

NEWSLETTER

TOWN OF LEVERETT <http://townhall.leverett.ma.us> FEBRUARY 2023

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 2023**. Offices up for election are:

Assessors: One three-year term;

Board of Health: One three-year term;

Library Trustees: Two three-year terms;

Constable: One three-year term;

Finance Committee: Two three-year terms;

Planning Board: One five-year term;

School Committee: One three-year term;

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.

Town-wide Budget Hearing

March 21, 2023 at 7:00 pm

Meeting will be in person at the Town Hall or you may participate remotely by going to leverett.ma.us and clicking on the Select Board meeting for that night.

NOTES FROM AROUND TOWN

- **Dogs:** 2023 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 2023.**
- 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 April 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 2023**

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

We hope everyone had a warm and peaceful holiday season. Here is an update on what your Select Board has been up to so far this new year.

Field Library Building

The fate of the Field Building is an ongoing hot topic in town, and the Select Board continues meetings with the Ad Hoc Committee for the Future of the Field Library Building for updates on the process of information gathering and delineating potential options for the building. Select Board member Pat Duffy is keeping a pulse on the inner workings of this diligent group by attending the Ad Hoc Committee meetings.

Leverett residents are passionate about how we should care for this building; there are several potential options to be laid out, including Leverett owning and maintaining the building on its current site versus moving the building to the town library complex, versus selling the building to a non-profit for use similar to its current. *Please consider attending the public forum the 3rd week of February if you want to give input at this juncture.*

We are immensely grateful that so many community members have put forth precious time and energy to develop a refreshed analysis, so that soon we as a community can revisit the decision of what to do with our beloved historical Field Library Building.

Mosquito Pilot Program

The Select Board is happy to report that our pilot program for mosquito surveillance testing was a success! In collaboration with MedZu Labs in Amherst, five brave volunteers learned to trap and gather mosquitos successfully, and are ready to train others for a more robust program this year, should the town decide, it would be a good idea. Besides being a potential disease identification measure, having a program in place to collect data on mosquito species and potential zoonotic disease could help support the town continuing to opt out of aerial spraying.

Fire Department Senior Safe Program

Seniors - did you know that our local Fire Department can come to your home and do a fire and carbon monoxide safety evaluation, provide and install smoke or carbon monoxide detectors? We learned that this special program also supports fall prevention through education and ice mitigation support.

Dialogue with State Representative, Natalie Blais

The Select Board was delighted to host a sit-down with our State Representative, Natalie Blais, in which we and other Leverett residents had the opportunity to talk about pressing issues. Rep. Blais updated us on her advocacy at the state level for improvement of paved and unpaved roads in the Commonwealth. She also spoke of her tireless work on improving rural school funding from the state, and noted there is a pending omnibus spending bill that is soon to be finalized that will benefit from robust local support - we are looking forward to collaborating with our school committee to support these efforts when the time comes. There was hopefulness that the new governor's administration will be increasingly supportive of a broad range of rural community needs going forward.

Appointments, hirings, and resignations

Mike Reske was hired to the position of laborer in the highway department - welcome aboard, Mike!
Judy Ricker resigned from the board of registrars - thank you, Judy, for all of your hard work!
David Rice was appointed to the Capital Planning Committee - lucky us!

Melissa Colbert, for the Select Board

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

Recreation Commission Needs You!

The Select Board would like to reinvigorate the Recreation Commission. People need more FUN in their lives! Please call or email Lisa if you are interested: 548-9150 or townclerk@leverett.ma.us

Highway Board

The Select Board is also looking for people interested in serving on a temporary Highway Board to provide input on planning and prioritizing with the Highway Supt. Call or email Lisa if interested: 548-9150 or townclerk@leverett.ma.us

Community Preservation Committee News and Notice of Annual Public Hearing on Project Applications:

The Community Preservation Committee received a record-breaking number of 7 proposals for funding this year. Three of the proposals were withdrawn by the proponents as the proposed uses were determined to not be permitted under the state's Community Preservation Act. The four remaining proposals will be presented at a Public Hearing to be held on March 1, 2023 prior to a vote by the Community Preservation Committee on whether or not to advance those proposals to Spring Town Meeting.

The proposals are:

- 1) From the Kestrel Trust, a request for \$81,000 from Community Preservation funds to purchase 91 acres of land between Depot Road and Long Hill Road for preservation and recreation. The total purchase price for the land is \$162,00, and the Kestrel Trust would contribute 50% of the total cost of the purchase of the land.
- 2) From the Leverett Historical Society, a request for \$74,400 Community Preservation funds to hire a design firm to plan for the rehabilitation of the interior and exterior of the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse. The total cost of the proposal is \$85,400, and the Leverett Historical Society would contribute \$11,000.
- 3) From the Friends of the North Leverett Sawmill, a 2-part application to develop a Heritage Park and Nature Trail on 2 adjoining parcels of land, one owned by FONLS, and the other by the town.
 - a) The first part of the application is a request for \$82,082 from Community Preservation funds for development of a Heritage Park and Nature Trails on FONLS-owned land. The proposal includes design and construction of an ADA-compliant

boardwalk and pavilion, design, construction and installation of interpretive signs, trail construction and tree work. The total cost of the project is projected to be \$93,742, of which the FONLS would contribute \$11,660 through volunteer labor and in-kind donations.

- b) The second part of the application is a request for \$8,508 from Community Preservation funds to develop trails on the town-owned parcel of land adjacent to the FONLS-owned land referenced "in part." The total cost of the project is projected to be \$9,508, of which the FONLS would contribute \$1,000 through volunteer labor and in-kind donations.
- 4) From the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District, a request for \$101,400 from Community Preservation funds to help pay for renovation of the track and fields at the Amherst Regional High School. The total cost of the Track and Field project is projected to be approximately \$4.7 million. The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District proposes to raise the bulk of that figure through local taxation, other towns' CPA funds and donations.

The public hearing on these proposals will be held at Town Hall, (with a zoom link) on Wednesday, March 1, 2023 at 7:00 pm. At that hearing, the proponents of the proposals will present their projects and be available to answer questions. The CPC will also take public comments on the draft CPC Annual Plan. 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 1 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 (\$105,714) 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 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.

PLANNING BOARD UPDATE

The Planning Board is in the middle of the largest project we have done in many years, maybe ever. It is a **COMPREHENSIVE PLAN** which will map the town's development path forward for the next 10-20 years. Phase 1 of the plan was finished in 2022. This effort, done by many volunteers, collected all that we know about our town – schools, finances, town government, history, etc. It is the launching pad into Phase 2 which begins this year and will complete the effort. This is the guts of the plan. It will examine almost all aspects of our small universe – schools, conservation, regionalization, housing, zoning, historical preservation. The input for this is . . . you. The goal of the finished plan is to provide a blueprint for the future: what do we want Leverett to be? What are our priorities?

This effort will be led by a Steering Committee of 8-12 residents. They will invite people to small group discussions, each group focused on a particular topic. The endgame will be the product of town voices representing different interest groups. When these groups come together in the Spring you will have the opportunity to be part of this effort. This is a unique chance to have a real voice in the future of our town. If interested, please email either Tim Shores (timothyshores@gmail.com) or Tom Ewing (ewing.tom@gmail.com) with an expression of interest. You will be notified when the groups start to form.

Steve Freedman for the Planning Board

Library News

Winter has finally descended and for those who love snowshoeing, skiing, and sledding -- your moment is here! For the rest of us, there are crafts, tea, music and a good book. Whether you fall into one camp or both, we have something for you at the library

Outside:

Have you walked the trail behind the library recently? The Community Network for Children puts up a new **StoryWalk** every week. Take a walk through the snowy woods and read a story along the way.

Speaking of which, the **Bill Rivers Memorial Bench** at the trailhead has been restored. You can take a seat to change into your snowshoes or cross-country skis or take a breather after trudging through the woods.

Not feeling well or in a hurry? We offer **curbside pickup**. If you are housebound, we'll also be happy to deliver items to your home. Just give us a call at 413-548-9220 or email us at: leverettlibrary@gmail.com

Inside:

Winter is the perfect time to try a new craft. We have **craft kits** designed for adults and teens. Learn to emboss, embroider, bind a book, or make jewelry. Our kits have everything you need to get started. Come and browse through all our offerings!

Blind Date with a Book is back. Stop in during the first couple weeks of February and we'll send you home with a surprise book to try and a sweet treat. We love our patrons! Thanks to the Friends of the Leverett Library for sponsoring this program.

Are you a gardener or want to be? Winter is the time to dream of the warm days ahead, your fingers in the dirt, and delicious produce from your garden. We have magazines and books to fuel your planning. Also, **join us on Saturday, February 25th at 1:00 p.m. to meet author, John Forti**. John is an author and garden historian who celebrates sustainable cottage industries and vibrant agricultural economies. Thanks to the Leverett Cultural Council for supporting this great program.

Are you a grandparent or parent looking to get out of the house with your little one? We have an informal **playgroup every Wednesday morning at 10:30 a.m.** Our growing community plays together and we sing songs and read books. Please join us!

For the month of February, the Massachusetts Library Association invites you to tell your legislators how much your public library means to you. We'll have a **Library Lovers Valentine's Making Party on Thursday, February 9th at 3 p.m.** Or you can drop off cards all month and we'll forward them to our lawmakers. Thanks for your joyful advocacy.

Good news! After 20 years of heating with a geothermal and electric heating system, the town has received a Green Communities grant to replace the aging system with modern air source heat pumps. As the geothermal heating system begins to age out, we are thankful to relieve the burden of continued high maintenance and replacement costs on you, the taxpayers. Thanks to Margie for a well-written grant. Let us know how we can help you!

Cozy wishes, Hannah Paessel -- Library Director

Leverett Energy Committee

Hello Everyone,

Which is worse? Paying the electric bill this winter or reflecting on the record-breaking profits coming into fossil fuel coffers? When our 3-year contract with Colonial Power ended in January, participating residents--the majority of us--lost the benefit of electricity generated by 100% wind energy at rates lower than those of Eversource. The new contract was made for a year with the hope that more favorable rates would become available. In the meantime, some residents have opted out of the town aggregation with Colonial seeking claims of lower rates being offered elsewhere. The committee would like to hear from those residents about their new arrangements. We have no power to change global influences on these matters but we are staying alert to changes that may benefit us later. We do have plenty of empathy and one big suggestion:

what a good time to take even more seriously our pledges to use less electricity!

Thanks to those who gave time and thought to our announcement about considering establishing a wood bank in Leverett. The idea was first proposed as a way to help wood-burning residents on lower incomes get wood to stay warm. Functioning wood banks are alive and well in several Franklin County towns. We are aware of the controversies involving right use of forests, health effects of wood smoke, and the enduring appeal of benign dis-organization to solve at least some problems. We have access to local people with perspective, skill, and expertise and will soon be making way for a general town conversation on wood bank issues.

Just so you know: if you are shocked, dismayed, and/or indignant about current fossil fuel company profit-making, you have distinguished company. In a recent New Yorker piece, Bill McKibben cited the "special message for fossil-fuel producers and their enablers scrambling to expand production and taking in monster profits"* that Secretary-General Antonio Guterres included in his recent annual address to the United Nations: "If you cannot set a credible course for net-zero, with 2025 and 2030 targets covering all your operations, you should not be in business."

Portia Williams Weiskel for the Energy Committee

pweiskel@gmail.com

413-548-9737

*Online version of the New Yorker, Feb. 6, 2023

Community News:

The 250th Committee is looking for someone to volunteer to help us with social media so we can spread the word about planning and celebrating Leverett's Anniversary next year. Please email Maureen if you can help. celebrateleverett250@gmail.com

LES Grants to Draw on Money Raised During ABC Campaign

Thanks to the generosity of local businesses, community organizations, and – most of all – the people of Leverett, the Leverett Education Foundation raised over \$17,500 during last fall's ABC Campaign to help support outdoor learning and nature-based education at Leverett Elementary School.

Now, principal Annie Foley-Ruiz and LES teachers are preparing applications for grants that will be awarded this spring. During a meeting with LES teachers and staff late last year, a number of ideas were discussed, and we are excited to be able to once again partner with LES teachers and staff as they continue to provide the extraordinary educational experiences for Leverett's children that have become a hallmark of our school.

Leverett Education Foundation

APPLICATION: 2023 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.