

NOTICE
Town of Lowell
SELECT BOARD MEETING
THE LOWELL SELECTBOARD WILL MEET ON
Tuesday, January 13, 2026, AT 5:30 P.M.
AT THE TOWN OFFICE BUILDING.

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AGENDA:

- Addition & Deletion
- Final Budget Discussion
- Sign Orders
- Review Minutes of December 30, 2025
- Road Commissioner Updates
- Other Business
- Public Comment on any agenda line if hand is raised

Selectboard:
Jennifer Blay-Chm
Darren Pion
Wayne Richardson

MINUTES
SELECTBOARD MEETING
TOWN OF LOWELL
Meeting held on January 13, 2026

Board members present:

Jennifer Blay-Chm, Darren Pion, Wayne Richardson
Christy M. Pion -Town Clerk/Selectboard Clerk/Ass't Treasurer
Marie A. Busch-Town Treasurer/Ass't Clerk
Levi Booska-Road Commissioner (In Training)

***Note: All meetings are recorded on a handheld recording device. ***

Meeting called to order at 5:43 p.m.

Guest:

- Dottie Spoerl (Resident/Auditor)
- Courtney Richardson (Resident/Baseball)
- Jason Richardson (Resident/Baseball)

Additions and Deletions: See additions and deletions below

Baseball Funding Request:

- The meeting began with a request for \$3,000 in funding for the local baseball program. The funds are used for registration fees, field maintenance, gear, and trophies. The program has seen increased participation, with over 15 kids from one school alone. The request was approved.

Certificate of Highway Mileage:

- The Board approved and signed the certificate of highway mileage. There were no changes.

Security Key Lock Box:

- A discussion took place regarding a security key lock box for the school. The purpose is for emergency access to the building. There was a brief discussion about the security implications of the code they chose and the need for a more robust system like keyless entry or badging in the future.

Contracts for Services:

- Three contracts were presented for signature: Fire Department, Lowell Bible Church, and St. Ignatius Catholic Church.

Solar Project Update:

- A resident inquired about the solar project, specifically regarding updates on the town website and whether more financial/legal advice had been obtained. Jenn Blay responded by email to this individual.

Final Budget Discussion:

- Road Budget and Equipment: A significant portion of the meeting was dedicated to the road budget and equipment.
- Budget Allocation: Discussions focused on the \$300,000 requested for roads, with a projected \$80,000 from the state. Concerns were raised about potential shortfalls if state aid isn't received.
- Funding for Equipment: A proposal was made to allocate \$175,000 from the town's surplus to create dedicated funds for paving, grader replacement, loader replacement, and truck replacement. This would prevent future borrowing and interest payments. The method of allocating this money (through the budget or a separate article) was debated.
- Budget Adjustments and Allocations: Various budget line items were reviewed and adjusted, including:
- Payroll: A line item for "retro" pay was clarified.
- Asphalt and Fuel: Increases were proposed for asphalt and fuel costs.
- Salt Usage: A change in strategy for salt usage was discussed, with less salt on dirt roads and more on blacktop to conserve resources.
- Tire Disposal: The cost and process for disposing of old tires were discussed.
- Recycling and Hazardous Waste: Fluctuations in recycling and hazardous waste costs were noted, with explanations for the variations.
- Legal Fees and Funds: A discussion ensued about establishing a legal fund and how to properly budget for legal services.
- Property and Casualty Insurance: A reduction in the insurance budget was noted.
- Town Garage Condition: The condition of the town garage, including roof leaks, was highlighted as a future concern.
- Storage for Baseball: A request was made to create dedicated storage space for baseball equipment within the town building.
- Professional Audit Fees: Clarification was sought on how audit fees were being accounted for and moved between budgets.
- Appraisal Fund: The movement of funds to the appraisal fund was discussed.
- Cemetery Funding: The funding for the Lowell Cemetery was clarified, noting it's no longer on the admin budget.
- Equipment Maintenance vs. Replacement: The distinction between maintenance and replacement funds for equipment was clarified, with a proposal to consolidate into an "equipment fund."

Sign Orders:

- Financials for the Treasurer were approved and signed by the Board.

Minutes from December 30, 2025:

- Minutes from December 30, 2025, were approved and signed by the Board unanimously.

Road Commissioner Updates (Darren Pion & Levi Booska):

- Equipment Issues: The 10-wheeler with DPF exhaust issues and a loader with exhaust system problems. Tire and stud issues on the 10-wheeler were all fixed and discussed at the meeting.
- Equipment Replacement: There was a strong emphasis on the need to upgrade aging equipment, particularly the loader, which is nearing the end of its useful life. The cost of new equipment and how not to increase taxes was discussed.
- Stevenson Road Debris Dumping: A resident reported a significant amount of construction debris dumped on Stevenson Road. The town is arranging for cleanup, and the cost and responsibility for disposal were discussed.

Other Business:

- No other business was discussed.

**** Overall Conclusions: ****

- * **Baseball Funding Approved:** The baseball program received its requested \$3,000.
- * **Security Measures:** The lock box needs future discussion.
- * **Contracts Signed:** The contracts for the Fire Department, Lowell Bible Church, and St. Ignatius Catholic Church

were signed By the Board Chair.

- * **Solar Project:** The solar project still in discussion with the PUC.
- * **Road Equipment and Funding are Critical:** The meeting highlighted issues with road maintenance equipment and the need for a proactive approach to funding replacements. The proposal to allocate \$175,000 for equipment and paving funds was a major focus, aiming to prevent future financial strain and tax increases.
- * **Budgeting Process is Complex:** The discussions revealed the intricate nature of budget preparation, with numerous line items, fund transfers, and the need for careful allocation of resources.
- * **Communication and Transparency are Key:** Some residents expressed concerns about communication regarding town projects and budget decisions, and the importance of clear updates on the town website and in meeting minutes.
- * **Need for Proactive Planning:** The discussions around equipment replacement and the legal fund underscored the importance of long-term financial planning to avoid reactive measures and potential crises.
- * **The Town Garage Needs Attention:** The town garage was identified as a future issue that will require addressing the leaky roof.
- * **The Budget Process is Ongoing:** The meeting concluded with the understanding that budget finalization is a detailed and iterative process, with further discussions and potential adjustments likely.

Board Warrants:

➤ General Order # 1	\$	11,495.06
➤ Payroll Order # 1	\$	<u>8,128.31</u>

Signed for the Treasurer to draw checks totaling -	\$	19,623.37
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* **Note:** Full discussion details of the minutes are available in the Clerk’s office. *

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by: Christy M. Pion

Next meeting date: January 26, 2026, at the Town Office Building.

Jennifer Blay – Chair

Christy M. Pion–Selectboard Clerk

Darren Pion-Select Person

Wayne Richardson-Select Person