

FY 2013

**TOWN OF ROWE**

**Minutes**

Rowe Board of Selectmen

July 17, 2012 at 6:00 P.M.

Rowe Town Hall

**Present:** Chair Noel Abbott, Vice-Chair Paul McLatchy III, Selectman Marilyn Wilson  
**Absent:** Town Coordinator Ellen Miller  
**Other Attendees:** Earl Carlow, Myra Carlow, Jim Davidson, Angela Foshay, Ron Gordon, Robin Reed, Elizabeth Vernes

**Call to Order:** Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M., a quorum being present. He announced to the audience of citizens that Town Coordinator Ellen Miller was on vacation, and therefore, the Selectboard was "on its own" for the evening, and asked for the audience to bear with them. Vice-Chair McLatchy will be taking the minutes for this meeting.

**Audience of Citizens:** Ms. Reed had informed the Selectmen at their last meeting that she had received a check from the town of \$10 for payment. 61% was given to Social Security and the other 39% was sent to Medicare, eliminating any actual payment. Her concern was not necessarily the money, only the oddity of having 100% of her check taken up by taxes. She asked if anything had been found out yet, and Chair Abbott replied that it had not. As the town is now on a new system, Chair Abbott encouraged Ms. Reed to wait until this next cycle of payroll was completed, and there could potentially be a corrected check sent to her.

**Green Communities Letter:** The letter required to receive funds from the Green Communities Program (attached) was read by the board. Chair Abbott made a motion to have the Selectboard approve and authorize him to sign the letter. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion, and the vote was 3-0 in favor.

**Mohawk Status:** The School Committee has signed the 2013 Three District Agreement. It is currently a one-year agreement, and Chair Abbott said that sometime in the fall the School Committee will begin discussion on a new agreement that is acceptable to all three districts. This will require legal counsel, and neither Russell Dupere nor Kopelman & Paige can be used, as they represent other schools and towns in the district, respectively.

**Joint Meeting:** Ms. Reed asked Chair Abbott if Bill Loomis has officially resigned from the School Committee yet. Chair Abbott is almost certain he has, but has not received any official notice. Mr. McLatchy was of the same opinion. The Selectboard received a letter from School Committee member Lisa Danek Burke requesting a joint meeting with the Board of Selectmen to fill this vacancy. This meeting must be posted at least one week in advance. The Board agreed to post a meeting at 4:30 P.M. on Wednesday, July 25<sup>th</sup> in the Selectmen's Office. If this meeting cannot be made by the School Committee, the posting will simply be taken down.

**Legal Fees:** The invoice from the attorneys used for the school matters has been reduced to reflect the amount left in the account, which amounted to an almost 60% discount. Ms. Wilson asked why they had such interest in this case. Chair Abbott replied that they believed strongly in Rowe's position and that they were people of high integrity. He had also created a strong relationship with their attorneys. Mr. McLatchy was very happy that they were willing to cut their bill by so much.

**MSBA:** The Selectmen voted unanimously at their last meeting to withdraw from the program for a variety of reasons. A letter needs to be signed to officially withdraw. All three Selectmen reviewed it thoroughly and Chair Abbott made a motion to have the Board agree to the terms and have him sign the letter. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion, and the vote was 3-0 in favor.

**Internal Control Review:** The Internal Control Review was addressed. Most of the items are already done or in progress, but the following subjects were discussed in-depth:

**Access to Accounts:** Ms. Wilson said that Town Coordinator Miller currently has access to all accounts on the server, not just her own. She believes that this global access needs to be changed to comply with State law. Mr. McLatchy questioned whether this was true, as he felt it would be very strange if she did. He will check with Horace Moody, IT Consultant, to find out this information. All members appear to be on the same page with regards to Ms. Miller having access to other people's accounts. A brief discussion ensued as to whether or not she should have remote access at home, but no decision was made.

**Previous Software and Records:** There was a question of the status of Scott Sawyer's *City and Town* software, as well as the current condition of financial records. All three selectmen admitted to not knowing much about the current system including where backup data was stored, and agreed that this should be added to the list of projects to tackle in the near future. Mr. McLatchy will check with Ellen Miller to determine the status of the microfilming project that was approved several months ago.

**Document Security/Process:** Ms. Wilson said that since the town is now utilizing FRCOG for accounting, most accounting documents should not be going to Ellen Miller, but directly to Joyce Muka, the FRCOG accountant for Rowe. After a brief discussion, Mr. McLatchy made a motion that the Selectboard purchase a locked drop box for Ms. Muka's use, not to exceed \$100. Ms. Wilson seconded the motion, and the vote was 3-0 in favor. Mr. McLatchy will purchase the drop box this week.

Access to certain offices has been a problem, according to Ms. Wilson, who said some people have made comments about this. As it may be impractical or unadvisable to limit access of an office solely to one person, Ms. Wilson suggested that locked filing cabinets be purchased to secure documents for certain officials. Mr. McLatchy agreed, and he will speak with the Town Clerk, Treasurer, and Accountant to assess their needs.

**Cross-training:** Ms. Wilson said that it is very important that the board look into cross-training employees, so that if one person was unavailable long-term, the business of the town would not be hindered.

**Electronic Check Converter:** UniBank, the Town's primary new official bank, will be providing the town with an electronic check converter, with no monthly fees. This was a recommendation of Jo Sarnelli.

**Medicare Tax:** Ms. Wilson will handle researching this matter and report back to the board.

**W4 & M4 Forms:** Some of these forms still need to be distributed, but progress is being made nevertheless on updating.

**W9 Forms:** These forms will be issued by FRCOG, and will hopefully be settled soon.

**Warrant Reviews:** The Selectmen would like to see warrants at least 24 hours before a meeting for review, as review during a meeting is either long or incomplete. Ms. Muka will be spoken to to see if this is possible.

Bid Procedures: This needs to be reviewed in the next year, as there have apparently been some inconsistencies and errors.

Tax Bills: Ms. Sarnelli recommended the town look at issuing tax bills quarterly, rather than semi-annually. This would improve the cash flow and reduce the amount of internal borrowing required. No decision was made, but more information from Tax Collector Sandy Daviau will be sought including which method of collection (quarterly or twice a year) would bring cash flow to the Town sooner.

On another note, Chair Abbott said that he had spoken with Assessor's Chair Rick Williams at Old Home Day, and that Bear Swamp had not filed a letter related to their disagreement over their assessment. The board will double check to make sure a letter has not been received.

Turnovers: To improve the rate of turnovers, the drop box that will be bought for the accountant will also be accessible to the treasurer, so people can drop off payments for her to deposit.

Employees vs. Independent Contractors: Mr. McLatchy is in favor of doing an analysis of what jobs could be done cheaper/better/more efficiently by outside contractors as opposed to in-town, but also felt strongly that he did not want to see the town "completely outsourced". He believes that if the town can provide a service of equal cost or quality compared to an outside contractor, he'd like to see it stay in town. The Board agreed with that principle and also agreed that each job will need to be analyzed independently.

Procedures and Policies: This will be a high priority for the board over the next few months. The board will need to compile a list of resources available and determine how to proceed.

King's Highway Bridge: Ms. Wilson spoke with DPW Superintendent Jim Taylor, and they are aware that they are aware of structural issues and what needs to be done in order to remedy the damage present.

Liaisons: It was agreed that the board would continue to establish liaisons with certain departments. Chair Abbott will continue with the Police Department, and Mr. McLatchy will continue to work with the Fire Department. Ms. Wilson agreed to be the liaison to the DPW. Having a liaison should establish a level of continuity and make communications more efficient.

Minutes: The remaining minutes will be done by Ms. Miller when she gets back from vacation.

Police Chief Succession: Chair Abbott began by saying that the decision of selecting a new police chief is both a very significant and sensitive issue, as the appointee might be in office for a long period of time. He suggested that while the Select Board had the bottom line responsibility for appointing the Police Chief, they lacked the knowledge to make a good professional decision without external guidance and recommendations.

Chair Abbott met with Greenfield Mayor Bill Martin, who told him that the town could obtain an assessment from the Isenberg School of Management for around \$10,000-\$12,000. Chair Abbott will contact several of the contacts Mayor Martin gave him and possibly set up presentations for the Selectboard.

Mr. McLatchy likes the idea of getting some outside help, but does want to spend an “arm and a leg”. Ms. Wilson agreed that some outside help would be useful, especially as no one on the board is an expert in this area, but also agreed that costs need to be considered.

Mr. McLatchy also felt that the job itself may need to be looked at. He had been toying with an idea of possibly having a full-time Police Chief who was also trained in other emergency areas (fire, medical, etc...)

Earl Carlow asked if the Board was only going to look at people in town, or would other towns be considered. Mr. McLatchy gave his opinion that he’d prefer to see someone in town get the job, but would not reject candidates from other neighboring towns if they were qualified. Chair Abbott agreed.

**Greenfield Planning Department:** Chair Abbott also spoke with Mayor Martin about the Greenfield Planning Department. This department has acquired a web-based hardware system used for searching and obtaining grants. Another town has been in talks with Greenfield to potentially utilize some of their services, for a cost. Perhaps Rowe is interested?

Myra Carlow asked what the status was of the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. She had worked hard when she was a selectman to apply for funds for the town, and hoped that the town was still applying for them. Mr. McLatchy said that the town had received funds several years in a row, but had not spent them, so no funds had been applied for recently. More research will be done on these funds.

**Paul Mark Meeting:** State Representative Paul Mark requested to meet with the Selectboard, and the board agreed to invite him to attend their August 14<sup>th</sup> or August 21<sup>st</sup> meeting with the earlier date as the preferred choice.

**Warrants:** Select Board members performed a close review of Payroll and Treasury warrants and signed them. Board members had some questions that needed answering and Ms. Wilson will contact Ms. Muka to clear these up. This cycle of warrants is particularly complicated because it combines FY’12 year end clean up warrants and a change to new accounting and software for FY’13.

**Adjourn:** Mr. McLatchy made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Ms. Wilson. The vote was 3-0 in favor. The meeting was closed at 9:50 P.M.

*Respectfully Submitted,*  
Paul McLatchy III

Approved on: 7/25/12



Noel Abbott, *Chair*



Paul McLatchy III, *Vice-Chair*



Marilyn Wilson, *Selectman*

July 25, 2012

Attached Documents:

- Agenda
- Green Communities Letter
- MSBA Declaration of Withdrawal
- MSBA Letter from Mary Pichetti