

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, October 14, 2025

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 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 delivered the following community announcements:

- The Teen Center's 9th Annual Shrieks and Creeks Haunted House and Hayride is scheduled for Saturday, October 18th from 6:30–9:30 PM. Those wishing to volunteer may contact andy@theclubluc.org.
- The Master Plan Steering Committee will host a public meeting at Smokestack Roasters on Wednesday, October 22nd from 6:30–8:30 PM to gather final public input on the master plan.
- The Lunenburg Public Library's 20th Birthday Party will be held on Friday, October 24th at 5:00 PM, featuring cake, activities, and a jazz ukulele concert.
- Fall 2025 Yard Waste Days run from October 18th through December 6th at the landfill on Youngs Road, open 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, with the exception of the week of Thanksgiving.

III. SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND HEARINGS

7:05 PM License Application for Joyce Higgins with Weathervane Home Services For Door-To-Door Solicitation

Joyce Higgins appeared remotely via Zoom on behalf of Weathervane Home Services. She confirmed that the purpose of the door-to-door solicitation is to assist residents in signing up for energy assessments through Mass Save, which residents are eligible for every two years as a benefit funded through their utility bills. Clerk Renee Emkey asked for clarification on days and hours of operation. Ms. Higgins confirmed operations would be Monday through Friday, approximately 9:30 AM to 1:30 PM, with no weekend work.

Motion by Vice-Chair Amanda Moore to approve the license application for door-to-door solicitation for Joyce Higgins with Weathervane Home Services. Seconded by Clerk Renee Emkey. Call for Vote: Five – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

7:10 PM Tollbooth Fundraiser Request, Salvation Army for Red Kettle Campaign on December 13, 2025 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

David MacDonald and Lynette Valentine Warren, representing the Salvation Army, appeared before the Select Board to present the Red Kettle Campaign tollbooth fundraiser request. Mr. MacDonald emphasized that all funds collected locally remain in the community to support residents of Fitchburg, Leominster, and Lunenburg. He noted that this would be his final Red Kettle Drive in Lunenburg, as he is relocating. Ms. Valentine Warren outlined the range of programs supported by Red Kettle donations, including a music education program, a summer camp program, the Good Neighbor Energy Fund for residents who do not qualify for standard fuel assistance, a food pantry, and social service support for rent and utility payments. The Select Board expressed appreciation for the presenters' longstanding service to the community.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to approve the tollbooth fundraiser request for the Salvation Army for the Red Kettle Campaign on December 13, 2025 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Four – Aye. One – Nay (Member Glenn McLeod). The motion passed (4-0-1).

IV. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

Sharon Jordan, 77 Burrage Street, addressed the Select Board to announce the Second No Kings Day protest, scheduled for Saturday, October 18 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM at Fitchburg City Hall. Ms. Jordan expressed her concerns regarding what she characterized as federal constitutional violations, including due process and citizenship rights, and invited the public to attend the peaceful assembly.

Matthew Brenner, 619 Northfield Road and Chair of the Planning Board, appeared as a private citizen to provide historical context on the proposed warrant article to merge the Architectural Preservation District Commission (APDC) with the Historical Commission. Mr. Brenner cautioned that the APDC was intentionally established as distinct from a historical preservation body, modeled after similar bylaws in Salem, and was designed to allow modern building materials and codes while preserving the aesthetic character of the downtown. He expressed concern that merging the two bodies would shift the focus toward historical preservation in a manner inconsistent with the original purpose of the district, citing as an example the APDC's requirement that Ritter be fitted with custom single-pane windows rather than modern double-pane alternatives at greater cost and long-term inefficiency to the town. He further noted that the Historical Commission has no compositional requirements analogous to those of the APDC, and urged that any expansion of historic preservation standards should occur only after significant public engagement.

John Rabbit, 314 Townsend Harbor Road and member of the Council on Aging, commended the Town Manager and the Select Board for fostering a collaborative spirit across town departments. He highlighted the integration of the Meals on Wheels and library book lending programs, cooperative fundraising between the Boys and Girls Club and the Council on Aging, and the leadership of Senior Center Director Deb Goodsell and Council on Aging Director Deb Lincoln. Mr. Rabbit praised the

overall level of activity and community support being provided through the senior center and urged the Board to continue its encouragement of interdepartmental cooperation.

Tom Alonzo, 284 Lancaster Avenue, acknowledged the recent passing of two Lunenburg centenarians. He noted that Kay Previtt, who passed at age 102, was co-founder of the Art in Bloom fundraising event at the Fitchburg Art Museum and was actively engaged at the Lunenburg Senior Center well into her nineties, having been the first recipient of the Town Century Award. He also recognized Mario Pitacciola, a World War II Navy veteran who passed away at approximately 100 years of age, noting his faithful attendance at Memorial Day ceremonies and his involvement in the bocce court at the senior center. Mr. Alonzo also thanked the Lunenburg Public Library, its Board of Trustees, and the Friends of the Library for the library's 20th anniversary celebration, and encouraged residents to attend the closing anniversary party on Friday, October 24 from 5:00 to 6:30 PM.

V. APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

• **Acknowledge the Resignation of Jennifer Daigle, Planning Administrative Assistant**
Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dyment informed the Select Board that Planning Administrative Assistant Jennifer Daigle had accepted a position in the private sector. The Town Manager acknowledged Ms. Daigle's contributions to keeping the planning department operational and thanked her for her service.

VI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented the following report:

Massachusetts Municipal Association Report. The MMA, in partnership with the Center for State Policy Analysis at Tufts University, released a report titled A Perfect Storm: Cities and Towns Face Historic Fiscal Pressures. The report highlights that municipalities statewide are facing rising costs and sluggish state aid, that local revenue-raising capacity is constrained by state law and Proposition 2½, and that rural communities such as Lunenburg have been disproportionately impacted in areas including education spending. Key data points included that real, inflation-adjusted municipal spending growth averaged only 0.6% per year between 2010 and 2022 below the national average of 1% while state budget spending grew at approximately 2.8% per year. Unrestricted general government aid (UGGA) has fallen 25% in real terms since 2002 despite strong state revenue growth. The Town Manager noted that the report confirms this is a statewide issue, not one unique to Lunenburg, and that the report would be posted to the town website.

Public Employee Committee (PEC) Engagement. The first formal discussion with the PEC regarding potential modifications to health benefits occurred the prior week. The next meeting is scheduled for December 4th, at which a smaller negotiating team will be formed.

Payroll and Benefits Coverage. The town engaged an outside contractor, Richard Tomichick, through Robert Half, to provide interim payroll and benefits coverage on a full-time basis. Mr. Tomichick brings payroll, accounting, and prior Munis experience. His engagement is intended to ensure continuity following the departure of Nancy O'Rourke at the end of the month.

Interim Planning Director Services. The Town has re-engaged Richard Harris to provide interim planning director services, including planning board support, application review, and oversight of

development projects, while the search for a permanent director continues.

Labor Negotiations — Fire. The Town Manager received the official request from Lunenburg Professional Firefighters Local 5369 to begin negotiations on the FY27–FY31 collective bargaining agreement.

Labor and Employment Law Update. The Town Manager attended a session hosted by labor counsel Mirick O'Connell covering ADA accommodations, investigation compliance, and wage and hour law updates.

Master Plan Public Meeting. The Master Plan Steering Committee will hold a public meeting on Wednesday, October 22 from 6:30–8:30 PM at Smokestack Roasters. Additional information is available at planLunenburg.org.

Trick-or-Treat Hours. Suggested trick-or-treat hours for Halloween are 6:00–8:00 PM.

Current Recruitments. Open positions include: Payroll and Benefits (36 hrs), Assistant Town Accountant (32 hrs), Dietary Aide (9 hrs), Intermittent Heavy Equipment Operator, Land Use Director (40 hrs), Administrative Assistant to Planning and Building Departments (36 hrs), and Recreation Director (19 hrs).

Board and Committee Vacancies. Vacancies exist on the Agricultural Commission, APDC, Cultural Council, Green Communities, Historical Commission, Personnel Board, PAC, ZBA (Associate Member), and the 1st Middlesex Small Towns Collaborative representative position. Elected board vacancies include the Board of Assessors, Planning Board, Sewer Commission, and Trust Fund Commission. The Town Manager placed particular emphasis on the Board of Assessors vacancy as a critical need.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

No items were presented under this agenda item.

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

• Discussion on November 18, 2025 Special Town Meeting and Warrant Articles

The Select Board conducted a comprehensive review of all warrant articles proposed for the November 18, 2025 Special Town Meeting. Planning Board Chair Matthew Brenner was invited to address two planning-related articles first, given his presence at the meeting.

Articles O and P — MBTA Zoning Act Compliance and Common Drive Amendments (Planning Board Articles)

Planning Board Chair Brenner explained that Article O represents the culmination of the Planning Board's MBTA Communities compliance work. Based on public feedback received during prior information sessions, the community expressed a preference for leveraging existing zoning infrastructure rather than adopting a broad MBTA-style multi-family overlay. The Planning Board elected to pursue what Mr. Brenner described as "taking credit for the hard work we already did," noting that Lunenburg holds the first 40R district in the Commonwealth, located at Tri Town. The article proposes to increase the allowable density at Tri Town from 22 units per acre to 26 units per acre to achieve state compliance. Mr. Brenner characterized this as paper compliance, anticipating no meaningful near-term development change, as the existing site is built out to 17–20 units per acre

and redevelopment is not economically feasible in the foreseeable future. Clerk Emkey encouraged residents to view the Planning Board's public information session recordings on the PAC YouTube channel for additional context. Member McLeod echoed that recommendation, expressing broader concern about state-mandated zoning changes impacting rural communities and noted the tension between state housing policy and local infrastructure capacity, including the loss of regional healthcare services.

Mr. Brenner added a cautionary note that while Lunenburg has benefited from forward-thinking zoning practices, the town is approaching a point where prior proactive measures are now state mandates, and that failure to continue planning ahead risks future top-down state intervention. He urged continued vigilance.

Article P addresses a straightforward correction to the common driveway bylaw, which had inadvertently included a requirement that common driveways be constructed of bituminous concrete (asphalt). Mr. Brenner explained this requirement was unintended, is more costly for developers and homeowners, and is worse for the environment. The article simply removes that language, allowing gravel or other surfaces.

Motion to refer the planning articles to the Planning Board under the requirements of MGL Chapter 40A, Section 5 was made by the Chair and seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

The Select Board then proceeded through the remaining warrant articles:

Article A — Previously voted to include; Board recommendation of approval, 5-0. No further discussion.

Article B — Amending the FY2026 Omnibus Budget. Previously voted to include; deferred. Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted there are anticipated transfers from the salary reserve and a potential additional appropriation to address gaps in the accounting office. The article will be printed as drafted, with a comprehensive handout of all transfers to be distributed at town meeting. Deferred.

Article C — Authorization to Pay Expenses from a Prior Fiscal Year. Previously voted to include; deferred. No new discussion.

Articles D and E — Stormwater Utility and School Mini-Splits. Town Manager Warren-Dyment confirmed amounts: \$42,900 for the stormwater consultant and \$28,000 for the school mini-split overage. She indicated a preference for combining both articles into one to simplify the appropriation source language, and stated she would ask Town Counsel to consolidate them into a single article offering flexibility on the funding source.

Article F — Public Access Cable Committee Transfer of Funds. Town Counsel is drafting a revision. No further discussion.

Article G — Cemetery Commission Transfer of Funds. Previously voted to include; recommended approval, 5-0. No further discussion.

Article H — Authorization to Appropriate a Sum of Money for Project Estimators. Town Manager Warren-Dyment reported that each use of a project estimator is estimated to cost approximately \$7,000, and that a sum of \$50,000 is proposed, which would cover several years of use across town departments, including the School Department and DPW. The funding source remains under review,

with a preference for capital funds, though free cash may be used. The Select Board voted to include Article H in the warrant.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to include Article H in the warrant. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0). A recommendation vote was deferred pending confirmation of the funding source.

Article I — Establishment of a Special Education Reserve Fund. Member McLeod requested deferral, citing a desire to hear from the Finance Committee before making a recommendation. The Finance Committee is scheduled to hold a Public Hearing on November 13, which would require a special Select Board meeting on November 17, the Monday before Town Meeting, to accommodate final recommendations. The Select Board agreed to schedule a meeting for November 17 for all deferred recommendation votes.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to defer a recommendation vote on Article I. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Article II — 41A Property Tax Deferral. Chair Nuzzolo summarized the article as increasing income eligibility thresholds for the senior property tax deferral program to the maximum circuit breaker levels: \$72,000 for single filers, \$91,000 for head of household, and \$109,000 for married filers. Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted a pending question to Town Counsel as to whether the previously voted reduction of the interest rate from 8% to 4% requires annual reaffirmation. The Principal Assessor is scheduled to appear the following week, and further discussion was deferred to that meeting.

Article J — Main Street Easement. Previously voted to include; recommended approval. No further discussion.

Article K — Transfer of the Care, Custody, and Control of Kids Kingdom. Previously voted to include; recommended approval. No further discussion.

Article L — Architectural Preservation District Amendments. The Select Board had not previously voted to include this article. Member McLeod stated he believes the article should be removed from the warrant, expressing concern that it has not been sufficiently vetted within the available timeframe, particularly given the recent establishment of the Bylaw Review Committee and the significance of the proposed change. Chair Nuzzolo disagreed that removal was necessary, noting that the primary question for him relates to whether he will vote to recommend the article, not whether it should appear on the warrant. Vice-Chair Moore suggested that the invitation to appear before the Select Board on October 21 be extended to both the full APDC and the full Historical Commission, not just the chairs, given that a quorum may be achievable and broader perspectives would be valuable. Clerk Emkey noted a specific legal question she wished Town Counsel to clarify before that meeting: the potential significance of a word change from "architectural" to "historical" within the bylaw's language. The Select Board agreed to continue discussion when both committees appear the following week.

Article M — Notice of Town Meeting Bylaw. Previously voted to include; recommended approval, 5-0. No further discussion.

Article N — Noise Ordinance. Town Manager Warren-Dyment summarized concerns raised by the Police Chief, including unintended consequences for commercial properties operating overnight,

landscaping companies, and the town hall clock chime. The original intent of the ordinance was to provide police with an enforcement tool for residential noise complaints, not to regulate commercial noise or establish a prescriptive decibel standard. Vice-Chair Moore expressed strong concern about the 9:00 PM quiet-hours threshold and potential unintended consequences for summer residential activity, and noted that a prior noise ordinance failed at town meeting even after public hearings. Town Manager Warren-Dyment acknowledged the complexity and noted Town Counsel is working on a redraft. Member McLeod suggested deferring the article to the Annual Town Meeting to allow for greater public engagement, characterizing it as an article that affects every resident in town. The Select Board agreed that more discussion is needed and that next steps are dependent on whether Town Counsel's redraft resolves outstanding concerns.

Article Q — Amendments to Salary Administration Plan, Position Titles, and Grades. Town Manager Warren-Dyment presented a proposal to add a temporary title, "Special Assistant to the Assessor (Temporary)", to the Salary Administration Plan to facilitate the completion of Department of Revenue directive work. A prior RFP for a contractor produced no bids. Under this approach, the individual would be hired as a temporary employee under an employment agreement defining specific working conditions and excluding standard SAP benefits, using the \$27,500 appropriated at the May Annual Town Meeting. The Select Board agreed to defer a vote to include until the principal assessor could be heard the following week.

Article R — Salary Administration Plan Amendments. Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted several clarifications were made since the prior meeting: a proposed qualifying-language change in Section 70-3 was withdrawn as unnecessary; language was added to address grievance procedures for employees who are themselves department heads; and Section 70-12A's language regarding hiring above Step 4 was flagged as requiring refinement if the article is bifurcated.

The Select Board reached consensus to split Article R into two separate articles: one addressing employee-focused changes to the SAP (including vacation, sick leave, grievance procedures, and compensation modernization), and a second addressing the proposed elimination of the Personnel Committee. Member McLeod characterized the elimination as premature given the lack of public input. The Town Manager acknowledged that the most important components are the employee-facing changes, and noted that in the absence of a Personnel Committee, the Select Board may wish to include fallback language allowing the Select Board to approve hiring above Step 4 should the Personnel Committee be unable to convene. The Select Board directed the Town Manager to prepare a revised draft separating the two components for review the following week.

Regarding sick leave incentive language in Section 70-21, the Select Board discussed whether the current quarterly calculation (one personal day for each three-month period without sick leave use) had been modified in the most recent Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the clerical union. After reviewing available documents, the Select Board concluded the provision had not been changed in the most recent MOA and agreed to leave it as is, maintaining the three-month period.

• Discussion on Tri-Board Meeting of the Select Board, Finance Committee, and School Committee

Clerk Emkey inquired about the timing of the next Tri-Board meeting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment indicated it would be held at the end of November, likely the week of November 17 or the week of Thanksgiving. The Select Board agreed the Thanksgiving week should be avoided due to travel conflicts and that the meeting should not be held immediately following Town Meeting. A

specific date was not confirmed.

IX. MINUTES/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

• Review and Approve Minutes for September 23, 2025*

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to approve the minutes from September 23, 2025. Seconded by Member Brian Lehtinen. Call for Vote: Five – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Warrants

The Select Board reviewed an accounts payable warrant in the amount of \$1,613,540.86.

Action Items

No specific action items were raised.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Member Lehtinen noted the School Committee meeting is scheduled for the following day and that the Board of Assessors will meet on Thursday. He reiterated the ongoing vacancy on the Board of Assessors.

Clerk Emkey reported that the Finance Committee met the prior week for its initial review of warrant articles, with no votes taken. She noted the Finance Committee requested presentations in advance of Tri-Board meetings and is tentatively scheduling a public hearing for November 13. She also noted the Stormwater Task Force may not meet that week if no agenda had been posted.

Chair Nuzzolo reported that the Council on Aging met that morning and conducted an initial introduction to the Bylaw Review process, with a focus on the Council on Aging bylaw scheduled for the next meeting. He also noted that the Eagle House Supporters will host a Festival of Trees fundraising event, with a viewing event at the Lunenburg Adult Activity Center on Friday, November 21. He reported that construction has begun on a satellite health center in Groton, with an anticipated opening in late 2026 or early 2027, pending DPH approval. Finally, he noted that a bill filed by a state representative would provide refundable tax credits of up to \$1,500 to family caregivers.

XI. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

The next Select Board meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2025.

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

• PUBLIC

Ana Lockwood, 91 Main Street, addressed the Select Board regarding the importance of public input in bylaw changes. She stated that meaningful bylaw changes in Lunenburg have historically been accompanied by robust public engagement processes including charrettes and public forums and that this standard should be maintained. She noted that the APDC voted to request the current Town Meeting warrant article in December 2024, at a meeting with only three members present, and that no public listening sessions had been held with residents of the village district. Ms. Lockwood

also expressed concern about the noise ordinance, citing the failure of a prior iteration at town meeting despite prior public hearings, and cautioned that reliance on officer discretion in enforcement invites inconsistent application. She expressed appreciation for the Select Board's more deliberate approach during the current meeting compared to the prior meeting and urged the Select Board to continue welcoming public participation, including by maintaining public comment at the beginning of meetings.

• **TOWN MANAGER**

The Town Manager had no comment.

• **BOARD**

No Select Board members offered comment.

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to enter into Executive Session and not to reenter into open session pursuant to MGL c. 30 § 21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares (Department of Industrial Accidents Claim).

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo Seconded by Member Brian Lehtinen. Roll Call Vote: Member McLeod – Aye, Member Lehtinen – Aye, Clerk Emkey – Aye, Vice-Chair Moore – Aye, Chair Nuzzolo – Aye. Motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned into Executive Session at 9:17 PM with no return to open session.

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

These Minutes were reviewed and approved by the Select Board on: Tuesday, September 15, 2026