

Rowe Finance Committee  
Joint Budget Hearing with the Board of Selectmen  
January 16, 2019  
6:30 P.M. at Rowe Town Hall – Meeting Room 1

**Present:** Chair Wayne Zavotka, Vice-Chair Loretta Dionne, Christopher “Selmi” Hyytinen  
Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike

**Board of  
Selectmen:** Chair Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair Dennis May, Selectman Chuck Sokol  
**Executive  
Secretary:** Janice Boudreau

**Other  
Attendees:** Rebecca Bradley, Library Trustee; Earl Carlow, Cemetery Commission; Myra  
Carlow, Audience Member; Molly Lane, Librarian; David Roberson, Planning  
Board Chair; Catherine Snyder, Library Trustee; James Williams, Cemetery  
Commission; Jay Williams, Cemetery Commission

**Call to Order:** Chair Zavotka called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M., with a quorum of the  
committee present.

**Yankee Road:** Chair Morse informed the two boards that the engineering report for Yankee  
Road has been received from the engineering firm. It is over 200 pages long, and therefore, she  
would like to have the company come up and walk town officials through it. In the meantime,  
estimates to repair/replace the road range between \$600,000 and \$1,300,000. The two boards  
agreed that 1:00 on Friday, February 1<sup>st</sup> would be best.

**FRCOG:** There will be a meeting held at GCC and hosted by FRCOG that will discuss the  
county’s current emergency radio situation. Apparently the existing system is not working well.  
No matter what route is pursued, it will be very expensive to upgrade/replace emergency radios.  
Individuals interested in attending will need to register with FRCOG in advance.

**Cemetery Budget:** Commissioners Earl Carlow, James Williams, and Jay Williams were in  
attendance. They have not submitted a written budget, but have made a verbal request for level  
funding, or \$15,000. This will be split with \$10,000 for maintenance and \$5,000 for special  
projects. They are hoping to replace the wooden fence at the West Cemetery, though the  
possibility of prevailing wage being a factor may affect the total cost. The Commission is  
looking into purchasing the materials with this year’s budget, and paying for the labor out of next  
year’s budget.

The Commission has been receiving requests for additional lots in the North Cemetery.  
Currently there are none left to sell. Commissioner Williams offered to sell the town one  
acre of abutting land to the town so that it could expand the cemetery. He would also be  
responsible for clearing it. He offered to sell the land for \$1,000, which would not even  
cover the expenses of clearing it for use. Members present suggested a number around

\$4,000-\$5,000. A motion was then made by Mr. Hyytinen and seconded by Vice-Chair Dionne to recommend that the town buy the land and pay to have it cleared. The vote was 4-0-1, with Mr. McLatchy abstaining.

**Library Budget:** The Library Trustees are requesting a total budget of \$70,365. The library is a unique budget in that it must be funded at a certain level (equal to a 2.5% increase over the average of the last three years) in order to maintain its certification. If the town loses its certification, it loses access to interlibrary loan, the bookmobile, and other services.

Members of the Finance Committee discussed the director's line, which called for a 5% merit raise increase. The Finance Committee voted unanimously at its last meeting to not support merit raises at this time. Trustee Bradley explained that perhaps the wording was incorrect, and that the increase was being sought as Ms. Lane had completed additional certifications. This has resulted in higher qualifications for the position, and is therefore a salary adjustment rather than a merit raise.

The utility bills have gone down thanks to the installation of heat pumps. This has allowed for the money to be allocated to other lines.

The Trustees will be presenting requests in the next year for projects to add to the Capital Improvement Plan. They are working on getting cost estimates.

**Planning Board Budget:** Chair Roberson explained that the Planning Board has requested a budget of \$17,000, with \$2,000 for operations, \$10,000 for legal expenses, and \$5,000 for stipends. The Planning Board recently voted that they will no longer publish The Goal Post after July 1<sup>st</sup>, and therefore are not asking for funding for it.

The operations line has been doubled to \$2,000 as the board is hoping to hold hearings on its zoning bylaw proposals before the next annual town meeting. There are numerous posting and legal requirements, as well as the cost of mailing the proposal to residents (Chair Roberson estimated that the proposed changes are roughly 60 pages).

The legal line has been doubled to \$10,000, as the board will be seeking town counsel review on all zoning changes before presenting them to the voters. In addition, if a special permit should be sought for a large-scale project, the board may need additional legal funds. Chair Zavotka noted that he was hesitant over increasing budgets that may not end up being used. A suggestion was made about possibly appropriating money to a revolving fund, which could then be rolled over to build up a reserve.

For the first time, a stipend line is being requested by the board. They are asking for \$5,000, or \$1,000 per member. Chair Roberson explained it would be a nice way for the town to say "thank you" and to appreciate the time put in by members. Mr. McLatchy said that he was not 100% behind the amount as there are other boards and committees (including the Finance Committee) that met more frequently than the Planning Board and were not paid. He did support a stipend for the Planning Board, but did not offer an

amount. A concern was raised about other unpaid boards possibly asking for stipends. It was then suggested that perhaps stipends as a whole should be reexamined.

**Wage Survey:** Chair Morse told the two boards that towns have the option of having a company come in and analyze job descriptions and salaries and then give recommendations to the town. This was recently done in Ashfield for \$6,000, and has led to a step system that sets wages for roughly five years. This has made budgeting more predictable. Mr. Hyytinen brought up a concern about whether current practices take into account prior experience and education. For example, is a new hire being paid the same rate as someone who has been working for the town for a few years? He suggested that job descriptions be uniform in their format, and that wages for new employees be looked at when hiring.

**Park Budget:** Ms. Pike and Mr. Hyytinen briefly stepped out of their role of Finance Committee members and into their role as Park Commissioners to present the Park's budget. Most of the increases have come from an increase in minimum wage, and the other positions that have had to increase as well to maintain parity. Overall, the Park is requesting an increase of only 1.55%.

The Commission is looking to add the replacement of the tennis court to the CIP in the next five years. They are hoping to replace it with a multi-functional area, rather than just two tennis courts. There are grants available to help pay up to 50% of the costs, but they require the town to have an open space plan, which is a considerable undertaking. Commissioner Pike will look into what is required, and an open space committee will likely be appointed in the near future.

**Municipal Light Plant Budget:** Selectman Chuck Sokol presented the MLP budget as the deputy manager. The budget being requested totals \$7,800. \$1,000 is for the Wired West dues, which is level-funded from previous years. Two new lines, \$6,000 for a manager stipend and \$800 for travel expenses, were requested.

The stipend being requested has been asked for due to the large amount of work the manager has done and will be required to do for the building and maintenance of the network. The current manager, David Dvore, is also representing Rowe on the Wired West executive committee and will be attending many meetings on the town's behalf.

The travel costs line will be used to reimburse anyone who is traveling on behalf of the broadband effort.

A question was raised about whether there would be any funds coming back from the operation of the network. Deputy Manager Sokol explained that it would all depend on the subscription rate, and the costs associated with running everything. If more towns sign on, fixed costs will be reduced for each town, possibly resulting in excess revenue being returned to the town. If the expenses remain high, it's possible the town will see no income from this endeavor.

The town will also need to consider how it wants to budget for the replacement of equipment, approximately \$100,000 worth every ten years.

**Fire Truck Sale:** The Selectmen will be meeting with Fire Chief Dennis Annear to discuss the sale of the tanker.

**Terms:** Members will need to speak with the town clerk to find out which terms are up for election this year. As Ms. Pike and Mr. Hyytinen were appointed to fill vacancies, they will be required to stand for election in May regardless.

**Next Meeting:** The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, January 23<sup>rd</sup> for the next budget hearing. They will meet at 6:00 and go over a few things before the budget hearing at 6:30.

**Adjourn:** A motion was made by Mr. McLatchy and seconded by Ms. Pike to adjourn the meeting at 9:03 P.M. The vote was 5-0-0 in favor.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

Approved: January 23, 2019

---

*Wayne Zavotka, Chairman*

---

*Loretta Dionne, Vice-Chair*

---

*Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

---

*Christopher "Selmi" Hyytinen, Member*

---

*Laurie Pike, Member*

Attachments:

- Agenda
- Library Budget
- Planning Board Budget
- Parks Budget
- Municipal Light Plant Budget