

TOWN HALL 3 EAST MAIN ROAD PERU, MA 01235

SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES: January 5, 2026 @ 6:00 P.M.

Town Hall Meeting Room

Verne Leach, Chair Selectman
Samuel Haupt, Selectman
Edward Munch, Selectman
Terry Walker, Recording Secretary
Bruce Cullett, Police Chief
Jonathon Mejias, Assessor
Caryn Wendling, Treasurer
Kim Leach, Town Clerk

Public Attendees:

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 12/22/2025: Selectman Leach motion to approve minutes pending changes, Selectman Munch second, 3-0

Item 6: Update from Departments:

Samuel Haupt

Sam mentioned that Berkshire County Regional Planning transportation staff are considering Middlefield Road as a scenic byway.

Maintenance:

Ed Munch is removing the basketball hoops and backboard since the meeting room will now be offices. He will also be getting an estimate on wiring part of the meeting room, so the new offices have electrical outlets.

Town Administrator:

- TA Walker contacted Superintendent Henault from CBRSD and he will be attending the BOS meeting on January 12th.
- TA Walker is working on two grants with Highway Superintendent Russell which both need to be submitted on January 9th.
 1. One grant for \$250,000 for a plow truck. They are waiting for the truck quote otherwise the grant is ready to submit.
 2. Another grant for \$150,000 for the design and permitting of the bridge on East Windsor Road over Trout Brook.

Town Clerk:

Town Clerk Leach mentioned that the outdoor sign is not working and she has not received her battery backup from IT. The BOS asked Town Clerk to call IT and get back to them.

Item 7: Discussion and possible vote on Website options: Justin Kaczowski, Selectman in the Town of Savoy, will be at next week's meeting to discuss the Town of Savoy's website. Placed on hold.

Item 8: Discussion on plowing private roads: Selectman Leach felt that according to the opinion from KP Law, the town should not be plowing private roads. Selectman Munch mentioned that MGL states that the town cannot plow private roads but for now leave as is. Selectman Haupt mentioned that we need to plow all the private roads or none of them and the private roads must be maintained by the homeowners. Selectman Haupt mentioned that according to MGL the BOS cannot place on the election ballot. This needs to be done by a citizen's petition. Selectman Haupt motion to maintain status quo, Selectman Munch second, 3-0.

Item 9: Discussion and possible vote on State Aid Anticipation Note for MassWorks Grant: Treasurer Wendling prepared a new SAAN #350 to pay the prior MassWorks note. Once the work is completed for the MassWorks grant the state will reimburse the town to pay off notes. The SAAN is through Easthampton Savings bank, and the rate of interest is 3.5%. Selectman Leach motion to sign SAAN, Selectman Munch second, 3-0. The Board of Selectmen and Town Clerk signed the SAAN to renew the note until August 28, 2026.

Item 10: Discussion and possible vote on Primary Assessor position with Jonathon Mejias: Selectman Haupt recommended that Jonathon needs to work very closely with Patriots Properties and communicate with everyone that can assist in the transition as Primary Assessor. Selectman Munch reiterated that Jonathon must communicate with everyone that can assist with the transition and the Revaluation may be a challenge. Selectman Munch felt that Jonathon's probationary period should begin when he took over the position. Jonathon was instructed to ask permission from the BOS when utilizing town council. Selectman Leach motion to appoint Jonathon Mejias as Primary Assessor, Selectman Munch second, 3-0.

Jonathon mentioned that he received an invoice for \$2,450 from CAI which is tax map updates dated 10/15/2025. Jonathon brought the invoice to TA Walker to be paid. The appropriation for Tax Map Maintenance for FY26 was \$1,600.00 which TA Walker paid on tonight's warrant. TA Walker asked Jonathon to contact CAI and request the budget request for FY26. The unpaid balance is \$850.00.

The BOS mentioned that they need to place an ad for a part-time assessor.

Item 11: Discussion and possible vote on a letter to State Legislators about Proposition 2 ½ and Local Aid: The BOS agreed to make a few changes and place on the next agenda. Placed on hold.

Item 12: Review and Approve accounts payable, Treasury Warrant, payroll Warrant: V14-2026

Item 13: Public Input:

Jesse Pelkey asked a question about plowing private driveways. Jesse mentioned that about 8 years ago when Superintendent Russell was hired, he stopped plowing snow at the church. Jesse wondered why Justin is plowing the library parking lot and not the church parking lot. Selectman Munch mentioned that the town will continue plowing until spring. Some discussion on placing this on the election ballot by petition

Item 14: Adjourn: Selectman Leach made a motion to adjourn the 1/5/2026 BOS Meeting, Selectman Haupt second, Vote 3-0. The 1/5/2026 BOS Meeting adjourned at 6:59 P.M.

Articles used:

12/22/2025 minutes

V14-2026

KP Law opinion on plowing private roads-dated July 2018

State Aid Anticipation Note

Letter to State Legislatures- prop 2 1/2

Terry Walker

Recording Secretary

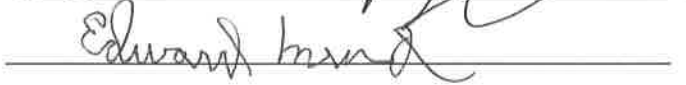
Verne Leach, Chairman



Samuel Haupt, Selectman



Edward Munch, Selectman



Date Approved: 1/12/26

Received 1-16-2026
Kim Leach, Town

Town Administrator

From: Jonathan D. Eichman <JEichman@k-plaw.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 08, 2018 11:49 AM
To: Town Administrator
Cc: Joel Bard
Subject: RE: PERU - FW: Draft letter for maintenance of private roads
Attachments: Letter residents on private roads 2018.docx

Hi Caleb:

Joel asked me to assist you with this. The form of the proposed letter looks fine, in my opinion. If lawfully authorized, the expenditure of Town funds and the use of Town equipment to plow private ways is fully discretionary with the Selectmen, and they are free to establish equitable conditions upon which they are willing to authorize that service. Please note, however, that acceptance of the provisions of G.L. c.40, s.6C, pursuant to the procedure set forth in G.L. c.40, s.6D, is required before Town funds can be appropriated and used to plow private ways. In short, that procedure requires the submission of a petition to the Selectmen from 200 or 20% of the total registered voters in the Town requesting that acceptance of G.L. c.40, s.6C be placed on the ballot at the next Town election in the form set forth in Section 6D, followed by a positive vote of the majority of the voters on the question. I realize that towns do plow private ways without accepting the statute, but I wanted you to be aware of the legal underpinnings before the letter issued. If the Town has already accepted that statute the Selectmen can proceed as set forth in the letter.

Please contact me with further questions.

Jonathan D. Eichman, Esq.
KP | LAW
101 Arch Street, 12th Floor
Boston, MA 02110
O: (617) 654 1727
F: (617) 654 1735
jeichman@k-plaw.com
www.k-plaw.com

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From: Town Administrator [<mailto:townadmin@townofperuma.com>]
Sent: Monday, July 30, 2018 4:56 PM
To: Joel Bard <JBard@k-plaw.com>
Subject: Draft letter for maintenance of private roads

Hi Joel,
The BOS are requesting that you review this draft letter to residents/property owners on private roads. They are concerned about the legal ramifications of sending such a letter, and whether there is a standard letter for situations like this? There are several private roads that do their own plowing, but most private roads are plowed by the Town of Peru highway department during the winter, but now we have several private roads that are not maintained adequately, and

Town of Peru

Peru, Massachusetts 01235



July 23, 2018

Dear Resident/Property Owner,

The Board of Selectmen is writing this letter to you as either a resident who lives on a private road, or a property owner who owns a house or owns property on a private road.

In order for the Highway Department to plow your road in the winter, all of the residents who live on a private road or property owners on a private road need to maintain the road in a suitable condition so as to not damage a Town of Peru highway truck plow or any vehicle equipment. Private roads also need an adequate turnaround for the larger plow truck to maneuver.

If you have any questions, please contact either the Town Administrator or a member of the Select Board

Sincerely,

Town of Peru Select board

Town of
Peru, Massachusetts



Office of the Treasurer/Tax Collector, 3 East Main Rd, Suite 101, Peru, Massachusetts 01235 •Tel: (413) 655-0072, •Fax: (413) 655-2759

No. 350

\$ 322,543.31

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Town of PERU

Date of Issue JANUARY 8, 2026

For Value Received, the inhabitants of the Town of PERU by
their Treasurer, hereto duly authorized by vote of said Town passed on _____

or by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 44, Section 60A, or both,

promise to pay to bank ESB or order

at bank ESB

the sum of Three hundred twenty two thousand five hundred forty three and 31/100 Dollars

on AUGUST 28, 2026 with interest at an annual rate of 3.50% payable AT MATURITY

Countersigned and Approved

[Signature]
[Signature]
Edward Munch

Majority of
the Board of
Selectmen

Signed

[Signature]
Treasurer
Town of PERU

Town Seal
To be affixed here

I certify that this note was countersigned and approved by the Selectmen in my presence.

JANUARY 5, 2026
Date

[Signature]
Town Clerk

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Revenue, Boston

I hereby certify that this note appears to have been duly issued in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 44 of the Massachusetts General Laws per the attached Director of Accounts Approval Letter.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Certificate of Town Clerk

Note Number(s): 350

Town Treasurer's Record

Town of PERU

1. Date of Town Meeting Authorizing Loan CHAPTER 44 SECTION 6A

2. Purpose of Loan ROAD
Note: Attach a Municipal Purpose Loan Form for lines 1 to 7 for all multiple purpose loans.

3. Total Amount of Loan Authorized \$ 322,543.31

4. Amount of Previous New Issues of this Loan \$ 0.00

5. Paydowns on this Issue (if required) \$ 0.00

6. Amount of this Issue \$ 322,543.31

7. Balance of this Loan Unissued \$ 0.00
Note: Amount Authorized minus Previous New Issues minus This Issue (New Money) equals Unissued Balance.

8. Issue Date JANUARY 8, 2026 Date Due AUGUST 28, 2026

9. Payable to bank ESB

10. Payable at bank ESB

11. Rate of Interest 3.50 % Payable AT MATURITY
(Annually, semi-annually or at maturity)

12. Signed by Lang E. Weir, Town Treasurer

TO THE DIRECTOR OF ACCOUNTS: THIS CONSTITUTES OUR AUTHORIZATION TO DELIVER THE NOTE(S), WHEN CERTIFIED, TO THE PURCHASER(S) SPECIFIED ON LINE 9 ABOVE.

COUNTERSIGNED AND APPROVED BY:

[Signature]
[Signature]
Edward Musiel

Selectmen
and a
majority
thereof

In the presence of: Kim A. Leach, Town Clerk  (complete right side)

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Certificate of Town Clerk

Only one Certificate is needed to cover all notes issued on the same date for the same purpose. The Town Clerk will furnish below an exact copy of the vote authorizing the loan, as appearing in the Clerk's records, showing how the vote was passed including a copy of the article in the warrant upon which the vote was based. The completed certificate is to be signed by the Clerk and given to the Treasurer, who must transmit the same, with the note or notes, to the Director of Accounts, Department of Revenue, Boston. General Laws Chapter 44, Sections 23-27.

Copy of Vote Authorizing Loan

(Attach a certified copy of the vote and warrant article for each authorization included in this borrowing.)

CHAPTER 44, SECTION 4



Seal

I CERTIFY that this is a true copy of the Town Treasurer's Record of the issue of notes and a true copy of the vote passed at a meeting of the voters of the Town of Pew, duly warned as required by law, which authorized borrowing as stated, as appears on the records of the town; that said vote is in full force and effect and has not been repealed or modified in any way by subsequent vote of the town. I FURTHER CERTIFY that the person whose signature appears on the note as treasurer of the Town of Pew was the duly authorized treasurer on the date when said signature was made; and that the persons whose signatures appear upon the note as those of a majority of the selectmen were duly qualified selectmen on the date when such signatures were made. I ALSO CERTIFY that the copy of the warrant article is a true copy of the same; that it was duly served and certified by the constable as required by the General Laws and by-laws or vote of the town or both.

Date JANUARY 5, 2026

Kenn A Leach

Town Clerk

(Revised: December 2003)

Town of Peru

Peru, Massachusetts 01235



January 12, 2026

The Honorable Paul W. Mark

Massachusetts State Senate
24 Beacon St., Rm. 504
Boston, MA 02133

The Honorable John Barrett, III

Massachusetts House of Representatives
24 Beacon St., Rm. 277
Boston, MA 02133

Gentlemen:

The Selectboard of Peru writes to raise 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 we continually struggle to 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 an important 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. 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, expenses are increasing based upon inflationary pressures, yet in some cases, municipalities are not able to raise revenue proportionally to level fund 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 reduce budget shortfalls. 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>.

As with all rural communities, we have a fiscally constrained budget and the interest earned on this Rainy-Day Fund would significantly help fund our needs. 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.

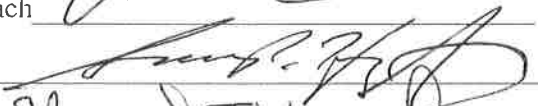
Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We appreciate your commitment to serving the people of Massachusetts and respectfully ask for your leadership in addressing the long-term fiscal health of our local governments. We would be glad to speak further or help coordinate input from other local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

Sincerely,

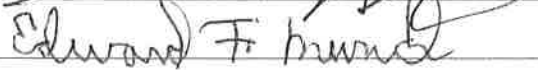
Chairman Verne Leach



Samuel P. Haupt



Edward Munch



Selectboard Members

Town of Peru