



Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen Minutes
Thursday April 9, 2020 –4:00 p.m.
VIA TELECONFERENCE

This meeting will be held via video conference, consistent with Gov. Baker's temporary modifications to Open Meeting Law.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION INFORMATION:

Video and/or audio

Meeting Host: zoom.us

Meeting ID: 288-065-7034

URL: <https://zoom.us/j/2880657034>

Telephone: 312-626-6799

Present: Chair Chuck Sokol, Vice-Chair Jennifer Morse, Ed Silva, Selectman and Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau

Audience: Joanne Semanie, Paul McLatchy III, Town Moderator Bob Clancy

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Sokol at 6:30 p.m. via remote participation.

MOTION: Roll call vote to call to order:

Chair Sokol: **yes**

Selectman Silva: **yes**

Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**

Announcement of recording devices: two

Meeting Minutes: 3/24/2020:

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to accept the Minutes of March 24, 2020 as written. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva. A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: **yes**

Selectman Silva: **yes**

Vice-Chair Morse: **abstain**

Meeting Minutes: 3/26/2020:

MOTION: Selectman Silva made a motion to accept the Minutes of March 26, 2020 with corrections. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Morse. A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: **yes**

Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**

Selectman Silva: **yes**

MOTION: Selectman Silva made a motion to accept the Minutes of March 31, 2020 as amended. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Morse. A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: **yes**
Selectman Silva: **yes**
Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**

Selectboard Business

Rowe Emergency Preparedness in Response to the Corona Virus Outbreak and Public Health

Emergency: Chair Sokol reported that changes had been implemented at the Refuse Gardens to allow one car at a time and it had been well marked with signs and cones. The Board of Health sent out notifications to out of town residents about quarantine guidelines and Covid-19 prevention. Police Chief would distribute to camps in the area as well.

Direct Deposit Requirement Extension: Selectmen discussed extension of the deadline for employees to sign up for Direct Deposit by July 1, 2020. It was decided to wait until May 4, 2020 to make a decision.

Local Change Option re: Extension of Tax Due Date: Selectmen review the Dept. of Revenue Division of Local Services (DLS) provided information regarding municipal finance law changes resulting from the COVID-19, Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020 which were signed into law. Local governments may opt to adopt the provisions as they relate to Real and Personal Property Tax Bills and Applications for Exemptions and Waiver of Interest in certain late payments.

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to adopt the Local Options of Chapter 53 of the Acts of 2020, Sections 10(a)(i-iii) and 10(a)(iv) and Section 11; extending tax due dates to June 1, 2020 and interest waiver of interest and penalties regarding late payments of bills due date of March 10, 2020 or after, when such bills are paid late but paid on or before June 30, 2020. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Morse.

A roll call vote was taken:
Chair Sokol: **yes**
Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**
Selectman Silva: **yes**

It was decided to notify residents by a robo call and on the website and posting at Town Hall.

Municipal Light Plant Broadband Project Updates and Discussion: Selectman Silva reported meeting with Tom Danek Excavating to discuss finalizing the grounds at the Broadband hut. He said that grading and seeding, gravel and plantings were discussed. Selectman Silva said he had difficulty with locating a contractor interested in submitting a bid for the siding and roof to the hut. It was noted that a formal bid process might have to be implemented.

Admin Asst. Request – re: Draft Retirees Policy Benefit Deductions: Administrative Assistant

requested that a new policy be implemented for retirees to authorize respective retirement system withdraw employee benefits from monthly payments and forward them directly to town treasurer so as to reduce unnecessary paperwork.

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to adopt the following policy and add it to the Personnel Policy Manual:

“ All employees retiring after June 30, 2021 that participate in either the Franklin Regional Retirement System (FRRS) or the Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System (MTRS) that elect to enroll in or continue benefits will be required to authorize their respective retirement systeme to withdraw benefit deductions from monthly payments and forward them directly to the town treasurer. Payments made directly by retirees (i.e. via check) will not be accepted unless authorized by the treasurer. Benefits are defined a including, but not limited to: health insurance (both primary and/or Medicare supplemental), dental insurance, life insurance (both basic and optional), vision insurance, and any other insurances or perks available as a result of employment with the town.”

A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: **yes**
Selectman Silva: **yes**
Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**

MTWP – Review Bid Award: – Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning & Development for Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) forwarded the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Request for Quotation (RFQ) for the Forest Stewardship Plans for the Towns of Rowe and Conway. The RFQ was for a creation of a Forestry Stewardship Plan and community outreach through a grant from the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs.

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to accept the low bid for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Proposal: Public Outreach and Forest Stewardship Plans for the Towns of Conway and Rowe in Franklin County, MA from Long View Forest Management. The Rowe portion is for the grant is the amount of \$17,800.00. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.

A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: **yes**
Vice-Chair Morse: **yes**
Selectman Silva: **yes**

Scheduled Presentations/Joint Meetings

7:00 p.m. : Bob Clancy- Town Moderator re: Town Meeting: Due to the Covid-19 outbreak state legislation had passed allowing towns to delay town meetings. There was discussion about when it would be safe to hold a town meeting allowing people to gather. Without a town meeting the legislation temporarily allowed for the use of the prior year budget one

month at a time using a 1/12 of the budget formula. Following discussion, it was agreed to postpone annual town meeting until Monday, June 22, 2020 at 7:00 p.m.

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to postpone the Annual Town Meeting until Monday, June 22, 2020 at 7:00p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Morse.

A roll call vote was taken:
Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes

Discussion continued about the Annual Town Election scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2020. Town Clerk Paul McLatchy III outlined plans to hold a safe election and distancing workers and voters and would present it to the Board of Health for review. He also said that absentee ballots should be encouraged and that voter turnout for the last few years was around 121 voters. Vice-Chair Morse said that there needed to be explanation to the voters about the non-binding ballot question and the opportunity for that would be at the Town Meeting. Vice-Chair Morse said that many prefer to vote in person. Selectman Silva said he thought that it would most likely be too early to vote safely in person in May and for the health and safety of residents, it should be postponed. Chair Sokol said that for the sake of continuity and presentation of the budget, it would be appropriate for the current board rather than with a newly elected Selectman. It is the purview of the Board of Selectmen to delay the election.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Morse made a motion to postpone the Annual Town Election until Saturday, June 27, 2020. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.

A roll call vote was taken:
Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes

Left the Meeting: Bob Clancy left the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

Letter to Employee: The draft letter to the Treasurer was reviewed and discussed. Following discussion, it was decided to add a page of information to explain the issues that need to be addressed and schedule an executive session in the future. There were some concerns expressed and Vice-Chair Morse agreed to reach out to the employee and report back to the board.

Town Administrator: Vice-Chair Morse said she wanted to set up a meeting to solely discuss the Town Administrator position. She acknowledged a letter that was sent to the Board by Finance Committee member Laurie Pike and the Board were in agreement that there has to be information presented to the town about why this position is necessary in an open and transparent way.

Selectman Silva expressed some questions about the Administrative Assistant position and whether there is a problem with this position and that it may need restructuring and reposting. Chair Sokol said he thinks the tasks are being tended to and that the structure of the office is 'broken' and thinks there really needs to be a 'point person' for the Board.

Vice-Chair Morse that that the 2 administrative positions total cost come within the range of other towns' Town Administrator position and that there needs to be an increase of hours in that position and a possible reduction in the assistant position to fall within the budgetary guidelines. Rework the 2 positions to stay within the same budget. The job description range will change as well as pay scale, so both jobs

will need to be reposted. Vice-Chair Morse said she would reach out to Kevin Fox, Town Coordinator for Colrain to discuss his position.

Loretta Dionne asked about the reducing the hours of the admin assistant position in half. The Board said that there would be a need for more hours than half of the 32 hours that are currently scheduled for. Ms. Dionne further asked why it has been repeatedly mentioned that “town hall is broken” and have any of those issues been addressed by the Board. Chair Sokol said he thought that the staff members were performing their duties, it was that structure that was broken and regretted that it seemed that employees were at blame. Selectman Silva said it was the process that was broken.

It was agreed to set the meeting of April 16, 2020 to strictly discuss the Town Administrator position.

Left the Meeting: Selectman Silva left the meeting at 7:46 p.m.

Employee Matters related to Covid-19: Chair Sokol said that there was a question raised asking for town guidance on what should be done regarding an employee’s ability to work or not work due to the corona virus. There was the possibility of changing job requirements due to corona virus. Chair Sokol said that as long as safe working distances and safe working environments are held that employees should continue to work. In cases where because of the nature of the job due to the virus they cannot work, there was a question as to whether they should be paid. Following discussion, it was agreed that Chair Sokol would work on a policy and present it to the Board for review and then notify town departments.

There was discussion about the situation if the corona virus occurs in town and what might need to be done to continue working. There was discussion about wearing masks and gloves when in time.

Executive Secretary Request – re: Vacation Leave Policy: Executive Secretary presented a draft Vacation Leave Requirement extending FY20 employee vacation time waiving the requirement to use their vacation time by June 30, 2020.

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to extend the vacation time for employees waiving the requirement to use their vacation time by June 30, 2020 to June 30, 2021 and notifying employees. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Morse.

A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: yes

Vice-Chair Morse: yes

Selectman Silva: absent

Citizen Comments: None

Unforeseen Business (within preceding 48 hours)

Adjournment:

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Morse.

A roll call vote was taken:

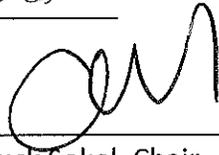
Chair Sokol: _____ **yes**
Vice-Chair Morse: _____ **yes**
Selectman Silva: _____ **absent**

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

Approval Date: _____ APRIL 30, 2020

Approved:



Chuck Sokol, Chair



Selectman Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair

Selectman Ed Silva

Documents:

1. Agenda 04/02/20
2. Draft Minutes of 03/24/20
3. Draft Minutes of 03/31/20
4. Draft Vacation Leave Policy
5. Admin Asst. Request – re: Draft Retirees Policy benefit deductions
6. Job Description – Draft Town Administrator – JB edits
7. Job Description – Draft Assistant Town Administrator – PMIII edits
8. Job Description – Draft Town Administrator – Ed Silva edits ver. 4/2/20
9. Job Description – Draft Assistant Town Administrator – Ed Silva edits ver. 4/2/20
10. DOR Administrative Review
11. DLS Bulletin re: An Act to Address Challenges Resulting from COVID-19
12. DLS Bulletin re: An Act to Address Challenges Resulting from COVID-19 – Addendum to Bulletin 2020-2
13. MTWP- Long View Forest Bid Proposal
14. Letter to OEHD re: Drop Cost Assistance Request – Rowe
15. Town Clerk – Waiver Application- Voter Turnout Figures 2016 – 2019
16. Draft Letter to Employee