to declare the electric range stove from the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center as surplus property. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for Vote: Four-Aye. The motion passed unanimously (4-0-0).

2. Review FY26 Select Board and Town Manager Goals and Objectives

The Select Board conducted a mid-year review of the FY26 Select Board and Town Manager Goals and Objectives, with the following outcomes:

Town Manager Goals — Goal 1: Budgeting and Finance

Objective 1 (FY27 budget and multi-year forecast) was discussed. Town Manager Warren-Dyment acknowledged that while department heads engaged meaningfully with multi-year thinking through the Tri-Board process, a truly robust three-year financial forecast was not achievable given volatility in labor contracts and health insurance rates. Vice-Chair Moore noted that the goals were set ambitiously. The Select Board agreed the progress made constitutes a meaningful success. Objective 2 (Town-School collaboration) was affirmed as ongoing. Objective 3 (ClearGov software) was removed, as the software subscription was not renewed following a lapse in use after the departure of the prior Town Manager; the \$20,000 in annual savings partially offsets rising Munis costs.

Objective 4 (financial policies) was modified: the word "complete" was changed to "begin," and the target date was updated from the 2026 Annual Town Meeting to the Special Town Meeting, to reflect realistic capacity given staffing transitions and budget season demands.

Town Manager Goals — Goal 2: Employee Experience

The sick leave bank committee was identified as requiring immediate action, particularly given that the topic arose during active collective bargaining negotiations. Objective 2 (onboarding and orientation) was modified by removing the specific target roll-out date of March 1, 2026, and striking the sentence requiring a formal orientation materials package, in recognition that discrete improvements are being made as gaps are identified, particularly through the recent IT onboarding experience, though a comprehensive overhaul remains deferred pending additional staff capacity. Objective 3 (climate survey and employee recognition) was affirmed as still on track.

Town Manager Goals — Goal 3: Municipal Property

Objective 1 (TCP) required no changes, as the wind-down discussions have naturally advanced the goal. Objective 2 (925 Mass Ave) required no changes. Objective 3 (tax title) was retained, with the Town Manager indicating a plan to work with the new Assistant Town Manager to assess which tax title parcels warrant Town acquisition versus return to the tax rolls, with more substantive work anticipated in the spring.

Select Board Goals — Goal 1: FY27 Budget

Objectives 1, 2, and 3 were affirmed as in progress or substantially underway, with Town Manager Warren-Dymont noting that PEC negotiations have advanced significantly and a potential executive session for Select Board consideration of plan design changes is anticipated at the first March meeting. Objective 4 (digitizing the Town Report and Warrant notification) was confirmed as accomplished.

Select Board Goals — Goal 2: Disposition of Municipal Properties

Both objectives were affirmed as on track, with the Municipal Building Design Committee actively working following an initial meeting with the Select Board.

Select Board Goals — Goal 3: Review of Select Board Policies and Procedures

Objective 2 (special event policy) is in progress, with Vice-Chair Moore indicating it will be ready for the first March meeting. Objective 3 (appointment/reappointment policy) is being addressed under Old Business. Objective 4 (goal-setting and evaluation policy) was retained over the Chair's initial suggestion to remove it; Vice-Chair Moore and Town Manager Warren-Dymont noted the value of documenting the legally-prescribed evaluation process to protect future Boards from inadvertently running afoul of state law. Vice-Chair Moore indicated she may have a prior draft. Objective 5 (fee schedule policy) was affirmed as feasible, with the Town Manager suggesting a survey be distributed to Department Heads to identify which fees warrant periodic Select Board review and on what cadence. Objective 6 (Open Meeting Law and conflict of interest training) was discussed; the Select Board concluded that obtaining the full policy by year-end is unlikely, but agreed to reach out to Town Counsel about conducting a workshop or confirming whether any significant updates have occurred since the prior recorded session, and to make that recording available to boards and committees in the interim.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

1. Discuss Warrant Articles for 2026 Annual Town Meeting

The Board reviewed the following submitted or anticipated Warrant Articles:

Kids Kingdom: Town Manager Warren-Dyment confirmed that the School Committee has formally co-sponsored the Article.

Notice of Town Meeting: Chair Nuzzolo reported on a productive meeting held with Lou Franco, a former Select Board member and current Council on Aging member, to refine the proposed bylaw amendment. The following language revisions were agreed upon: (1) a new sentence specifying that the notification shall include sufficient information to reasonably direct residents to the full text of the warrant; and (2) a sentence affirming that the Select Board's office shall maintain an opt-in list of residents who wish to receive a physical copy of the warrant mailed to their household at least 14 days prior to Town Meeting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment recommended that operational details such as the inclusion of article summaries, QR codes, and format specifications be addressed through a supporting policy rather than embedded in the Bylaw, preserving flexibility for future adjustments without requiring a return to town meeting. Clerk Emkey raised the question of whether the notification should include a list of Articles to be considered; the Select Board agreed this is best handled in a policy to be adopted alongside the Bylaw. The Select Board agreed to proceed with the revised language as discussed.

300th Anniversary Committee Articles: Two articles were noted, a multi-year allocation of \$15,000 and a Gift Account Article, both described as straightforward. A potential presentation at Town Meeting by the committee was also mentioned.

PACC Articles: Town Manager Warren-Dyment characterized two annual PACC articles as standard housekeeping related to the Enterprise Fund, one restoring \$31,271.94 to the Town General Fund and one appropriating \$209,000 from expected income for operations.

Trust Fund Commission Articles: Two articles were noted. The first would amend the Bylaws to allow the Select Board to disperse Trust Fund Commission funds in the absence of a quorum; the Select Board acknowledged this is a significant change requiring further deliberation, and the Trust Fund Commission has been invited to present at the next Select Board meeting. The second would appropriate \$14,252.39 for legal research. The specific dollar amount prompted questions; the Trust Fund Commission will explain the basis for that figure when they present.

Open Space Committee: The Select Board discussed a proposal to formalize the Open Space Committee as a standing committee via Bylaw, replacing its current status as an ad hoc advisory body under the Planning Board. The Select Board would gain appointing authority for two at-large positions. The chair of the Open Space Committee has been invited to present at the next meeting. The Bylaw Review Committee has indicated it intends to include this article in its package.

Town Manager's Anticipated Articles: Town Manager Warren-Dyment previewed the following for the first March meeting: standard operating articles; placeholder articles for three collective bargaining agreements; an article for vacation buy-off in connection with the transition to an accrual-based system; and a capital cleanup article to unwind and re-vote the funding associated with the TCP roof repair, which was inadvertently double-voted alongside the FY26 capital plan. The Town Manager confirmed the funds have not been spent, and that work on the affected building projects

(windows and HVAC) has been paused pending the corrective town meeting vote.

2. Discussion and Approval of Appointment Policy

The Select Board reviewed the cleaned version of the Appointment Policy prepared by Executive Assistant Melissa. One revision was made: the sentence requiring the Select Board to provide in writing to applicants the reasons that interviews were requested was struck from the policy, consistent with a prior agreement to require only a majority vote rather than individual written justification. The Select Board expressed satisfaction with the document's readability and completeness. A formal vote was deferred to the March 3 meeting to allow the full Select Board to be present, as the Chair will be absent and Member Brian Lehtinen was not in attendance.

3. Request for Legislative Earmarks in the FY27 State Budget

The Select Board briefly discussed the status of potential earmark requests. Chair Nuzzolo noted that the Adult Activity Center ramp does not yet have a cost estimate, which may affect whether it is included. Clerk Emkey inquired whether the School Committee planned to submit requests; Town Manager Warren-Dyment indicated she had not formally solicited anything from the schools. Chair Nuzzolo noted the submission deadline is the end of March, providing adequate time to finalize requests. No formal action was taken.

IX. MINUTES*/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

No minutes were ready for approval.

Warrants

No warrants were presented.

Action Items

None.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Member Glenn McLeod reported upcoming attendance at the Library Board of Trustees on Thursday and the MPO the following day, and noted that the Master Plan Steering Committee is in its final editing phase.

Clerk Emkey reported that the Stormwater Task Force will meet Thursday to review feedback from Finance Committee and Select Board presentations, and to begin preparing for a public information session on March 5. She also noted that the Finance Committee is commencing its weekly budget season cadence and encouraged the public to monitor agendas and attend department presentations over the coming weeks.

Chair Nuzzolo reported that the Capital Planning Committee met the prior Wednesday and will schedule its next meeting in the second week of March. The Bylaw Review Committee met the prior Thursday and reviewed proposals from the Trust Fund Commission and Open Space Committee, and also discussed the Council on Aging bylaw, reaching a resolution that Chair Nuzzolo will share with the Council on Aging Chair. Chair Nuzzolo noted that the committee is working to schedule a final

meeting prior to the warrant closing deadline, and that Town Counsel review is also required before submission.

XI. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

The next regularly scheduled Select Board meeting is Monday, March 3. Chair Nuzzolo noted he will not be in attendance at that meeting but will return for the third week of March.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

• PUBLIC

John Bowen, 162 Highland Street, addressed the Select Board. Mr. Bowen recalled a recommendation he made approximately two years ago suggesting that rather than pursuing overrides, the town consider increasing the tax rate by approximately \$1.66 per thousand, which he estimated would generate \$5,000,000 annually into the town's coffers. In light of the Town Manager's report indicating a \$3,000,000-plus budget shortfall, Mr. Bowen suggested that approach remains viable, noting that his current estimate has risen to approximately \$1.86–\$1.89 per thousand. He also expressed interest in maximizing investment returns on accumulated funds through Bartholomew and suggested the approach could reduce reliance on repeated overrides.

• TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager Warren-Dymont offered no additional comment.

• BOARD

No comment by the Select Board.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Clerk Emkey to adjourn at 8:31 PM. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for Vote: Four-Aye. The motion passed (4-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on: Tuesday, September 1, 2026