

**Town of Rowe**  
Board of Selectmen – Minutes  
Wednesday, February 6, 2019 – 6:30 pm  
Rowe Town Hall - Hearing Room 1

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**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order by Chair Jennifer Morse at 6:17 p.m.

**Present:** Jennifer Morse, Chair, Dennis May, Vice Chair, Chuck Sokol - Member, Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau  
Finance Committee: Wayne Zavotka, -Chair, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike, C. Selmi Hyytinen, Loretta Dionne  
Fire Dept: Brandon Sprague, Fire Chief and Dennis Annear Fire Chief of Charlemont  
Treasurer: Joanne Semanie

### **OPEN MEETING**

Announcement of recording devices & noteworthy information –one recording device

6:15 Pole Hearing:

In accordance with the provisions of Section 22, Chapter 166, of the General Laws, a Public Hearing was held at on the petition of the Town of Rowe to erect 3 poles and wires upon, along, under, or across one or more public ways in the Town of Rowe at Ford Hill Road.

**Motion to Approve:** Following discussion and document review, Chair Morse made a motion to approve 3 poles on Ford Hill Road as illustrated on the Municipal Light Plant plan provided. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May, was unanimously accepted.  
(3/0/0)

Select Board Members joined the Finance Committee at 6:30p.m.

### **BUDGET HEARINGS**

Chair Morse opened the meeting with updates on urgent budget items to consider affecting Rowe:

- **Emergency System:** Chair Morse reported attending a meeting updating local officials on the Franklin County Emergency Communications System (FCECS). Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) had agreed to own the system on behalf of Franklin County Towns with the understanding the town users (fire, police, EMS) will pay for the costs associated with the operation, maintenance and capital improvements. The system is old and failing and at a decision making point. The decision to rebuild or replace the system is required since parts are no longer available to repair for the current system. One option is migration to the Commonwealth of MA Interoperable Radio System (CoMIRS) to what the State Police are using and the second is to rebuild the system. There needs to be more information from the state and a commitment for funding before the final decision is made. Chair Morse said it would cost Rowe potentially \$21,000.00 as an assessment.
- **Yankee Road:** Chair Morse and Paul McLatchy III met with Engineers from Lamson Engineering to review options for rebuilding Yankee Road which is in subsidence. It was estimated it would cost \$800,000.00 to rebuild which moves the road and retaining wall. Chair Morse said she and Admin Assistant were looking into finding some funding sources in the form of grants,

especially due to the fact that the road only usage is to provide access to the nuclear cask storage facility. Admin Assistant Paul McLatchy III is working on sending letters to state officials asking for any and reach out to Yankee to see if they had any ideas about who to contact regarding funding.

- The Bridge on Zoar Road over Shippee Brook: MA Dept. of Transportation (MassDOT) notified the town that they are requiring that the bridge near the church on Zoar Road over Shippee Brook have barriers to make it into one lane to prevent weight loads on the roadway beam that needs repair. Gil Engineering needs to be contacted to find out estimated costs for repair.
- Small Bridge Grant: Chair Morse said that the town was awarded a Small Bridge Grant for \$500,000.00 for Kings Highway Bridge, however, the Mass Works grant was rolled over to the King's Highway Bridge replacement and she will have to work on where the funding can be best utilized. The cost of the adding the temporary bridge for King's Highway and the need to hire a project manager will exceed the Mass Works grant so some funds could be used from the Small Bridge Grant so the bridge replacement will be entirely paid by grant funding.
- Insurance: Executive Secretary presented insurance costs related to employee insurance included in their personnel packages and the property, workers comp and municipal bonds. She explained the final rates from Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) would be available in March. Employee health insurance rates did not rise, however, the co-payments will and cause greater expense to the employee. Compared with other insurance rates, the plans offered with Hampshire Group Insurance Trust (HGIT) remain the best rate for towns and employees as verified by HGIT who provided a comparison chart.
- Old Home Day: Chair Morse said the Historical Society agreed to provide the chicken barbeque at no cost to the town and that she had booked the fireworks from Atlas and the DJ Bobby C for entertainment. Paul McLatchy III questioned the need of having the event each year and what does the town want. Member Sokol pointed out that the event was largely for the benefit of the children. It was agreed to look into applying for a Cultural Council grant request for some activities.
- Budget Hearing Announcements: Chair Morse said the Assessors, DPW and Custodian would meet on February 20 and General Government, Assessors and the School on the 27<sup>th</sup>.
- STM – Chair Morse said the Special Town Meeting was tentatively set for March 5<sup>th</sup> and be ready by Feb 19<sup>th</sup> to post. Bylaw Committee member McLatchy said that the Bylaw recommended that an amendment be placed on the STM regarding the Annual Town Report; changing the delivery of the report from mail to be picked up due to the high cost of postage.
- OBRA & Social Security: Vice-Chair May reported speaking with Administrator between Social Security and the MA State Retirement System who said the town could go with either OBRA or Social Security for employees not eligible for a retirement program for their deferred compensation plan. Tom Scanlon, our Auditor will meet next Tuesday with Town Counsel and School Counsel to discuss and make recommendations for proceeding.

**APPOINTMENT – 7:30 p.m.**

Charlemont Chief – Dennis Annear & Rowe Chief Brandon Sprague: shared fire chief agreement –  
Vote, MOU, Equipment:

7:20pm Dennis Annear and Fire Chief Sprague arrived at the meeting.

Dennis Annear, Fire Chief in Charlemont explained the long range goals and that he has been meeting with area towns to see how better fire-fighting service can be provided to area. In the last 6 months he has met with Greenfield, Montague and other towns to consider combining service to have a full time staff. The plan long-term plan would retain North Adams Ambulance and combine with EMS and Fire Departments from the area, ultimately to have one Emergency Medical Service out of Shelburne Falls. This proposal, to put all under one management, is due to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations that came into effect February 2019. One level of management and shared stations would have deputy chiefs. Long term plan is to join trucks and create a fire district with an assessment to area towns to save towns resources. One model would be based on valuations, so there would be a reduction in equipment needs since they will be shared. There was discussion about the strong/weak chief designation and Chief Annear said the new district change would become a “strong chief” designation and town vote. Cost savings could come from splitting training costs with online training and in the future the Policy and Procedures vetting could be shared by towns.

For now, a shared chief agreement with Charlemont was presented, sharing costs of Fire Chief and a Fire Chief vehicle to remain in compliance with safety regulations and OSHA requirements avoiding potential fines. Since most of the needed training occurs during the day for Fire Chiefs and firefighters, with having a regular job, most cannot attend training. Fire calls can be answered at a better timetable due to the combining of both towns.

Chief Annear recommended to get rid of the Rowe tanker due to it being a safety and liability hazard for the town. Its transmission does not allow everyone to drive. It is a difficult truck to drive and unsafe. That will leave the trucks of 1993 and 2003 vintage. Chief Annear also recommended purchasing Charlemont’s 2003 truck which doesn’t fit the Charlemont Fire Dept. It would give a newer truck and save money since a new truck would cost between \$400,000 to \$500,000. It was requested that Mr. Annear put his recommendations in writing.

Finance Committee left the meeting at 8:40 pm.

Chair Morse said the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Town of Charlemont and the Town of Rowe Regarding Fire Chief Employment had been prepared by Town Counsel for another town and reviewed by Kopelman and Paige, Town Counsel for Charlemont.

**Motion to Approve:** Following review and discussion Member Sokol made a motion to sign the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Town of Charlemont and the Town of Rowe Regarding Fire Chief Employment. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

There was further discussion about the selling Rowe’s tanker to the Town of Halifax, Vermont due to the inability to have adequate drivers for the truck and that Halifax would trade a utility truck body to help fully equip a response vehicle.

**Motion to Sell Tanker:** Chair Morse made a motion to sell the Tanker to the Halifax Vermont Volunteer Fire Company for \$5500.00 and one utility body. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

It was agreed that a Deputy Fire Chief Job description was needed.

Chief Annear and Chief Sprague left the meeting at 9:05 p.m.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

- Green Community: Chair Morse said we could be applying for energy saving grants that could save money for the town. It was agreed that it would be of value and who could do the work could be investigated as a Green Community confirming whether the work could be done by a town employee rather than by an appointed committee.
- Time Sheet – Discussion regarding proper recording: Chair Morse had an example of a properly completed employee time sheet and asked that Treasurer send this sample copy to employees that were not properly completing their sheets. There was discussion about the pro-rating of employee benefits and their calculations. It was agreed that Member Sokol would prepare a table with pro-rated benefits for inclusion in the Personnel Policy Manual.
- Update Telephone Grant: Chair Morse said she was going to apply for a grant to upgrade the telephones for the town with the approval of the board.

**Motion to Submit Grant:** Chair Morse made a motion to submit an Efficiency Grant for upgrading the telephone system for the town. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May, was accepted. (3/0/0)

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **MLP UPDATES:**

- Borrowing for Broadband: Treasurer Semanie recommended that the town borrow State House notes and initially borrow \$500,000.00 and borrow more later if needed. She said that it will take 3 weeks to get loan.
- Pole Insurance: There was discussion about whether we should obtain insurance for the poles the town owned telephone poles and it was confirmed insurance would not be required.
- Onboarding: The Onboarding meeting with Westfield Gas and Electric will take place Tuesday morning at 8:30 a.m. at Town Hall.
- Gracy House Estimates: Executive Secretary presented the Board with the updated list of estimates received from contractors for mold remediation and prevention needed at the Gracy House before it could safely reopen. It was agreed to present the \$ 58,000.00 for Gracy House projects at a Special Town Meeting.
- Bylaw Review Committee: The Bylaw Review Committee recommended that there be an immediate change made to have citizens pick up the Annual Town Reports at Town Hall or the Library rather than to mail them to voters directly due to the great postage expense.

**Motion to Approve Bylaw Change:** Member Sokol made a motion to add to the Special Town Meeting Warrant a change to the town bylaws regarding to Annual Town Report be available for picked up rather than mailed to each voter. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair May was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

FY20 Administrative Job Descriptions, Funding & Administrative Tasks List: Chair Morse asked for reorganization of administrative tasks and the need for more administrative staff support and recommended creating a Town Coordinator position. She expressed that due to her own employment, she was unable to perform tasks that were needed for the town in her free time. Chair Morse expressed the need for help with the workload as well as with the application and management of grants. Following discussion, it was agreed to ask voters to add an administrative assistant to perform jobs that the Select Board and Executive Secretary did not have time to do immediately as well as requesting funding it for the coming year.

There were concerns expressed by Executive Secretary and Treasurer that job duties were changed effective immediately in an email sent earlier in the week and that they were not consulted and that did not appear to have had proper Select Board approval. Member Sokol expressed his concerns that when changes were made to job descriptions and shifting of duties changed that the employee be part of the conversation and Select Board vote be made.

OBRA and Social Security Discussion Continued: Treasurer Semanie raised the issue about the OBRA and Social Security and that the school suggested that all of the employees that were ineligible for retirement plans on be OBRA. There was discussion as to whether all of the town employees should have OBRA plans as well since the school employees were doing so. School Committee members were now asking for the town to reimburse employees that had paid into Social Security rather than OBRA. There was discussion about who sets policy. Town Counsel is scheduled to meet with Tom Scanlon, our Town Auditor and Counsel for the school to work out details. There are employees that were part-time that were contributing to Social Security that had OBRA in other towns that want to be reimbursed for the Social Security contributions. The Board felt that the town should remain contributing to Social Security. Member Sokol expressed concern that the School Committee minutes and in a letter reported decisions the Select Board had made regarding OBRA and Social Security were not reported accurately, that the Board had not made any decisions regarding the matter.

RFT: Treasurer Semanie requested a Reserve Fund Transfer for the amount of \$3920.00 to pay for the interest on the short term loan borrowed due to lateness of tax collection to maintain town cash flow.

**Motion to Accept Reserve Fund Transfer:** Member Sokol made a motion to accept the Request for Transfer from the Reserve Fund of amount of \$3920.00 to Interest on Indebtedness contingent upon the approval of the Finance Committee. The motion, seconded, by Vice-Chair May, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

**MINUTES:** Tabled until next meeting

**Correspondence:** Select Board Members reviewed emails from Sue Williams regarding the Goal Post and Gail Cromack regarding the road conditions on Monroe Hill Road. No Action was required. Member Sokol stated that if Sue Williams officially applied for the position of Goal Post Editor then he would recuse himself from the interview process and subsequent appointment due to potential conflict of interest.

**WARRANTS:**

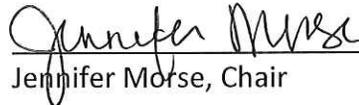
FY19 W17 Payroll FY19 W16 were reviewed and signed.  
Vice-Chair May invoked the Rule of Necessity since he had a family member on the payroll.

**AJOURNMENT:** Seeing no further business, Chair Morse made a motion to adjourn the Meeting at 10:35 p.m. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

Respectfully Submitted  
Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

Approval Date: March 6, 2019

Approved:

  
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Jennifer Morse, Chair

  
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Dennis May, Vice-Chair

  
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Chuck Sokol, Select Board Member

Documents:

1. Petition for Pole and Wire Locations
2. Ford Hill Pole Locations
3. Council on Aging Budget
4. Tax Collector Budget
5. Board of Health Budget
6. Police Budget
7. Memorandum of Understanding Between the Town of Charlemont and the Town of Rowe Regarding Fire Chief Employment
8. Insurance Comparison – HGIT
9. Town Counsel Re: Insurance
10. The Commonwealth of MA MassDOT- Interoffice Memorandum Re: Bridge Rating
11. Executive Secretary Updates
12. Executive Secretary 'to do list'
13. Executive Secretary Duties list
14. Email – Chair Morse to Ms. Boudreau re: Duties changes
15. Email – Chair Morse to Ms. Boudreau re: Job reorganization
16. Gracy House Remediation
17. Mike Kumph estimates for Gracy House
18. Walt Baenzger – Air Test Estimate
19. Time Sheet Sample

Mail:

- Sue Williams email and Goal Post sample
- Gail Cromack email re: Monroe Hill Road