

Rowe Finance Committee  
Regular Meeting and Joint Budget Hearing with the Board of Selectmen  
February 20, 2019  
6:00 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  
**Board of Selectmen\*:** Chair Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair Dennis May, Selectman Chuck Sokol  
**Other Attendees\*:** Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary; Herb Butzke, Assessor; Ellen Miller, Assessor; Ramon Sanchez, Conservation Commission; Rick Williams, Assessor; Marilyn Wilson, Resident

\*During the budget hearings which began at 6:30.

**Call to Order:** Chair Zavotka called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M., with a quorum of the committee present.

**Minutes:** The minutes of February 6, 2019 were presented. With one minor change to the attachment list, the minutes were otherwise approved as written.

**Reserve Fund Transfer:** A request for a reserve fund transfer (FY19-RFT-3) was submitted by Treasurer Joanne Semanie in the amount of \$3,920. As tax bills went out later than usual this year, the treasurer was required to obtain a loan from the bank for cash flow. The \$3,920 represents the interest from that loan. There have been no appropriated funds to cover this cost. A motion was made and seconded to approve the request, and the vote was 4-0-0 in favor.

**Capital Improvement Plan:** The committee would like to go over the Capital Improvement Plan before long. Some questions were raised about whether the document as produced by Joe Markarian from FRCOG is complete, and if so, whether it is accurate. Members seemed to be in agreement that once the budget has been completed this could be their next project.

**Joint Meeting:** The Selectmen joined the Finance Committee and called their meeting to order at 6:31.

**Yankee Road Letter:** A letter has been drafted to approximately 23 different public officials and/or agencies/committees. The letter asks for help, either financially or via other means, in replacing/repairing Yankee Road. As the road is the only reliable ingress/egress, this project *must* be done, and is not an option for the town. Members from both the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee signed. Chief Julie Shippee briefly stopped by and signed as well. Finance Committee Member Selmi Hyytinen, Fire Chief Dennis Annear, Emergency Management Director Brandon Sprague, and Highway Superintendent Lance Larned will still need to sign before they are mailed out.

**Conservation Commission Budget:** Conservation Commission Chair Ramon Sanchez presented a budget of \$1,477. This represents a 15.6% reduction over the current year's \$1,750 budget. The primary reason for this has been a reduction in printing at home by members, and budgeting less for trainings as not all members will be likely to attend. He did note that several commissioners have attended state-run trainings, and that they have learned a great deal in the process.

**DPW Budget:** The DPW budget was presented by the Selectmen. Most line items have been increased by 2.5%, with a few being left level-funded. No major questions or concerns were raised.

**Custodian Budget:** The custodian budget was reviewed. Though money is being requested for a new line item, other operation lines in various departments are being reduced by the same amount. This means that there is no net increase in spending for supplies and other expenses. The salary line was raised per the 2.5% COLA.

**Assessors Budget:** Assessors Williams and Miller recommended to the Selectmen that Herb Butzke be appointed to the long-vacant third seat. The Selectmen then voted unanimously to do so.

As the incumbent clerk is retiring in June, the Assessors will be reconsidering whether they want to seek a higher-level clerk or possibly even an assistant assessor. Therefore, they have requested funding in the amount of \$12,000. This represents 10 hours a week at a wage comparable to other towns in Franklin County. They also requested \$2,400 for costs related to server upgrades, but it was agreed that this one-time cost should come out of a town line as it's a result of the town replacing the server and not a decision made by the Assessors.

Assessor Miller will be compiling a spreadsheet to show the projected revenues from the new assessments on the transmission and distribution right-of-ways, which had never been assessed before. That said, the utilities have applied for an abatement, so revenue may not be immediately forthcoming.

The utilities have also applied for an abatement on their recent revaluation for their major properties. If the Assessors make a decision that the utilities do not like, they can appeal to the Appellate Tax Board, which could be drawn out for several years. If the ATB agrees with the utilities, the town may be on the hook for a large abatement. Therefore, the Assessors may choose to put a large amount of money into their overlay account, which can be rolled over from year to year. They also requested \$25,000 for legal consulting in the event that this *does* go to the ATB.

In the meantime, the levy limit this year has been raised by nearly \$500,000 due to a large increase in utility valuation. Assessor Williams cautioned the two boards that while this is a good thing, it should not be taken as a pass to go wild with the budget, especially since the Assessors will likely put a large amount of money into their overlay.

**Special Town Meeting:** A special town meeting will be held on March 12<sup>th</sup>. The Selectmen will need to sign the warrant by February 26<sup>th</sup>. After the warrant has been approved, a copy will be given to the Finance Committee to review for their recommendations.

**Next Meeting:** The Finance Committee will meet on Wednesday, February 27<sup>th</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 Vice-Chair Dionne to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 P.M. The vote was 4-0-0 in favor.

*Respectfully Submitted,  
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

Approved: April 3, 2019

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*Wayne Zavotka, Chairman*

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*Loretta Dionne, Vice-Chairman*

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*Paul McLatchy III, Secretary*

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*Laurie Pike, Member*

Attachments:

- Reserve Fund Transfer Request FY19-RFT-3 and Supporting Document
- Yankee Letter (Letters were identical except for recipient address)
- Conservation Commission Budget
- DPW Budget
- Custodian Budget
- Assessors Budget