

Town of Lunenburg
Select Board Meeting Minutes
Zoom Only
Tuesday, December 2, 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. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom and was recorded and broadcast live on the Lunenburg Public Access Facebook page, with the recording to be uploaded to the Lunenburg Access YouTube channel following the meeting. The Pledge of Allegiance was omitted as the meeting was conducted remotely.

II. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Clerk Renee Emkey noted that the annual tree lighting would be held Thursday, December 4 at 6:00 PM at the Town Center. Chair Nuzzolo encouraged residents to attend and to bring letters for Santa to be deposited in the mailbox at the upper common.

III. PUBLIC COMMENT

Public Comment

None.

Board Comment

No Board members offered public comment at this time.

IV. SCHEDULED MEETINGS AND PUBLIC HEARINGS

- **7:05 PM Presentation from the Lunenburg Education Accelerator Foundation (LEAF) on their mission and inaugural fundraising campaign to raise funds to support direct-to-teacher grants**

Sibyl Kaufman, President of LEAF and Lunenburg resident, presented on behalf of the organization. She described LEAF as a citizen-led nonprofit formed by a group of parents and neighbors to address the school district's financial pressures, including rising inflation, health insurance, and transportation costs. The organization's mission is to provide direct-to-teacher grants to fund creative, supplemental learning opportunities that fall outside the scope of the district's operating budget.

Ms. Kaufman reported that LEAF had completed all foundational steps, including obtaining 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt status, nonprofit postal status, a bank account, and the ability to accept payments via PayPal and Venmo. She noted that the organization launched its inaugural fundraising campaign with an oversized postcard mailer funded by a local business donation, and has begun

cultivating corporate gifts. Example grant projects drawn from other Massachusetts education foundations include laser cutters, stereomicroscopes, and chicken coops.

Ms. Kaufman indicated that LEAF has an established relationship with Superintendent Dr. Fortuna, whose prior experience in Brookline—the first district in the state to establish an education foundation—was viewed as a significant asset. A School Committee liaison has also been appointed to ensure representation in the nonprofit's decision-making.

LEAF's planned grant cycle involves collecting funds through the current semester, soliciting teacher applications by spring, reviewing them over the summer, and distributing awards in time for the fall school year. The organization's website is available at leafma.org.

Select Board members congratulated Ms. Kaufman on the launch and encouraged her to return with regular updates. No formal action was taken.

- **7:15 PM Lunenburg's Low-Income Community Solar for Municipal Aggregation, presentation by Mark Cappadona of Colonial Power Group**

Mark Cappadona of Colonial Power Group presented a proposal to add a Low-Income Community Solar component to Lunenburg's existing municipal electricity aggregation program, which has been in operation since 2013. Mr. Cappadona explained that Lunenburg was among the earliest communities to join a Colonial Power aggregation, making it a natural fit for this add-on program.

Under the proposal, Unitil customers already designated as low-income (classified as R-2 accounts) would automatically receive an additional approximately 4-cent-per-kilowatt-hour discount off the aggregation supply rate—meaning a customer currently paying approximately 12.9 cents per kWh would instead pay approximately 8.9 cents. Mr. Cappadona emphasized that eligible customers would not need to take any action, as enrollment would be automatic with opt-out notification by mail sent one month prior to program commencement. The solar array underpinning the program is located in Ashby, Massachusetts, within the Unitil service territory; no physical installation in Lunenburg is required, as this is a financial transaction.

The program operates under the state's SMART (Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target) program, administered by the Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and subject to approval by the Department of Public Utilities (DPU). Mr. Cappadona noted that Colonial Power has obtained a predetermination letter, and all agreements would be verified by the DOER and DPU before becoming effective. The commitment is 20 years in duration; however, if Lunenburg were to withdraw, the discount allocation would be transferred to other Unitil communities such as Fitchburg or Townsend. The Town of Ashby has already signed on to this program.

Mr. Cappadona noted urgency related to potential changes to the federal Inflation Reduction Act and associated low-income solar incentives, which could erode benefits after December 31st. The Town Manager stated she had confirmed with the Chief of Police that there were no concerns from a law enforcement perspective, and that she did not believe Town Counsel review was necessary, though she offered to seek it if the Board wished.

In response to Select Board questions, Mr. Cappadona clarified that low-income eligibility is determined by Unitil based on state and federal criteria, such as qualification for fuel assistance, free school lunches, or EBT benefits, and that costs for the SMART program are already distributed across all ratepayers. Select Board Member Moore noted that Unitil's existing low-income discount

is approximately 38%, to which this solar discount would be additive. The Chair characterized the proposal as "a no-brainer," and the Board concurred.

Motion by Clerk Emkey to authorize the Town Manager to sign both the Memorandum of Understanding and the Administrative Services Agreement with Colonial Power Group for the Low-Income Community Solar program. Seconded by Vice-Chair Amanda Moore. Roll call vote: Member McLeod – Aye; Member Lehtinen – Aye; Vice-Chair Moore – Aye; Clerk Emkey – Aye; Chair Nuzzolo – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **Motion to Enter into Executive Session and re-enter Open Session after exiting Executive 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; (Burden, George et al vs. Courtemanche, Stacy et al 2572CM00296 and Town of Lunenburg, acting by and through its Select Board its Chief of Police et al vs. Burden, George B. et al 2585CV01256)**

This Executive Session item, as noticed on the agenda regarding Burden, George et al. vs. Courtemanche, Stacy et al. (2572CM00296) and Town of Lunenburg et al. vs. Burden, George B. et al. (2585CV01256), was not convened during the open session portion of the meeting. The Select Board proceeded with the remainder of the agenda before entering a separate Executive Session at the close of the meeting on the collective bargaining matter.

VI. TOWN MANAGER REPORT

The Town Manager provided the following updates:

Finance Department Transition: The Finance Director position has been posted and is receiving initial interest. Assistant Town Accountant Jackie Thibault is advancing well in accounts payable training. The Payroll and Benefits position remains difficult to fill; job descriptions, hours, and classifications are under review. The Town and School payroll teams have begun collaborating on workflow modifications. External consulting support remains in place to stabilize core functions, and the Town Manager characterized the situation as an operational challenge, not a financial one.

Tax Rate Setting: Following the Select Board's tax classification hearing the prior week at which it voted to maintain a single tax rate and not adopt a residential or small commercial exemption or open space discount. The Principal Assessor submitted the tax rate recap to the Division of Local Services on December 1. The state will review and finalize the rate, after which tax bills will be prepared. The Town Manager expressed no concern regarding timely issuance of bills.

Capital Planning Committee: The committee continues to meet, with a presentation from the School Department scheduled for the following evening.

FY27 Budget and Town Meeting Calendar: The Town Manager and Finance Committee Chair Chris Menard met to discuss the budget calendar, and a draft is expected within the following week.

Collective Bargaining: The Town is currently in active bargaining with three unions: Clerical (Council 93, with an initial meeting sought for January), Fire, and DPW.

Health Insurance: Blue Cross Blue Shield and UMass Memorial Health have reached an agreement, keeping UMass in-network for subscribers. Some rate impact from the negotiations is anticipated.

Public Employee Committee (PEC): A meeting with the PEC was scheduled for December 4th, after which the Town Manager anticipated providing an Executive Session update to the Board.

Facilities: No project updates were available; the Facilities Director had recently returned from vacation.

Current Recruitments: Open positions include Conservation Agent (36 hrs/wk, applications preferred by December 12), Staff Librarian – Young Adult (30 hrs/wk), Finance Director (40 hrs/wk), Payroll and Benefits (36 hrs/wk), Meal Site Manager (36 hrs/wk, interviews concluded), Recreation Director (19 hrs/wk), and Dietary Aide (9 hrs/wk). An offer for the Land Use Director position has been accepted; the candidate's name is being held in confidence and will appear before the Board at the December 16 meeting. An offer for a Library Assistant (19 hrs/wk) has also been accepted.

Board and Committee Vacancies: Open elected positions include Planning Board, Sewer Commission, and Trust Fund Commission. Appointed vacancies exist on the Agricultural Commission, APDC, Cultural Council, Green Communities, Historical Commission, Personnel Board, PACC, ZBA (Associate), and the First Middlesex Small Town Collaborative representative seat.

Clerk Emkey inquired about the availability of external consultant Steve Barrett and was advised that his schedule has shifted to Mondays and Wednesdays, providing more in-person time.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

1. Letter to Governor Maura Healey on Local Aid and the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

Chair Nuzzolo indicated this item would be deferred to the following week's in-person meeting for review and discussion.

2. Discussion on Special Event Policy

Chair Nuzzolo noted that review of this policy is part of the Select Board's established goals. The item was flagged for initial discussion at the next meeting.

3. Discussion on Appointment Policy

Deferred to initial discussion at the next meeting.

4. Review Select Board Bylaw for Potential Recommendations to Bylaw Review Committee

Chair Nuzzolo noted that the Bylaw Review Committee had solicited feedback from all boards and committees. Select Board members were asked to review the Select Board bylaw and provide feedback, which may then be discussed at the next meeting.

5. Communications with Boards/Committees/Commissions

Clerk Emkey introduced a draft letter she had prepared regarding inter-board communication, with a focus on the Tri-Board (Select Board, School Committee, and Finance Committee). She explained that the impetus was a pattern of perceived communication breakdowns, including instances where board/committee members were not reading email correspondence and relying instead on social

media for information, a dynamic she expressed concern could lead to misinformation, particularly heading into budget season.

Clerk Emkey stated she struggled with tone, not wanting the letter to appear as finger-pointing, and acknowledged the Select Board shares responsibility for improvement. Key themes of the draft included: acknowledging communication challenges, improving information-sharing and engagement, more effective use of existing liaisons between the three boards, a commitment by all members to monitor official Town email, and a reaffirmation of the Select Board's commitment to transparency and collaboration. She proposed that she deliver the letter at a Finance Committee meeting and that Member Brian Lehtinen do the same at the School Committee, in addition to transmitting it by email.

Chair Nuzzolo expressed full support while emphasizing that tone would be critical, and noted that he believed meaningful collaboration was already occurring, with the communication issues perhaps reflecting growing pains of increased cooperation. Member Lehtinen, Vice-Chair Moore, and Member McLeod all expressed support for the initiative and agreed to review the draft before the next meeting. Clerk Emkey noted that public perception of inter-board communication is also an important consideration, particularly given comments made at the Special Town Meeting.

The Select Board agreed to review the draft letter individually and continue the discussion the following week, with any edits or comments to be sent only to the Town Manager or Clerk Emkey to comply with Open Meeting Law.

6. Annual License Renewals

- **Identify requests by Select Board Members to meet with individual applicants**
- **Renewals Ready for Consideration by Select Board:**
 - o **Pouring – All Kinds of Alcoholic Beverages**
 - **American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street., Lunenburg, MA 01462**
 - **Settlers Crossing Enterprises, Inc., d/b/a Settler's Pub, 994 Northfield Road, Lunenburg, MA 01462**
 - o **Annual Re-licensing – Package Store – All Kinds of Alcoholic Beverages**
 - **Victory Distributors, LLC., d/b/a Hannaford Supermarket & Pharmacy #8388, 333 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462**
 - **Lunenburg Liquor Mart, Inc. d/b/a Lunenburg Liquor Mart, 88 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg MA, 01462**
 - **Sarjudas, LLC, d/b/a Lunenburg Liquors, 433 Electric Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462**
 - o **Annual Re-licensing – Package Store – Wine and Malt**
 - **Central Mass Garden Center, Inc., d/b/a Central Mass Gardens, 621 Chase Street, Lunenburg MA 01462**
 - o **Annual Re-licensing – Jukebox**
 - **American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street., Lunenburg, MA 01462**
 - o **Annual Re-licensing – Common Victualler**
 - **American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street., Lunenburg, MA 01462**

**▪ Victory Distributors, LLC., d/b/a Hannaford Supermarket & Pharmacy
#8388, 333 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462**

The Executive Assistant to the Town Manager and Select Board, Melissa Richard, provided an update on the status of pending annual license renewals. Several applicants had outstanding compliance items:

- Exstapa Restaurant – Requires a building inspection, fire inspection, and must be current on sewer bills. This was identified as the most significant outstanding concern.
- Lakeview Club – Does not currently hold a valid food service license with the Board of Health; communications are ongoing.
- On the Rocks – Outstanding tax payment, paid online the day of the meeting.
- Bedrock Bar & Grill – Delinquent on real estate taxes; it was reported that the mortgage company is responsible for payment and the establishment has been directed to resolve the matter with their lender.
- White Thai – Food service license issue involving a language barrier; a food service license submitted had expired in October. A receipt for a new inspection was provided, but the updated certificate was not yet available. Staff indicated that the Board of Health would follow up with Nashoba Valley the following day.

The Select Board was also informed that the Chief of Police had no concerns with any of the current alcohol licensees. The Town Manager clarified that all current licensees hold valid licenses through the end of the calendar year, and that a contingent approval vote could be used at the final December meeting for applicants who are close to compliance particularly in advance of New Year's Eve.

No Select Board members requested that any individual applicants be brought in for a meeting at this time. The Select Board agreed to allow another week for outstanding compliance matters to be resolved.

The following license renewals, having been confirmed as complete and ready for action, were presented for approval:

- Pouring – All Kinds of Alcoholic Beverages: American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street; Settlers Crossing Enterprises, Inc. d/b/a Settler's Pub, 994 Northfield Road.
- Annual Re-licensing – Package Store – All Kinds of Alcoholic Beverages: Victory Distributors, LLC d/b/a Hannaford Supermarket & Pharmacy #8388, 333 Massachusetts Avenue; Lunenburg Liquor Mart, Inc. d/b/a Lunenburg Liquor Mart, 88 Massachusetts Avenue; Sarjudas, LLC d/b/a Lunenburg Liquors, 433 Electric Avenue.
- Annual Re-licensing – Package Store – Wine and Malt: Central Mass Garden Center, Inc. d/b/a Central Mass Gardens, 621 Chase Street.
- Annual Re-licensing – Jukebox: American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street.

- Annual Re-licensing – Common Victualler: American Graffiti Inc. d/b/a American Graffiti, 113 Summer Street; Victory Distributors, LLC d/b/a Hannaford Supermarket & Pharmacy #8388, 333 Massachusetts Avenue.

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to renew all license applications as printed on the agenda. Seconded by Clerk Emkey. Roll call vote: Member McLeod – Aye; Member Lehtinen – Aye; Vice-Chair Moore – Aye; Clerk Emkey – Aye; Chair Nuzzolo – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

VIII. OLD BUSINESS

No old business was brought forward.

IX. PUBLIC COMMENT**

• PUBLIC

No public comment was received.

• TOWN MANAGER

The Town Manager entered a clarification into the record regarding Article 11 (Kids Kingdom) from the November 18 Special Town Meeting, at which the School Committee Chair had publicly stated that the School Committee was not consulted prior to the article being placed on the warrant. The Town Manager confirmed that this statement was technically accurate; however, she noted that on October 13 shortly after the Select Board voted to add the article to the warrant she had emailed a full draft of the article and summary to both the Superintendent and the School Committee Chair, explicitly inviting the committee to take a position. The Town Manager further noted that the School Committee Chair had courteously notified her on the day of Town Meeting that the statement would be made, but that she had not had time to research the prior correspondence before the meeting. Following Town Meeting, she located and re-shared the October 13 email with both parties. She stated that both conversations led her to believe the email was simply missed during a busy period, and that no deliberate omission occurred. The Town Manager emphasized that her intent was transparency for the public record, not criticism, and that she remains committed to collaborative working relationships with the Superintendent and School Committee.

• BOARD

No comment by the Select Board.

X. MINUTES*/WARRANTS/ACTION ITEMS

Minutes

No minutes were available for approval.

Warrants

None.

Action Items

Clerk Emkey raised two action items:

- Water Rates: Clerk Emkey inquired whether a discussion on water rates could be scheduled for the following week. The Town Manager indicated that a consultant had completed the revenue summary as part of the tax rate recap process, but that a full discussion on water rates may not be ready by the next meeting. The Town Manager expressed the goal of completing the water rate discussion in December.
- FY24 Audit: Clerk Emkey noted that the FY24 audit had been shared and asked whether the Select Board wished to invite the auditors to present, as had been done in prior years. Chair Nuzzolo indicated he had not yet read the audit but would do so. The Town Manager noted no striking findings in the document. The Select Board agreed to read the audit and then determine whether a formal presentation should be scheduled.

Member Lehtinen requested that a post-Special Town Meeting review be placed on a future agenda, specifically to discuss next steps for the Kids Kingdom article.

XI. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Member Lehtinen reported on several committees. The Board of Assessors met on November 19, appointing Brian Marple as a new member, addressing 27 abatements, and working through personal property and exemption issues with a consultant. The classification hearing was held November 25. The School Committee met November 19, discussing the Special Education Recovery Fund, the FY27 budget timeline, substitute teacher pay (increased to \$112/day), the Capital Planning Committee, the Primary School feasibility study and playground designer services, Turkey Hill (renovation vs. rebuild), MSBA, transportation vans, and health insurance projections of potentially 20% increases. The district will prepare three budget scenarios: level service, level funded, and a prioritized necessary increase. The Town Manager was commended by the committee for partnership and fairness. The Lunenburg Municipal Building Design Committee met on Monday and established a subcommittee consisting of Matthew Brenner, Anthony Sculimbrene, and Laura Brzozoski to conduct a space needs assessment with Town employees. The committee will continue analyzing whether all departments can be housed in the Ritter building.

Member McLeod reported that the Planning Board met November 24, appointing Judy Dragoslis to the Economic Development Committee. A public hearing was held for a proposed self-storage facility at 30 Summer Street (four stories, approximately 104,700 square feet), continued to December 15. The MPO met November 19 and discussed the designation of critical rural freight corridors in Lunenburg, running from Route 2 to the Keating property, which could make the area eligible for National Highway Freight Network funding potentially of benefit to safety improvements at the Reservoir Road/Lancaster Shirley Road intersection. Open Space Committee continues to pursue standing committee status. No reports from AgCom or the Library Board of Trustees.

XII. UPCOMING MEETINGS/EVENTS SCHEDULE

- December 9
- December 16

XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- **Motion to Enter into Executive Session and not re-enter Open Session after exiting Executive Session pursuant to MGL c. 30 §21 (a)(3) to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining ... if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining ... position of the public body and the chair so declares (Lunenburg Professional Firefighters PFFM Local 5369)**

Motion by Chair Nuzzolo to enter into Executive Session and not re-enter Open Session after exiting Executive Session, pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21(a)(3), to discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining position of the public body, and the Chair so declares—for Lunenburg Professional Firefighters PFFM Local 5369. Seconded by Member Lehtinen. Roll call vote: Member McLeod – Aye; Member Lehtinen – Aye; Vice-Chair Moore – Aye; Clerk Emkey – Aye; Chair Nuzzolo – Aye. The motion passed unanimously (5-0-0).

The Select Board entered Executive Session at the conclusion of open business. The meeting did not re-enter Open Session.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

The open session of the Select Board meeting concluded upon entry into Executive Session.

Respectfully Submitted,
Renee Emkey

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