

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Ritter Building, 960 Massachusetts Avenue and via Zoom
Tuesday, March 23, 2026

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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: Jennifer Warren-Dyment, 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 6:30 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. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to enter into Executive Session and re-enter Open Session after exiting, pursuant to MGL c. 30 §21(a)(3), was made by the Chair and Seconded by Vice-Chair Amanda Moore. A roll call vote was conducted: Renee — Aye; Glenn — Aye; Brian — Aye; Amanda — Aye; Chair — Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

The Select Board entered Executive Session and subsequently returned to Open Session.

III. SCHEDULED MEETINGS

Workshop on FY 27 Budget

The Select Board conducted a workshop on the FY27 Budget, building upon prior sessions. Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dyment led the discussion, focusing primarily on the finalization of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 override structures. The workshop covered several specific departmental items and concluded with updated running totals for both tiers.

Preliminary Matters and Health Insurance

Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted at the outset that since the Select Board's last session, one Tier 2 request had been evaluated and found unnecessary by staff: additional administrative support for Facilities. The Town Manager explained that the 19 additional hours per week already included in Tier 1 were deemed sufficient for all circumstances.

On the question of health insurance, Town Manager Warren-Dyment advised the Select Board that she did not recommend making any further reductions to the health insurance line item. She cited the need to remain conservative in budgeting, noting that DLS recommends generating some free cash each year, and that the Town needs available funds for mid-year transfers and snow and ice

coverage. She noted the health insurance figures remained as previously presented, with an additional estimated \$25,000 included in Tier 2 for any newly added positions, based on a realistic assessment of typical plan choices rather than budgeting uniformly for the highest-cost family plans.

Overview of Tier 1 and Tier 2 Deficit Numbers

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented the current deficit figures:

- Tier 1 override (Town operations without any additional restorations): approximately \$970,843
- Tier 2 override (additional above Tier 1): approximately \$1,086,383
- Combined Tier 1 and Tier 2 total override: approximately \$2,025,000 (before workshop adjustments)

For context, the School's override numbers were referenced as approximately \$1,601,140 (Core) and \$1,973,462 (Restoration).

Tier 2 Discussion: Item by Item

Minute Clerk Pool: The Select Board discussed increasing the pool of funds for minute clerks from \$6,000 to \$12,000. Town Manager Warren-Dyment clarified this does not add any insured bodies, only increases the available pool. The Select Board indicated general support for retaining this item in Tier 2.

Restoration of Communications and IT Manager: The restoration of the full-time Communications and IT Manager position was discussed. Town Manager Warren-Dyment confirmed the position is cut entirely in the Balanced Budget and in Tier 1, and only restored in Tier 2. Vice-Chair Moore raised the question of whether the position could be reduced to part-time in Tier 2 as a cost-saving measure. Town Manager Warren-Dyment indicated this was possible but expressed concern about the difficulty of attracting a qualified candidate on a part-time basis. The Select Board ultimately agreed to retain the full-time restoration in Tier 2. The value of the position was discussed at length, with Town Manager Warren-Dyment noting that the Communications Manager handles not only social media but all departmental website maintenance, ADA compliance for online documents, employee newsletters, internal graphics, and public-facing communications. She described the cut as "1 of the more noticeable [service decreases] to the public." Vice-Chair Moore noted that the position's newsletters and cross-department communications had been particularly valuable in breaking down silos and connecting people. The Select Board agreed this item should remain fully funded in Tier 2.

Town Clerk's Office Succession Planning: Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented a succession planning proposal for the Town Clerk's office, noting that the current Town Clerk has served for many decades, relies heavily on personal knowledge and informal volunteer support from family members, and that the statutory obligations of the office would not be sustainably met upon her departure. The proposal included: (1) the creation of a second administrative position in the office, at an estimated cost of approximately \$53,000; and (2) a \$12,000 increase to bring the Town Clerk's salary to market rate, which would apply upon a transition to a new Town Clerk.

Town Manager Warren-Dyment confirmed the current Town Clerk was aware of and in agreement with the need for additional staffing. The Town Manager noted, "She kind of laughed and said, 'I've

been asking for more help since I've been here."

Following discussion, the Select Board agreed to move the second administrative assistant position to Tier 1, given the immediacy of the need regardless of a Tier 2 outcome. The Select Board agreed to remove the \$12,000 salary market adjustment from Tier 2, noting that incremental adjustments could be made as needed and that the position transition could be managed through other means in the interim. Vice-Chair Moore summarized that it would be "irresponsible" not to plan for this, given the likelihood the transition would occur within one to two years.

Police Department: Town Manager Warren-Dyment outlined the Tier 2 Police additions:

- Restoration of the part-time administrative position.
- Addition of a fourth Sergeant (restoring from 3 Sergeants and 2 Detectives back to 4 Sergeants with 2 Detectives, which represents a net addition of one Sergeant position).
- Addition of two Patrol Officers, restoring the department to 14 Patrol Officers total, including the restoration of a second School Resource Officer (SRO).

Chief of Police Jeffrey Thibodeau was present and provided context throughout the discussion. He explained that with the current staffing of 12 Patrol Officers, the overnight shift runs with only two officers instead of the previous three, creating cascading impacts on prisoner watch costs and other operational lines. On the question of prioritization between adding a fourth sergeant versus restoring patrol officers, Chief Thibodeau indicated he would prioritize filling patrol officers.

Vice-Chair Moore raised the cost to the town of funding two SROs in the Police budget, noting the Town pays approximately \$180,000 to \$200,000 annually for two Officers working almost exclusively in the schools, without any cost contribution from the schools. The Select Board acknowledged this as a significant investment but expressed support for maintaining the commitment in Tier 2. Member McLeod expressed general concern about the addition of positions across the board, noting affordability and sustainability of an override as key concerns. The Select Board agreed to make no changes to the police Tier 2 requests.

All associated lines including holiday pay, court time, educational incentive, less-than-lethal/SRO stipend, and supplies were confirmed as connected to the personnel changes.

Animal Control: Town Manager Warren-Dyment provided background on the Town's current animal control arrangement, explaining that the Town's Animal Control Officer has served for nearly five decades, operates the required kennel out of their personal residence, and receives only a stipend. She described the current structure as one that "works because of the individual in the role" and characterized any future transition as a "light switch, not a ramp." Upon departure of the current officer, the Town would immediately lose both the officer and the kennel facility.

The Town Manager noted that options include an inter-municipal agreement (IMA) or contracting, but that capacity in the region is limited. Chief Thibodeau noted that similar contracts in neighboring communities run approximately \$126,000 to \$136,000 annually. The Tier 2 budget had been estimated at \$100,000 (including salary and expenses) as an educated approximation.

Following discussion, the Select Board agreed to reduce the Tier 2 animal control line to \$80,000,

with the understanding that the figure is a planning estimate and that an actual transition would require further study. The Town Manager noted that if costs exceeded budget, a transfer of approximately \$20,000 would be more manageable than a larger gap.

Department of Public Works (DPW) Junior Engineer/Project Manager: Town Manager Warren-Dymont presented the DPW Director's request for a Junior Engineer/Project Manager at a budgeted cost of \$86,000. The DPW Director characterized the position as "highly desirable" and noted an average starting salary of approximately \$73,000 and a top salary of approximately \$98,000 across five comparable communities. The position's duties would include MS4 compliance documentation, stormwater BMP inspections, oversight of contractor work on public projects, verification of payment requisitions, GIS coordination, and review of Planning Board permit applications. Town Manager Warren-Dymont noted that the verification of contractor quantities "is the area that is ripe for fraud," underscoring the operational need for the position beyond stormwater compliance.

Following discussion, the Select Board agreed to move the Junior Engineer position from Tier 2 to Tier 1.

Stormwater Management: The Tier 2 proposal would have increased the stormwater management line to \$510,000, representing full MS4 compliance without a stormwater utility. The Tier 1 proposal had included a \$350,000 increase for a total of \$450,000. The Select Board discussed at length whether the stormwater funding should remain in Tier 2, be separated into a standalone question, or be structured as a third tier. Town Manager Warren-Dymont recommended removing the large Tier 1 stormwater increase and returning that line to \$110,000 in Tier 1 (consistent with FY26 funding), with the Tier 2 line remaining at \$510,000. This approach would reduce the Tier 1 override number substantially while preserving the full compliance ask in Tier 2. Vice-Chair Moore expressed hesitation about the \$510,000 figure in Tier 2, suggesting the possibility of separating stormwater out as a standalone question or a third tier, noting that "3.3 is a much more palatable override number than 3.7."

Town Manager Warren-Dymont also explained that while a stormwater utility had been studied, the administrative overhead of a relatively small utility would be approximately 30%, making direct operating budget funding more cost-effective. She stated: "All of the admin overhead billing, the processing, the fees — for a relatively small utility, 30 percent overhead is huge."

The Select Board discussed but did not resolve the stormwater standalone question, agreeing to revisit it. The stormwater management line was maintained in Tier 2 at \$510,000 pending further deliberation. Member McLeod expressed openness to thinking about it further, and Vice-Chair Moore indicated she would want any separation to be clearly framed as a stormwater-specific question to avoid the utility not as a third tier that could compete with the primary override.

Pavement Management Plan: Town Manager Warren-Dymont provided a detailed history of the Town's pavement management plan, noting it originated from a \$4,000,000 debt exclusion approved at the 2016 Town Meeting, with a goal of reaching a Pavement Condition Index (PCI) of between 70 and 75. The updated 2023 plan calculated the PCI at 84.75, confirming the 2016 plan had been a "great success." The original goal required \$1,000,000 to \$1,200,000 in annual spending between

Chapter 90 and operating budget funds.

In Tier 1, the operating budget for pavement management was proposed at \$279,000, combined with a Chapter 90 allotment of \$718,000, for a total of approximately \$997,000, just short of the \$1,000,000 floor of the original goal range.

The Tier 2 proposal would add an additional \$202,282 to reach \$1,200,000. Following discussion, Vice-Chair Moore noted that at the Tier 1 level the town was already nearly at the \$1,000,000 target, and given the excellent PCI rating, the Select Board agreed that a full Tier 2 increase to \$1,200,000 was not necessary. The Select Board agreed to set both Tier 1 and Tier 2 pavement management at \$282,000 (a nominal \$3,000 increase in Tier 1 to bring total spending to an even \$1,000,000 at the operating level), effectively removing most of the Tier 2 pavement management increase. Member Lehtinen noted that the PCI rating should be monitored and that the upcoming updated pavement management plan would provide revised guidance.

Recreation Director: The Tier 2 proposal would increase the Recreation Director from a 19-hour part-time position (as in Tier 1) to a full-time position at \$75,000. The Balanced Budget eliminates the position entirely, along with programming salaries and most beach operations. Town Manager Warren-Dymont made the case that the community has consistently expressed demand for robust recreational programming and that making recreation more self-sustaining in terms of revenue is not achievable with a part-time Director. The Select Board agreed to retain the full-time Recreation Director in Tier 2.

Running Totals Following Workshop Adjustments

After all adjustments and with the addition of a part-time IT/Communications Director position discussed for possible inclusion in Tier 1 Town Manager Warren-Dymont provided updated figures:

- Tier 1 deficit: approximately \$823,000
- Tier 2 total deficit (cumulative): approximately \$1,354,000

With the addition of a part-time IT/Communications Director position discussed for possible inclusion in Tier 1, the Select Board discussed the following approximate combined figures inclusive of School overrides:

- Tier 1 combined override (Town + School): approximately \$2,424,000 (to be presented as a round number of \$2,500,000)
- Tier 2 combined override (Town + School): approximately \$3,328,000 (to be presented as a round number of \$3,400,000)

Town Manager Warren-Dymont also provided tax impact estimates on a \$517,000 home:

- Tier 1 (\$2.4M): approximately \$507 annually above current taxes
- Tier 2 (\$3.3M): approximately \$698 annually
- Tier 2 (\$3.7M, with stormwater): approximately \$786 annually

IV. APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Inspector of Animals, Kathy Comeau, 806 West Street (term May 1, 2026 – April 30, 2027)

Chair Nuzzolo noted that this is an annual ratification required by state statute, processed earlier in the year than typical annual reappointments due to state requirements.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Inspector of Animals, Kathy Comeau, 806 West Street, for the term of May 1, 2026 through April 30, 2027. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for the vote: Five-aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Krista Deveau, Part-Time Recreation Director

Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted that this item involved not only ratification of the appointment but also approval of a Step 6 hire. She advised the Board that Krista Deveau has over six years of recreation experience, beginning as a counselor-in-training and most recently serving as a Program Manager with the Medford Recreation Department for approximately six years. The step placement at Step 6 was supported by the HR Director, the Facilities Director, and the Chair of the Recreation Commission.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Krista Deveau and to approve a Step 6 placement for the Part-Time Recreation Director position. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for the vote: Five-aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

V. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

Chair Nuzzolo noted that the next meeting is a Tri-Board Meeting scheduled for the following evening, Tuesday, March 24, 2026.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Member Lehtinen to adjourn at 9:39 PM. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for Vote: Five-Aye. The motion passed (5-0-0).

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on: Tuesday, August 18, 2026