

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Town Hall, 17 Main Street and via Zoom
Tuesday, November 4, 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 offered the following announcements:

- The Lions Club pancake breakfast at the Adult Activity Center is scheduled for Wednesday, November 12, 8:00–10:00 AM.
- The Eagle House Supporters will host a Christmas Festival of Trees on Friday, November 21 (9:00 AM–5:00 PM) and Saturday, November 22 (9:00 AM–1:00 PM), featuring custom-designed trees, a bake sale, a raffle, and a visit from Santa Claus.
- Chair Nuzzolo noted that SNAP benefits are no longer being disbursed as part of the ongoing federal government shutdown and encouraged residents to support the Lunenburg Community Food Pantry at lunenburgfoodpantry.org.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

Anthony Sculimbrene, 5 Valley Road, addressed the Select Board regarding the consequences of the recent vote to withhold the Historic Commission/APDC merger warrant from Special Town Meeting. He posed two questions for reflection to the majority members who voted to withhold the warrant: first, how the vote impacted the volunteers who had dedicated approximately a year and a half of work to the merger effort; and second, how the vote affected civil discourse among engaged citizens. He emphasized that the Town's reliance on volunteers makes these questions critical. Mr. Sculimbrene also raised the issue of volunteer reimbursement for public records requests, drawing on his experience handling FOIA requests as a federal employee. He noted that under Massachusetts law, volunteers can be compensated for responding to public information requests, and recommended the town adopt such a policy to protect volunteer time.

Board Comment

No Board members offered public comment at this time.

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND SCHEDULED MEETINGS

- **7:05 PM Presentation of Gift to Lunenburg Public Safety of Trail Maintenance Equipment by the Lunenburg Snow Riders**

Mel Bertram, President of the Lunenburg Snow Riders (312 Townsend Harbor Road), presented a portable chainsaw to the Lunenburg Police and Fire Departments. The gift was prompted by a request from law enforcement following a missing child incident in which access to a portable chainsaw for ATV trail use would have been beneficial.

Mr. Bertram provided an overview of the club's history, noting it was incorporated in 1969, went dormant, and was revived around 2000. The club maintains snowmobile trails connecting Lunenburg, Townsend, and Ashby, and has brought over \$200,000 in Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grants to the community over the past 15 years, representing more than 2,000 volunteer hours of in-kind match. Community contributions include construction and maintenance of hiking and biking bridges at the Lane property and the Cowdrey Lot, as well as annual Toys for Tots drives and food drives.

Fire Chief Sullivan accepted the gift on behalf of the Police and Fire Departments.

Note: Per the Select Board's gift acceptance policy, no vote was required as the gift value is under \$500.

V. APPOINTMENTS, RATIFICATIONS, AND RESIGNATIONS

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Jacqueline Thibeau as Assistant Town Accountant**

Town Manager Jennifer Warren-Dymont noted that while Ms. Thibodeau lacks direct municipal experience, she brings substantial accounting and customer service experience and demonstrated qualities of a quick learner with an interest in creating efficiencies during the interview process. She was to begin the following day.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Jacqueline Thibodeau as Assistant Town Accountant. Seconded by Clerk Renee Emkey. Call for Vote: Five- Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Deborah Crowley as Administrative Assistant of the Building Department**

Town Manager Warren-Dymont noted that Ms. Crowley's paralegal background makes her well-suited to the regulatory and permitting work of the Building Department and Zoning Board, and that she brings strong customer service skills. She was to begin November 17th.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Deborah Crowley as Administrative Assistant of the Building Department. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five - Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

- **Ratification of the Town Manager's Appointment of Leigh Bain as Administrative Assistant of Planning**

Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted that Ms. Bain currently works with MassDOT, giving her experience working with municipalities. She also brings customer service experience and technical drafting skills developed in the banking industry. She was to begin the following day.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to ratify the Town Manager's appointment of Leigh Bain as Administrative Assistant of Planning. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five - Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

- **Acknowledge the resignation of James McGuigan, Van Driver for the Council on Aging**

The Select Board acknowledged the resignation of James McGuigan, who served as both a van driver and member of the Council on Aging. Chair Nuzzolo offered thanks for his service, including his work with Meals on Wheels.

VI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

Town Manager Warren-Dyment delivered the following updates:

Finance Department Transition: The transition of three Finance Department positions, Finance Director, Payroll and Benefits Coordinator, and Assistant Accountant, has proven more complex than anticipated. External consulting services have been engaged to stabilize core functions, but the volume of issues encountered is substantial. The Town is in the process of closing out FY25 and identifying and correcting existing issues. Additional contracted support services are being arranged. The Town Manager clarified that the Town is not facing a financial crisis, but emphasized a significant volume of cleanup and catch-up work. She noted that the full transition is expected to take more than one year and will have a meaningful operational impact on the town.

Tax Classification Hearing: An off-cycle Select Board meeting is officially scheduled for November 25 for the Tax Classification Hearing. The Board of Assessors has been preparing by submitting state sales data and property values by class. Actual new growth over the estimated \$400,000 is approximately \$118,000 (corrected later in the meeting from an initially stated figure of \$180,000). The Town Manager clarified that the Select Board's role at this hearing is to determine the tax rate split between residential, commercial, industrial, and personal property not to set the tax rate itself.

Capital Planning Committee: The Capital Planning Committee is actively meeting to consider FY27 capital requests. It recently heard from the Police and School Departments and was scheduled to hear from the Fire Department and DPW the following evening.

DPW Union Representation: As of October 29, DPW employees are officially represented by Teamsters Local 170 for collective bargaining purposes.

Flat Hill Bridge Replacement: MassDOT has agreed to extend the \$600,000 Small Bridge Grant through December 31, 2027. Work is expected to begin in October 2026 and conclude by June 2027.

Town Hall Weather Vane: The planned reproduction of the Town Hall weather vane at a Maine woodshop is facing scheduling difficulties. The Town's Facilities Director will craft the replica himself.

Open Positions: A Library Assistant position (19 hours/week) has been posted. Remaining open positions include: Payroll and Benefits Coordinator (36 hrs/week), Dietary Aide (9 hrs/week), Intermittent Heavy Equipment Operator, Land Use Director (40 hrs/week), and Recreation Director (19 hrs/week). An offer on the Land Use Director position to a strong candidate was declined. The Town Manager flagged that these staffing gaps are critically impacting operations, particularly in light of the simultaneous Finance Department transition.

Board and Committee Vacancies: A Board of Assessors candidate has been identified, and an off-cycle joint meeting for appointment is being arranged.

Vice-Chair Amanda Moore expressed appreciation for the Town Manager's efforts in navigating these organizational challenges. Town Manager Warren-Dyment acknowledged that there would likely be "bumps and bruises along the way" and asked for community patience during the prolonged transition period.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

• Consider Signing on to Letter to Governor and State Legislature Regarding FY27 School Funding Formula and Using Available Fair Share Surplus Funds to Address the Fiscal Crisis Facing our Public Schools

Chair Nuzzolo presented a draft letter to the Governor and the legislative delegation on behalf of the town, urging decisive state action in the FY27 budget to address fiscal challenges facing public school districts. The letter, developed in coordination with a statewide advocacy effort led in part by Representative Scarsdale, outlined six specific priorities:

- Strengthening the Special Education Circuit Breaker Program
- Fixing the Chapter 70 inflation cap
- Fully reimbursing regional and non-regional school districts for student transportation costs
- Significantly increasing rural school aid
- Further mitigating the financial impact of charter schools on traditional public schools
- Making targeted investments in staffing and programs for student mental health

Member Glenn McLeod expressed general agreement with the substance of the letter but raised two concerns: first, that the letter's scope was narrow and more appropriate for the School Committee; and second, that a letter from the Select Board should more broadly represent all municipal funding challenges, including those facing the Fire Department and the Stormwater Task Force. He referenced a prior Mass Municipal Association report as context. Chair Nuzzolo responded that the Select Board had previously sent a more general local aid letter to the state delegation (dated March 18) and noted that these advocacy letters provide the legislative delegation with greater political weight in their own advocacy efforts. He also clarified that Representative Scarsdale had specifically requested the Select Board sign on to strengthen support from her district.

Member Brian Lehtinen expressed support for the letter while noting that Lunenburg does not qualify as a "rural" community under state funding definitions, which he found frustrating. He suggested drafting a supplementary letter on broader municipal funding concerns. Clerk Emkey

agreed that both efforts could coexist. Vice-Chair Moore concurred that the Select Board could pursue both this letter and broader advocacy separately, and noted that the Select Board had a near-term deadline for signing on.

A minor correction to the spelling of Vice-Chair Moore's name on the signature block was identified and noted for correction before signing.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to authorize the Select Board to sign on to the letter to the Governor and legislative delegation regarding FY27 school funding as presented. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Call for Vote: Five - Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

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

Chair Nuzzolo provided an update on the status of warrant article motions. Town Counsel is continuing minor revisions, particularly to the MBTA Communities article. The warrant article for the PEG transfer was removed, as that vote will be deferred to the May Annual Town Meeting.

Consent Calendar: Articles 6 (Cemetery Commission transfers) and 14 (Bituminous Concrete Common Driveways) are currently designated for the consent calendar. The Select Board discussed the elevated voting threshold (two-thirds) that results when a two-thirds-vote article is included on the consent agenda, and concluded the risk was manageable given the low likelihood of controversy on those items.

Article 2 – Budget Adjustments: Town Manager Warren-Dyment corrected her earlier report, noting New Growth is approximately \$118,000 (not \$180,000). She outlined anticipated FY26 budget adjustments, including approximately \$150,000 to cover the costs of the Finance Department transition (primarily consulting fees and vacation buyouts). She noted that retiree health insurance came in approximately \$100,000 higher than budgeted but expects that can be absorbed through existing contingency funds, or alternatively through the Health Insurance Stabilization Fund (which retains approximately \$140,000). A salary reserve transfer to fund the first year of the police contract will also be brought to Town Meeting. The Town Manager recommended against using the Finance Committee reserve fund at this time, preferring to preserve it for unanticipated spring needs.

Board Recommendations on Planning Board Articles: The Board voted on two Planning Board articles for which public hearings had already been held.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to recommend approval of Article 13, MBTA Zoning Act Compliance. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for vote: Four – Aye. One – Nay (Member Glenn McLeod). The motion passed (4-1-0).

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to recommend approval of Article 14, Bituminous Concrete Common Driveways. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Call for Vote: Five - Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

Articles 2 and 3 (Budget Adjustments and Payment of Prior Year Bills) were deferred pending finalization of figures. The Board also noted that the Lunenburg Municipal Building Design Committee confirmed it will not be presenting a report at this Special Town Meeting.

Pre-Town Meeting Select Board Meeting: The Board agreed to tentatively schedule a remote meeting for the Monday prior to Town Meeting (November 17) at 6:00 PM to address remaining article recommendations, with the option to cancel and instead convene a brief meeting at 6:30 PM the night of Town Meeting. Town Manager Warren-Dyment requested both options be kept available given the fluidity of the transition-related agenda items.

Town Meeting Mailers: The Town Manager reported that mailers were delivered to the post office on November 3 and that supporting warrant documents have been posted online. Additional handouts will be shared with the Select Board for feedback as they are completed.

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

The next Tri-Board meeting is to focus on school budget matters, with the Superintendent prepared to present during the week of Thanksgiving. The Select Board agreed to schedule the meeting for Monday, November 24 at 7:00 PM. The Town Manager noted her continued commitment to the Tri-Board process, with the caveat that the ongoing organizational challenges could affect scheduling going forward.

IX. MINUTES*/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

The Select Board discussed a backlog of approximately ten sets of meeting minutes prepared by third-party contractors that require member review prior to approval. It was agreed that minutes would be made available in a shared drive and Select Board members would volunteer to claim and review individual sets.

Warrants

None.

Action Items

None.

X. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Stormwater Task Force (reported by Clerk Emkey): The Task Force voted 4-0 to approve a proposal from Weston & Sampson.

Planning Board (reported by Member McLeod): The Planning Board adopted a new public comment policy, with public comment now occurring before each individual agenda item rather than at the outset of the meeting. The Open Space Committee is in early discussions about transitioning from an ad hoc to a freestanding committee. An ANR (Approval Not Required) endorsement was issued for 930 Mass Ave to expand a substation. A stormwater permit hearing at 255 Sunny Hill Road was continued after outstanding property taxes were identified. The MBTA Communities Act and Common Driveway articles were recommended for adoption. The Board adopted MGL Chapter 110G pertaining to electronic document signing. The Master Plan Steering Committee held its final public information-gathering session on October 22.

School Committee (reported by Member Lehtinen): At the October 15 meeting, the Committee

reviewed school improvement plans, the assessment and student data report, budget goals, plans for Turkey Hill renovation or new construction, and a framework for improved budget process clarity. The next meeting (November 5) includes first reads on advertising, cash handling, middle school pathways, and competency determination policies, as well as review of the Superintendent's and School Committee's drafted goals.

Board of Assessors (reported by Member Lehtinen): At the November 3 meeting, the Board processed nine motor vehicle excise tax abatement lists covering 51 abatements and approved 96 exemptions. The Board is transitioning data from Vision to Munis to reduce duplications. The median assessment-to-sales ratio is at 95%, within the Department of Revenue's required 90–110% range. The Board voted to approve the LA-4 and LA-13 documents. The next meeting is December 3.

Lunenburg Municipal Building Design Committee (reported by Member Lehtinen): The Committee reviewed tours of the Ritter Building and Town Hall, discussed Ritter painting improvements and accessibility challenges related to original building entrances, and noted concerns regarding the Brooks House and 925 Mass Ave. The Committee confirmed it is not prepared to present at the Fall Town Meeting.

Capital Planning Committee (reported by Chair Nuzzolo): The Capital Planning Committee meets the following evening to hear from Fire and DPW.

Bylaw Review Committee (reported by Chair Nuzzolo): The Bylaw Review Committee meets Thursday evening.

XI. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- November 17, 2025 – Tentative remote Select Board meeting (6:00 PM) prior to Special Town Meeting
- November 18, 2025 – Special Town Meeting
- November 24, 2025 – Tri-Board Meeting (Select Board, Finance Committee, School Committee), 7:00 PM
- November 25, 2025 – Tax Classification Hearing (off-cycle Select Board meeting)

XII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

• PUBLIC

Mike Clark, 275 Cross Road (via Zoom), commented on the Select Board's vote to sign the letter coordinated with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA). Mr. Clark, identifying himself as Chair of the Lunenburg Republican Town Committee, characterized the MTA as a partisan organization that primarily supports Democratic candidates. He expressed concern that the Select Board, as a bipartisan body representing residents of all political affiliations, should not align itself with what he described as a union organization with a partisan orientation. He requested that the Board refrain from future association with the MTA or similar organizations.

• TOWN MANAGER

Town Manager Warren-Dyment noted that, according to MassGIS data as of September 2025, the

Town of Lunenburg has 995 SNAP clients, representing approximately 8% of the municipality's population. She acknowledged that SNAP benefits ceased as of November 1 due to the federal government shutdown, and reiterated the call for residents able to do so to support local food assistance organizations during the coming cold months.

• **BOARD**

No comment by the Select Board.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to enter into Executive Session and not re-enter open session pursuant to MGL Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(2), to conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with non-union personnel, specifically for the Director of Municipal Finance/Town Accountant. Seconded by Vice-Chair Moore. Roll call vote: Member McLeod – Aye; Member Lehtinen – Aye; Clerk Emkey – Aye; Vice-Chair Moore – Aye; Chair Nuzzolo – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

The Board entered Executive Session at approximately 8:00 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

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