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Larry Kelley Papers

1985-2006

2 boxes (1 linear ft.)

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Owner of the Amherst Athletic Club and columnist for the *Amherst Bulletin* from 1991 to 2004, Larry Kelley is deeply involved with Amherst area relations and government. He ran for both Select Board and Finance Committee, and was instrumental in raising awareness about and banning the illegal sale of martial arts weapons in Massachusetts.

Included in the Kelley papers are over 100 newspaper clippings, either his editorials, letters to the editor, or guest columns, about issues ranging from the use of town safety services by Amherst College, his objection to the Civil Rights Review Commission's right to subpoena, his fight to fly commemorative flags in downtown Amherst both on the anniversary of September 11th and on the day Osama bin Laden is captured, to his objection over the Amherst-Pelham Regional High School's production of Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues*.

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Background on Larry Kelley

After immigrating from Ireland to Northampton, Massachusetts, the first generation of Kelleys moved across the Connecticut River in 1855 to settle in Amherst. Five generations and one hundred years later, Lawrence J. Kelley was born there. A local businessman, Kelley is one of three owners of the Amherst Athletic Club, and from 1991 to 2004, he was a columnist for the *Amherst Bulletin* and regular contributor to a number of blogs and discussion lists, offering conservative perspectives on issues affecting the typically liberal Pioneer Valley. He resigned from the *Bulletin* in 2004, however, after a dispute with the newspaper's editors over the content and direction of his columns. He currently writes a blog *Only in the Republic of Amherst* on local and national politics.

A long-time participant in civic affairs in Amherst, Kelley ran unsuccessfully for Select Board five times and for the Finance Committee once. He was instrumental in creating laws to stop the flow of illegal martial arts weapons into Massachusetts via the postal service. As a local activist, Larry Kelley has taken on a wide range of other issues, often running against the grain of local majority opinion, taking prominent stands ranging from his opposition to a local high school staging a production of the play *Vagina Monologues* to his advocacy for flying the American flag in Amherst. Kelley, his wife Donna, and their daughter, Kiri Li, currently live in Amherst.



Larry Kelley at Ground Zero, 2001

Scope of collection

Larry Kelley's papers span nearly two decades, beginning in 1985 with the start of his fight to pass legislation to stop the flow of illegal martial arts weapons into Massachusetts via mail. The collection includes numerous newspaper articles and the correspondence Kelley maintained with Senator Edward Kennedy and his office about the matter. Kelley renewed his efforts in 1994 after the legislation failed to pass in 1985.

The remainder of the collection deals chiefly with local matters in Amherst, such as Kelley's support of a change to a mayoral government for the town and his campaigns for both Select Board and Finance Committee in 1994. Both campaigns are documented by numerous newspaper clippings from the *Amherst Bulletin*, among them his own editorials, published letters, and guest columns. Also included are over 20 letters of recommendation for Kelley's appointment.

Over the years, Kelley has raised several issues concerning the Amherst Fire Department, such as Amherst College's use of Emergency Services during a fire on campus. Kelley responded to the College by sending a mock invoice charging them for the services. He also led an organization called "Eyes of Life" to raise money for the purchase of thermal cameras for the Fire Department.

Kelley also supported the proposed smoking ban for Amherst restaurants in 1998 and 1999. He kept close track of the issue as it progressed, again collecting numerous newspaper clippings, EPA reports on the effects of second hand smoke, memoranda from the District Attorney and Assistant District Attorney concerning the issue, and his own columns regarding the ban.

Among other clippings in the collection are the article in *Time* magazine focusing on the controversy surrounding the Amherst-Pelham Regional High School's 2004 production of Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*. Claiming the content was inappropriate for high school students, Kelley brought major media attention to the production. He appeared on NBC's *Today Show* and Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor* to protest the production. The collection also documents a similar controversy that emerged when the same high school decided five years earlier to cancel a production of *West Side Story*. A 17-year-old Puerto Rican student started a petition to cancel the production claiming it portrayed Puerto Ricans in a negative light. Kelley opposed her objection to allowing the play to be performed, and led a fight to convince the school committee to reconsider, and veto the petition and the girl's request. The production was nevertheless cancelled.

Kelley also worked strongly against Amherst's decision to buy a Y2K generator, arguing that the decision was economically irresponsible, not to mention unnecessary, and he conveyed these opinions via his column in the *Amherst Bulletin*. To support his position, he obtained information on the improbability of an electrical failure from the North American Electrical Reliability Council and Solidago Foundation.

Finally, Kelley's papers include material on the Amherst board's decision to limit the number of days the town would fly its

twenty-nine commemorative American flags throughout downtown. The decision was made on September 10th, 2001 to fly these flags only on designated holidays, which Kelley felt was insufficient. After the terrorist attack of September 11th, the board agreed unanimously that the flags should be raised, and they flew until November 26th. Once the flags were removed, Kelley selected one from among the 29 and brought it to Ground Zero the following week. On December 1st, Kelley, with the help of a New York City police officer, fought to raise the flag again, this time over the rubble at the site of the World Trade Center. The flag was then sent to Washington, where it was flown over the Capitol building, as well as to Boston, where it flew over the State Capitol, and now is in the hands of the Amherst Historical Society. The photograph that captures this moment has been autographed by Ted Kennedy, John W. Oliver, Jane Garvey, Jane Swift, and George W. Bush.

Inventory

Amherst Charter

1999-2004

Box 1: 1

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, email correspondence, final report of proposed Amherst Charter.

Amherst Charter

2005

Box 1: 2

Newspaper clippings, email correspondence.

Amherst College

1996

Box 1: 3

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, on Amherst College's use of emergency services during fire; mock invoice sent to Amherst College for services rendered by Amherst Fire Department; correspondence between Kelley and the Amherst College student newspaper.

Amherst Finance Committee Campaign

1994

Box 1: 4

Newspaper clippings on Kelley's run for Finance Committee appointment; 10 letters of recommendation for Kelley; advertisement for Kelley from the *Hampshire Gazette*; 3 Letters against Kelley's appointment to Finance Committee.

Amherst Select Board Campaign

1994

Box 1: 5

Newspaper clippings on Kelley's campaign for Select Board appointment; flyers from Kelley to voters urging his name for write-in; campaign finance report; letters from Kelley to Select Board; pledge list for his campaign; 8 letters of recommendation for Kelley.

Amherst Select Board Campaign

1994

Box 1: 6

Newspaper clippings on Kelley's campaign for Select Board appointment.

Civil Rights Review Commission

1998-1999

Box 1: 7

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorial, on demotion of the Civil Rights Review Commission; editorial by Shenandoah Titus, leader of C.R.R.C.; correspondence between Kelley and members of C.R.R.C.; Human Rights Department expense report; C.R.R.C. department bylaws.

September 11th, Ground Zero Flag

2001-2004

Box 1: 8

Two Certificates verifying Amherst Town flag was flown over State Capitol; correspondence between Kelley and Amherst Historical Society about the flag; photograph of Kelley and New York City Police Officer with flag at Ground Zero autographed by President George W. Bush, John Oliver, Jane Garvey, and Jane Swift.

Smoking Ban

1998-1999

Box 1: 9

Memos from District Attorney and Assistant District Attorney; Select Board memos about smoking ban decision; pamphlets for the progression of the smoking ban; letters to Kelley unsigned with no return address.

Smoking Ban

1998-1999

Box 1: 10

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, about Amherst Smoking Ban.

Smoking Ban

1994-1998

Box 1: 11

Notes and information from various associations including the EPA, American Heart & Lung Association, and Asthma & Allergy Foundation about effects of second hand tobacco smoke.

Thermal Camera, Eyes of Life Organization

1999-2000

Box 1: 12

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, about Amherst Fire Department's need for thermal cameras; Select Board agenda for January 10, 2000; Eyes of Life information including pledge list and notes from donors; brochures and informational packets on thermal cameras.

Town Charters, Mayoral Government

1996-2002

Box 1: 13

Newspaper clippings on change to mayoral government in Plymouth, Massachusetts; information on various towns making change to mayoral governments.

Vagina Monologues

2003-2004

Box 2: 1

Correspondence between Kelley and various opponents of the production; protest signs; copy of *The Graphic* from January 25, 2002.

Vagina Monologues

2003-2004

Box 2: 2

Newspaper and magazine clippings about Amherst-Pelham Regional High School's production of the play.

Weapons Ban

1985-1986

Box 2: 3

Newspaper clippings from various major publications about illegal mail-order weapons; correspondence between Kelley and Senators Edward Kennedy and Strom Thurmond, as well as Governor William Weld; Bill S-1363 to ban mail-order sales of illegal martial arts weapons.

Weapons Ban

1994

Box 2: 4

Newspaper clippings and reports about illegal mail-order weapons; correspondence between Kelley and Senator Kennedy and Attorney General Harshbarger.

West Side Story

1999

Box 2: 5

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, about the decision not to produce *West Side Story* at Amherst Regional High School; letter to editor of *Daily Hampshire Gazette* from *Christian Science Monitor*.

Y2K in Amherst

1999

Box 2: 6

Newspaper clippings, including Kelley's editorials, about the decision to buy a Y2K generator for the town of Amherst; status report and work plan by the United States Department of Energy for preparing electrical power systems; memos from Barry L. Del Castilho about generator; information on Y2K related electrical failure improbability from the North American Electrical Reliability Council; Y2K References and Resources handout from the Solidago Foundation.

Administrative information

Access

The collection is open for research.

Provenance

Acquired from Larry Kelley in 2006.

Processing Information

Collection was processed by Mary E. Fahey, 2007.

Language:

English

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Search terms

Subjects

Amherst (Mass.)

Kelley, Larry

Martial arts weapons--Massachusetts

Passive smoking

Patriotism

September 11 Terrorist Attacks, 2001

Weapons--Law and legislation

Contributors

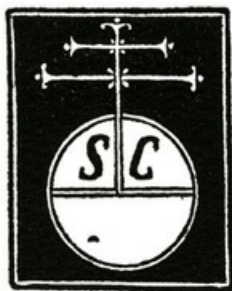
Kelley, Larry [main entry]

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Massachusetts (West)

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