

Rowe Finance Committee  
December 17, 2018  
6:30 P.M. at Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

**Present:** Chair Wayne Zavotka, Vice-Chair Loretta Dionne, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike  
**Absent:** Christopher “Selmi” Hyytinen  
**Other**  
**Attendees:** None

**Call to Order:** Chair Zavotka called the meeting to order at 6:41 P.M., with a quorum of the committee present.

**Minutes:** The minutes of October 29<sup>th</sup> and November 5<sup>th</sup> were presented. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Dionne and seconded by Ms. Pike to approve the minutes of October 29<sup>th</sup> as written. The vote was 4-0-0 in favor. A motion was made by Vice-Chair Dionne and seconded by Ms. Pike to approve the minutes of November 5<sup>th</sup> as amended (several grammatical changes were made). The vote was 4-0-0 in favor. The minutes of October 29<sup>th</sup> were signed, and the minutes of November 5<sup>th</sup> will be updated and a copy brought to the next meeting for signatures.

**OBRA:** Chair Zavotka reported that the town is researching whether or not it is required to take deductions from an employee’s pay and deposit it into an OBRA account rather than with Social Security. Employees who pay into the regional retirement system or the Mass Teachers’ Retirement System should not be affected by this, as they *shouldn’t* be paying into either of them. This only affects part-time, seasonal, and elected officials who don’t work enough hours to be eligible for one of the two retirement systems.

The town seems to be getting conflicting information about whether OBRA is mandatory or merely optional. Mr. McLatchy explained that per an email he received today, it was optional, and that the treasurer (who is in charge of payroll), will begin depositing funds into an OBRA account come January, but will not need to reimburse employees other than a few who had both Social Security and retirement funds taken out of their pay.

**Insurance Meeting:** Chair Zavotka reported on the November 14<sup>th</sup> meeting with the Board of Selectmen and town counsel. It was not an official meeting due to a lack of quorum. Per town counsel, the town cannot lower the percentage that the town pays at this time. Vice-Chair Dionne noted that if the teachers’ union agreed to lower it, only then could the town vote to lower the portion it pays. Ms. Pike asked about whether or not there could be minimum eligibility requirements for retirees- i.e. an individual has to work for the town for X years before being eligible for retirement benefits. Chair Zavotka reported that it was not allowed, and that a town that had tried to do so recently was involved in a court battle that resulted in such a policy being overturned.

**Budgets:** The following budgets were addressed:

General Administration: The Department of Revenue will be conducting a review of town staffing positions. Therefore, the budget for general administration will not be ready until after this review.

School: The school budget is usually among the last to be submitted, as there are a number of factors outside of the school's control that impact the budget.

Assessors: Per Ms. Pike, the Assessors' budget will be submitted on Wednesday.

Park: The Park Department has submitted its budget. One large change is that the previous fitness instructor resigned, and the Park Commission voted to contract out for multi-week programs, rather than hire a replacement. Therefore, moneys were shifted out of wages and moved into operations. Otherwise, operations remains largely level-funded.

Library: The Library Trustees submitted a budget with a request for a 5% merit raise for the Library Director, as well as the approved 2.5% COLA. Other staffing was raised by 4.52%. A motion was made by Chair Zavotka and seconded by Ms. Pike that "at this time, the Finance Committee will not recommend any salary increases beyond the COLA unless there is a change in the job description." The vote was 3-0-1 in favor, with Mr. McLatchy abstaining as he is an employee and will be affected by any changes in the COLA. As the liaison to the library, Ms. Pike will inquire about the two lines for salaries.

Council on Aging: The Council on Aging is asking for \$4,600, the same amount originally requested last year. The Committee agreed to ask the question of why an extra \$800 is needed, to provide more information. As of the end of November, the Council was right on track with its budget- 42% of the fiscal year had passed and 42% of their budget had been spent. Mr. McLatchy will speak with council chair Sandy Daviau.

Tax Collector: The operations line for the tax collector's office has been reduced slightly. It was briefly discussed whether the wage line would need to change as the position is transitioning from elected to appointed in May.

Accountant: The town accountant has requested an 8% increase in her salary, stating that broadband accounting has taken up more of her time and was not part of her original duties when a wage was set. She has also argued that her pay should be more in line with the treasurer's line. Chair Zavotka will look into whether the work done for the broadband is temporary or permanent. If it is temporary, perhaps a reserve-fund transfer would be more appropriate to cover the extra hours rather than a permanent increase in salary.

Fire Department: The budget for the Fire Department is coming soon. The Selectmen are working on an intergovernmental agreement with the Charlemont Fire Department which

will result in a shared chief and possibly other services. An email from Dennis Annear recommended that the town sell its old tanker truck, which would result in the town gaining roughly \$10,000 in a combination of cash and equipment.

**Capital Improvement Plan (CIP):** The draft CIP from Joe Markarian at FRCOG has been received, and was reviewed by the committee. There are a number of items that will need to be reviewed at a future meeting, but it was agreed that an in-depth review was not needed before budget hearings.

**Budget Hearings:** A proposed list of dates to hold budget hearings was sent by Selectboard Chair Jenn Morse. The committee reviewed the proposal. Other than separating the school into its own evening, the committee agreed that the dates looked good. Hearings will begin in January and conclude in February.

**Next Meeting:** The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> for its first budget hearing, and will continue to meet for a hearing every Wednesday until February 27<sup>th</sup>, with the exception of February 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Adjourn:** A motion was made by Mr. McLatchy and seconded by Ms. Pike to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 P.M. The vote was 4-0-0 in favor.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

Approved: January 23, 2019

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*Wayne Zavotka, Chairman*

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*Loretta Dionne, Vice-Chair*

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*Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

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*Laurie Pike, Member*

Attachments:

- Agenda
- List of Budgets Received
- Budgets: Park, Library, Council on Aging, Tax Collector, Accountant
- Email from Joe Markarian Re: CIP
- Draft Capital Improvement Plan
- Email from Dennis Annear