

NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT <http://townhall.leverett.ma.us> FEBRUARY 2022

It takes a village to run a Town. If you have not run for office before, if you are new to town, if you'd like to meet people in town, if you're newly retired and looking for a project, if you're an expert, if you want to learn something new—please, consider running for office. In addition to the list below there are appointed committees that also could use help. Call Lisa at 548-9150 for information about being an elected or appointed official. Thank you. Really.

Elected officials with expiring terms who are running again as well as new candidates for office are asked to submit substantive statements to the *Newsletter* editor at townclerk@leverett.ma.us or leave in Town Clerk box at Town Hall, by **1 March 2021**. Offices up for election are:

Assessors: One three-year term; one two-year term;

Board of Health: One three-year term;

Library Trustees: Two three-year terms;

Constable: One three-year term;

Finance Committee: One three-year term;

Moderator: One three-year term;

Planning Board: One five-year term;

School Committee: Two three-year terms;

Select Board: One three-year term.

Assessors: Includes three elected Assessors. The primary responsibility is to assure that property assessments are established and maintained in a fair and equitable manner in accordance with state mandates, and to process warrants for real estate, personal property, forestry, and vehicle excise taxes. The office of the Assessors *is the only elected position in town that has state-mandated qualifications that must be achieved within the first term of office.*

Board of Health: Primary duties relate to the protection of public health, promotion of sanitary living conditions, control of disease, and protection of the environment. The Board of Health oversees soil evaluation and perc tests and approves disposal systems (for new construction, additions, and repairs or replacements of existing systems), and applies well regulations. **Meetings:** two or more times per month.

Constable: Responsible for posting warrants for town meetings and elections. Constable is present during elections to ensure safety of polling place, buy the

donuts, make the coffee, and entertain the voters and election workers.

Finance Committee: Oversees town spending. Works with Select Board prior to town meeting on budget issues; runs the annual budget hearing; approves (or not) expenditures from the Reserve Account. **Meetings:** several per year, more during the months of January-March when the next fiscal year budget is being drafted.

Library Trustees: Responsible for overseeing the library and establishing policies and plans to provide services to the community, and for determining final budgeting, and conducting public relations. The trustees value individuals who are team players, have a sense of humor, and are avid readers. **Meetings:** once per month (except in July and August).

Planning Board: Writes zoning and subdivision bylaws. Members meet with individuals seeking to build or modify homes or divide land, and help decipher bylaws for the confused. **Meetings:** once a month (except in summer).

Select Board: Official governing body of the town, charged with setting policies and regulations which are not within the realm of Town Meeting. Members make appointments to ad hoc boards, committees, and commissions; work directly with police, fire, and highway departments; authorize town spending; call town meetings; set the warrant for Annual Town Meeting; develop town budget in cooperation with Finance Committee. ETC, ETC, ETC. **Meetings:** every other Tuesday.

School Committee: The School Committee meets once a month during the school year as a full group and each member may attend 1-2 more meetings a month depending on which sub-committee/roles they take on. Our main role includes creating/managing the School Budget, participating in the Superintendent evaluation, and creating/reviewing school policies.

NOTES FROM AROUND TOWN

- **Dogs:** 2022 dog licenses are in; the application for a license is in this *Newsletter*. Dogs will be required to present a birth certificate, and 3 forms of ID to get a "Real Dog ID."
- **Candidates' statements:** Candidates for elected office must submit a statement of intent to the *Newsletter* by 1 March 2022.
- Please send your Valentine cards through the **Leverett Post Office**. Mail traffic will help keep it open.
- Applications for **tax relief** assistance (toward next property tax payment) can be obtained from and submitted to the Assessor's Office. Deadline for submission is March 1.
- Foot Care by Nurses Clinic The footcare clinics are scheduled for the 3rd Tuesdays of every month at Leverett Town Hall for Leverett residents over 60 years old. The 30-minute sessions are by appointment only - please contact Fay Zipkowitz at 367-9573 or email: the_czarina@fastmail.fm. Suggested donation is \$35-\$45 to help cover our costs.

NEXT NEWSLETTER DEADLINES:

1 March (candidate statements only), 15 April, 1 June 2022

Send news items, candidates' statements, and a bouquet of freesia to Lisa Stratford, P.O. Box 300, Leverett, MA 01054 or e-mail to townclerk@leverett.ma.us Call 548-9150 for information and guidelines.

SELECT BOARD

Budgetary news - The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District continues the annual four-town meetings to discuss the upcoming 2023 district budget. Tension remains about the rolling average method versus the statutory method, and it is understood that the statutory method would lead to probable budget cuts in an already strained system in Leverett. The Select Board, with the support of School Committee and Finance Committee members, is pursuing more direct conversation with Shutesbury about their perspective, and aiming to gather data on exactly what budgetary cuts would need to be made in Amherst if the statutory method were to be fully instituted in the four-town region. On a local tax level, we voted to keep business and residential tax rates equivalent, thus continuing a single tax rate for the town. As noted in December, the Finance Committee/Select Board meeting generated a 3% budget increase guidance for town departments; thus far, all town department FY23 budget proposals are at or below this increase.

Recent appointments - We happily voted to appoint JC Kirby and Julie Rossier as Substitute Library Assistants, Jackson Barber-Just as Transfer Station Attendant, and Ray Mitchell to Highway

Dept as an additional plow driver. We also have a new accountant, Deborah Jones. Welcome, all!

Childcare at Town Meeting - The Select Board is working with the Social Justice Committee to optimize the long-term plan for childcare at Town Meeting, and it is agreed across the board that childcare is an essential element of maintaining equitable participation in the annual civic event.

Policing - We signed a long-anticipated intermunicipal agreement with Wendell, establishing formal joint-policing with the town, under the direction of police Chief Scott Minckler. Leverett will also be working with Erving, Gill, Bernardston, and Northfield on obtaining funding for a Co-Responder Grant, which would support employment of a mental health clinician who would respond to relevant calls with officers. Leverett resident Shannon Gamble, who works for a local nonprofit community behavioral and mental health agency, has offered to provide informal support to the Leverett Police Department for the implementation/development of the program.

Elder Studies project update and award - Leverett has secured a \$10,000 Community Compact Grant for senior population needs assessment. The board awarded the consulting contract to Town Common Research, a local organization with extensive experience in community organizing, public policy research, and program design. They are self-described as "motivated by the opportunity to contribute a thorough, attentive needs assessment to an elder services initiative that will result in more inclusive, accessible, and age friendly services, and a more resilient community for years to come. Town Common Research will collaborate with our Council on Aging and Life Path (our local non-profit Area Agency on Aging). For anyone over the age of 50, or for caregivers of elders over 50, the first arm of elder services research can be accessed via the Life Path survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/age-friendly-survey>.

We couldn't be happier about the collaborative efforts that are underway for improving the lives of our beloved over-the-age-of 50 community members.

Melissa Colbert, for the Select Board

Conservation Commission Members Needed

There are not one, but two opening on the Conservation Commission. Here is your chance to dive into Town Government (pun intended). If you are interested, please email: concom@gmail.com

TOWN STREET LIST/CENSUS

Annual street list/census forms were sent to each household in town in January. In order to remain active on the voting list, make accurate predictions of school population, and keep reliable records for emergency responders, it is important that these forms be returned quickly. Please note that the political party designation next to a name on this form indicates that you are registered, and in which party. This is not an official voter registration form. *No additions, deletions, or changes will be made to your voting status based on the street list form.* Call 548-9150 if you have questions about anything on the form.

Lisa Stratford, Town Clerk

Community Preservation Committee

For February 2022 Town Newsletter: Community Preservation Committee News and Notice of Annual Public Hearing:

The Community Preservation Committee has received three proposals for funding this year, (for requests totaling \$529,300). The proposals are:

- 1) From the Leverett Historical Commission, a request for \$12,500, to continue support for its ongoing project "A Sense of Where You Are," a project intended to educate town residents about and promote town historic resources. This year's proposal includes funding for signage and oral histories.
- 2) From the Leverett Historical Commission and the Leverett Historic Society, a request for \$237,500*, to conduct restoration and renovation work on the Leverett Family Museum, (formerly the Field Library) and the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse.
- 3) From the Leverett Recreation Committee, a request for \$279,300* to construct a pavilion on the field between the school and the library, said pavilion to be used for public gatherings, performances etc. The proposal also includes the installation of rooftop solar panels for generation of electricity.

NOTE: The asterisk * for projects 2 and 3 indicate that the actual cost of the project is still uncertain.

The proposals and draft Annual Plan are available for review at the Town Hall and on the Town website. The link to the ZOOM meeting will be posted along with the Agenda for the March 2 meeting at least one week in

advance of the meeting, and will be available at www.leverett.ma.us.

Again, this year, Leverett has received a 100% match (\$102,928) from the state of funds raised through the town's Community Preservation surcharge! Leverett is one of only a handful of municipalities in the entire state to receive this highest possible match.

In the almost 20 years since the Town adopted the Community Preservation Act in 2002, voters have appropriated over \$1.8 million for historic preservation, open space preservation and housing projects throughout the Town. We welcome proposals and inquiries. For more information or questions, contact CPC Chairperson Danielle Barshak at daniellebarshak@verizon.net.

Tax Relief Fund

The eagerly awaited property tax bills-well, may-be not "eagerly"-have arrived, and as promised, most of us have seen an increase in our bills. This could mean that even more of our neighbors will face challenges in meeting their local tax obligations this year. The Tax Relief Committee wants to remind tax payers that we hope to raise the current modest balance in the Tax Relief Fund (which was \$1345 as of November, 2021), in order to meet the anticipated increased need for financial assistance. If you haven't yet paid your tax bill, you may use the check-off box conveniently located on the upper left corner of your bill (along with boxes for other worthy charitable causes) and include an extra amount along with your payment. If your bill has already been paid, you may send a separate check-made out to the Town of Leverett-to the attention of the Tax Collector, at the Town Hall, Montague Rd, or drop off a check at the Town Hall; donations can be made at any time of year, not just during tax bill payment season. Any amount helps and will be much appreciated by the Tax Relief Committee as well as your fellow members of the Leverett community who can ill afford to absorb any tax increases. The Tax Relief Committee thanks the community for supporting this cause every year.

Town-wide Budget Hearing

March 15, 2022 at 7:00 pm

Meeting will be remote only. Please go to leverett.ma.us and click on the Select Board meeting for that night for a link to the hearing. Or come, masked, in person.

Library News

It is the depths of winter and there is no better time to snuggle up with an audiobook and learn a new craft while something delicious bubbles away on the stove. We can help with that!

Spice Samples

This month we are offering samples of turmeric. Some of you may already be familiar with this spice which is common in Indian dishes. If you aren't, now is a perfect time to give it a try. With your sample are suggested recipes such as Golden Milk, Red Lentil Dal, and South African Yellow Rice. Stop in and pick up a sample while supplies last. Thank you to the Friends of the Leverett Library for sponsoring this delicious program!

Ecards

If you don't have a library card yet, you can get one on our website and begin downloading audiobooks and ebooks right away. Stop in the library with proof of address and we'll upgrade that card so you can take advantage of all our wonderful physical offerings as well. Start at leverettlibrary.org

Curiosity Kits

Some of you have been trying our Curiosity Kits to learn new crafts like wood carving, knitting, and watercolors. We are adding new kits this month including an embossing kit, DIY beeswax wraps, and a Pysanky egg dying kit. Our Curiosity Kits are supported in part by a grant from the Leverett Cultural Council, a local agency which is supported by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. Borrow one today!

Movie Streaming

Have you tried our new movie streaming service? Go to Kanopy.com, choose your library (Leverett!), and make an account with your email address. You'll be able to start streaming movies right away. If you have any trouble, please call or email us. We're happy to help!

Curbside Pickup and Home Delivery

Remember, we offer Curbside Pickup by request during our open hours. Email us at leverettlibrary@gmail.com or call us at 413-548-9220 and we'll get your items outside for you. Are you or someone you know housebound? Let us know and we'll be happy to deliver books or other.

Programming, books, and other news

Want to stay-up-to-date with all our exciting news? There are more ways to stay in-the-know than ever:

1. Our monthly email newsletter. Sign up here: <https://leverettlibrary.org/p/42/Join-the-Leverett-Library-Mailing-list>
2. A weekly email listing our newest books. Sign up here: <https://wowbrary.org/signup.aspx?l=3286>
3. Follow us on Facebook

Warm Wishes, Hannah Paessel, Library Director

Age-Friendly Survey

The Leverett Council on Aging and Selectboard are participating in a regional Age-Friendly Program sponsored by

LifePath. Age-Friendly Franklin County and North Quabbin is a regional initiative working to make our communities better places for people to live as they age. The key step in the process is for everyone in Leverett over the age of 50 to complete a survey to share your views on what you need now and as you get older, and your level of access to supportive services. The information collected through this process will be used to create an Age-Friendly Action Plan, to apply for grants to improve conditions for older people in the region, and for additional meetings and research to be completed in Leverett. Please take the survey online by following this link

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/age-friendly-survey> or by, accessing the survey from the Town of Leverett website. Paper copies of it are available at the Leverett Town Hall or the Leverett Coop. Caregivers are welcome to complete one for the elder in their care. All questions are optional after the first two, and your responses will remain confidential. Everyone who fills out this survey will be eligible for a drawing for gift cards.

Leverett Energy Committee

Since the UN's startling Code Red assessment about the climate outlook was reported the Energy Committee has been considering ways to amplify our communications with town residents. We can't make a single decision about how and when to use any form of energy without also making choices about the world we want to live in and leave for the

generations that follow. We plan to initiate conversations through Leverett Connects and the town newsletter about what's at stake here and what responsibility each of us has for making decisions designed to keep Planet Earth habitable. Hard to come up with a more compelling challenge. We think of this proposal as Leverett Conversations about Energy. EC members will offer ideas for reflection and discussion and invite everyone to join in, including bringing up concerns you are tired of carrying around by yourself. This is an experiment. You will hear from us soon, or you can start us off with your own comments. We can imagine sharing resources for household essentials that don't come in plastic and discussions about consumerism and the 6 Rs: reduce, re-use, re-cycle, resist, repair, and refuse.

Community News:

FUND DRIVE SECURES LES GREENHOUSE PROGRAM

Thanks to the generosity of Leverett residents and businesses, the Leverett Education Foundation was able to raise over \$17,000 this past fall to pay for the repair and replacement of structural elements at the Leverett Elementary School greenhouse and for the purchase of a variety of equipment and materials to sustain and enhance the Greenhouse Program. In addition, the many contributions we received – including major donations from Grass Roots Landscaping, People's Bank, Dean's Beans, Earthworks, West Branch Capital, Jamrog HVAC, the Friends of Leverett Pond, and Rattlesnake Gutter Trust -- have enabled the Foundation to provide grants that will help fund Dawn Ward's work as Director of the Greenhouse Program. In all, the money raised during the fund drive will refurbish the greenhouse itself, purchase much-needed new equipment, supply soil, compost, and seeds, and ensure that this marvelous resource for Leverett's children continues to offer them unique experiences and a deeper understanding of the plants, animals, and environments that make up the natural world that surrounds us. Thank you for your support.

Leverett Education Foundation

A Heartfelt Thanks

First, I would like to sincerely **Thank** all the folks involved with the Leverett Education Foundation for all the time, energy and effort put forward to create and facilitate such a successful fundraiser to support the Greenhouse/Nature program at the Leverett Elementary School.

However, the fundraiser could not have been the success it was without all the outpouring of support from **all the town folks of Leverett!** Therefore, I would like to send words of sincere **thanks** and appreciation to the entire Leverett community!

Now, thanks to your generous support the necessary repairs can happen, the gardens can continue to grow and the children will continue to explore and learn to respect and appreciate the natural world in their community and beyond!

With all sincerity, I send **Heartfelt THANKS** to the **entire Leverett community!**

Dawn Marvin Ward – LES Greenhouse/Nature Educator & Manager

APPLICATION: 2022 DOG LICENSE Renewal _____ or New _____ license

Name of owner _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Name of dog _____ Age _____

Breed _____ Color _____

Male (\$10.00) _____ Neutered Male (\$5.00) _____ Female (\$10.00) _____ Spayed female* (\$5.00) _____

Send check payable to Town of Leverett, business-size self-addressed stamped envelope, proof of rabies immunization, and proof of spaying to Town Clerk, Box 300, Leverett 01054. Documents will be returned with license.

Dogs must be licensed on or before April 1st! Thank you.

FRIENDS OF THE LEVERETT LIBRARY

The 2021 annual Holiday Basket auction was a grand success! The Friends of the Leverett Library thank the many bidders and congratulate the winners!

Our annual membership drive is underway for 2022. Forms are available at the library and on the library website. Thank you to new members and to those who have already renewed their membership. Membership donations are used solely for the library's needs and programs.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/MEMBERSHIP CALENDAR YEAR 2021 NEW MEMBERS WELCOME!

Please complete form and send to the library at: Box 250 Leverett, MA 01054

Circle membership type: Individual \$10 Family \$20 Patron \$50 Lifetime \$200

If your membership is other than "individual" please tell us how many people should be listed in our statistics for your membership (e.g. family of 4): _____

NAME _____ TELEPHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

EMAIL _____

We ask for your email address so that we can send an acknowledgement of your membership and very occasionally send you information about events and our annual meeting. We are not allowed to access your email address from library patron records and we will not share your email address with anyone. **Please make checks payable to "Friends of the Leverett Library" or "FoLL." ALL DUES AND DONATIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**