

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: December 22, 2025, 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman
Samuel Haupt, Selectman
Edward Munch, Selectman
Terry Walker, Recording Secretary
Justin Russell, Highway Superintendent
Bruce Cullett, Police Chief

Public Attendees: Colette Davis, Wyatt Davis, Spencer Brooks, Liam Davis, Wesley Davis, Violette Davis, Timothy Davis, Heather Brooks

Item 1: Call to order: 6:00 P.M.

Item 2: Selectboard Roll Call: Chairman Leach present, Selectman Haupt present, Selectman Munch present

Item 3: State Recording status: TA Walker recording, Selectman Leach recording for personal reasons under exemption E

Item 4: Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: Led by Selectman Leach

Item 5: Review and Approve BOS meeting Minutes for 12/8/2025: Selectman Leach motion to approve minutes pending changes, Selectman Munch second, 3-0

Item 6: Update from Departments:

Highway Department:

- Superintendent Russell mentioned that he received the bridge inspection report for East Windsor Bridge. He and TA Walker will be writing a grant for engineering which is phase 1. The grant is due January 9, 2026. Justin mentioned that he and TA Walker are also writing a grant for a new highway truck to replace the 2008 International. This grant is also due on January 9, 2026.
- Superintendent Russell stated that it is urgent that the Army Truck be removed from the fire house. He mentioned that he will get a tire if that's what holding up removing the Army Truck. The Army Truck is hindering snow removal from the area.
- Justin asked who unplugged the heater in the bathroom at the highway garage. Selectman Leach stated that he had unplugged the heater. Justin wants the heater left plugged in, so the bathroom won't freeze up.

Police Chief:

Chief Cullett mentioned that there are items that should be purchased prior to the UTV being placed in service. The UTV needs brush guards and skid plates. Once Chief Cullett gets clarification stating what is acceptable with the EMPG grant he may apply for UTV parts.

Maintenance:

Ed Munch mentioned that he is in the process of pulling heaters off wall and power washing then finally painting the heaters. He is also in the process of removing the basketball hoops.

Treasurer:

Treasurer Wendling mentioned that she needs to renew the State Aid Anticipation Note (SAAN) for the MassWorks Grant. She does not need to go out to bid. Treasurer Wendling wants the BOS and Town Clerk to be aware that the note needs to be signed on January 5, 2026, at the BOS meeting.

Sam Haupt:

Selectman Haupt mentioned that the MVP grant requires forming a committee to acquire funds. This should be placed on the website to reach out to interested members to be involved on the committee.

Item 7: Discussion on plowing Private roads policy: The BOS briefly reviewed MGL 40 section 6C and 6D that Superintendent Russell distributed last week. It appears that Chapter 40 was never accepted by the town. Selectman Munch felt that this should be sent to town council for advisement. Bruce Cullett mentioned that the town had received a legal opinion on snow removal from private ways 6-8 years ago. Selectman Munch mentioned that the Town Clerk Leach should have a copy of KP law's legal opinion. Selectman Leach asked TA Walker to search in the Selectmen's files for the legal opinion. Selectman Haupt did a little research and mentioned that no municipality in Massachusetts plows private roads. This was placed on hold until TA Walker brings the legal opinion before the board.

Item 8: Discussion and possible vote on Peru Scout Troop to empty the Bottle and Can Shed: Colette Davis, Scout Leader, mentioned that the scouts would appreciate bottles and cans that are at the transfer station. The Scouts would use the money to help with summer camp, tents and trips. The money would be placed in an official Scout bank account. Selectman Munch wanted to be certain the scouts would use masks and rubber gloves to stay free of germs when picking up the bottles and cans. The BOS mentioned that the scouts could begin immediately picking up the bottles and cans. Wyatt Davis mentioned that he manages meetings and will be setting up campouts etc. Selectman Haupt mentioned that the troop's idea about shoveling driveways is a great suggestion. Selectman Leach motion to allow the local scouts Troop 143 permission to remove all the bottles and cans at the transfer station, Selectman Haupt second, 3-0.

Item 9: Discussion and possible vote on Website options: Selectman Munch stated that it is hard to believe the Town of Windsor has a free website. Superintendent Russell mentioned that the Town of Windsor's website charges file storage.

Selectman Leach stated that The Town of Windsor's website is free and Town Clerk Kim Leach will manage Peru's website for free. Selectman Haupt wants to know with the free website who will manage the technical aspects. Chief Cullett mentioned that the current website has been professionally managed by CivicPlus, including security protocols. Chief Cullett feels that it would be tough for someone in house to manage the website and it makes more sense to use a professional. Selectman Haupt prefers a third party and asked TA Walker to invite Selectmen Justin Kaczowski from Savoy to discuss the Town of Savoy's website.

Item 10: Discussion and possible vote on a letter to State Legislators and Proposition 21/2 and Local Aid: Placed on hold.

Item 11: Discussion and possible vote on Primary Assessor position: Selectman Leach mentioned that we now only have one candidate for the position. Selectman Munch mentioned that he is strongly in favor of Jonathon and someone with more qualifications would ending up seeking employment in another town. Selectman Leach wants to hear what Selectman Haupt has to say, and Selectman Leach is in favor of hiring Jonathon with a 90-day probation period. Selectman Haupt contacted Jonathon's references:

- He reached out to Laura the Chief Assessor in Pittsfield where Jonathon was an intern. She said he completed the 101 course and was cordial to staff and residents.
- Sam reached out to the City of Greenfield. Apparently, no one could give a reference since none of the employees had worked with Jonathon. The Chief Assessor couldn't speak on his interaction but knew a prior assessor from Greenfield that now worked in another town had personal conflicts with Jonathon. Debbie Wagner from Division of Local Services did not get back to Sam. The BOS decided to place on the next agenda and have another discussion with Jonathon regarding the hiring process and probation period. Selectman Munch reiterated about the good job Jonathon had done with getting the tax rate set. Selectman Haupt mentioned that Susan Koziara had set everything up to set the tax rate and Jonathon didn't "save the town". This was placed on hold.

Item 12: Review and Approve accounts payable, Treasury Warrant, payroll Warrant: V13-2026

Item 13: Public Input: Justin Russell asked if Jonathon Mejias is currently working more hours than anticipated. The BOS stated that Jonathon is staying within the budget.

Item 14: Adjourn: Selectman Leach made a motion to adjourn the 12/22/2025 BOS Meeting, Selectman Haupt second, Vote 3-0. The 12/22/2025 BOS Meeting adjourned at 7:21 P.M.

Articles used:

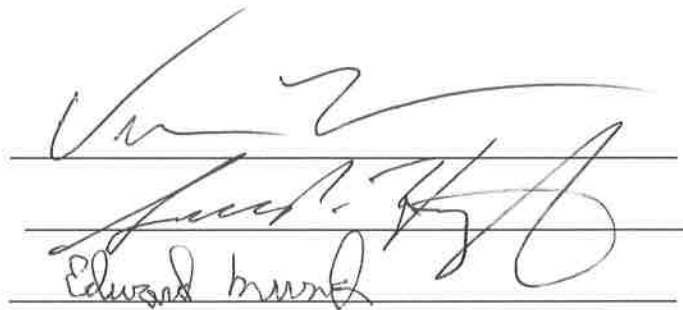
- 12/8/2025 minutes
- V13-2026
- Draft letter for Legislators

Terry Walker
Recording Secretary

Verne Leach, Chairman

Samuel Haupt, Selectman

Edward Munch, Selectman



Date Approved: 1/5/26

Received 1-5-2025
Kim Leach, Town Clerk

January 5, 2026

The Honorable Paul W. Mark

Massachusetts State Senate
State House Room
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable John Barrett

Massachusetts House of Representative
State House Room
Boston, MA 02133

Dear Honorable Mark and Honorable Barrett:

The Selectboard of Peru writes to bring up the topic of local aid and express our collective and unified concern about how the amount allocated by the Legislature for this item has fallen as each year passes. This topic has become critical for the Town of Peru- and for almost every other city and town in the Commonwealth – as Peru is presently struggling to financially balance our municipal budget. Despite our best efforts to craft a responsible budget which addresses the basic needs of our community, the historical cap on property tax collections as a result of Proposition 2 ½ have left us with very few options to address this revenue shortfall. Local aid is such a revenue source and an increase in these receipts would go a long way to help close our budget deficit.

The mechanisms which cities and towns are permitted to utilize in raising revenues to fund their respective budgets are well known and we do not need to go into that topic in detail except that one aspect must be highlighted as we have seen first-hand how it wreaks havoc on the ability of a municipality to balance its budget. That aspect is that the foundational mechanisms of proposition 2 ½ (which were developed some 40 years ago) are such that the revenues cities and towns are statutorily able to generate do not allow these same cities and towns to keep pace with inflation. This dynamic is a self-perpetuating cycle of revenue constraint which is no longer sustainable. For example, although the reported inflation rate of 1.2% in 2020 was relatively low, 2021 and 2022 we saw a sharp increase of 4.1% and 8% respectively. The years of 2023 and 2024 did show a downward trend (4.1% and 2.9%) but they nonetheless still exceeded the Proposition 2 ½ ceiling on revenue generation through an increase in property tax levy. Plainly put, our expenses are increasing based upon inflationary pressures, yet we are not able to raise revenue proportionally to level fund our expenses. This is unsustainable and we ask for your help in securing a material increase in the amount of local aid.

A solution is to urge your colleagues to allocate a portion of the interest earned from the state's Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund) directly to municipalities, which as the unofficial title of this fund indicates, is designed to help close budget shortfall when it is fiscally raining. According to the Office of the Comptroller, the balance of this fund at the close of Fiscal year 2025 increased by \$111,350,000.00 to **\$8,634 billion** and interest generated during this same fiscal year totaled \$405,930,000.00. See <https://cthru.data.socrata.com/stories/s/eqrd-tdvi>.

We (unfortunately) report that it is fiscally raining in Peru and the interest earned on this Rainy Day Fund would significantly help close our deficit. As cities and towns struggle to meet basic obligations and deliver critical services, even a modest share of this Rainy Day Fund earnings could provide meaningful relief and a measure of financial stability. This would represent a responsible reinvestment of state-held wealth into the communities that generate the fund's balance. These earnings represent a potential source of relief that could have a meaningful impact at the local level without compromising the integrity of the stabilization fund itself.

Massachusetts communities take great pride in managing their budgets prudently. However, without increased support, they will continue to face mounting deficits and difficult choices that undermine the quality of life for residents.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We appreciate your commitment to serving the people of Massachusetts and respectfully ask for your leadership in addressing the long-term fiscal health of our local governments. We would be glad to speak further or help coordinate input from other local leaders who are dealing with these issues also.

Sincerely,

Chairman Verne Leach _____

Samuel Haupt _____

Edward Munch _____

Selectboard Members

Town of Peru