



Town of Rowe  
**Board of Selectmen** Minutes  
Thursday, September 30, 2021–6:00 p.m.  
Rowe Town Hall – Hearing Room 1

**Board of Selectmen:** Chair Charles Sokol (participating via remote), Vice-Chair Joanne Semanie, Selectman Ed Silva  
**Present:** Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau  
**Audience:** Rowe Principal Bill Knittle, School Committee Chair Susan Zavotka, C.Selmi Hyttinen, Police Chief Julie Shippee, Assessors' Chair Rick Williams

**Call to Order:** Chair Sokol called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Announcement of recording devices- One  
Noteworthy Announcements- None

**Minutes:**

1. Board of Selectmen Minutes of September 16, 2021

**MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES: Chair Sokol made a motion to accept the Minutes of the Meeting of August 16, 2021 as presented. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie was accepted. (vote: 2-0-1 Selectman Silva abstained from the vote)**

**Ongoing Projects: Tabled until a later date**

1. Policy Updates and Review:
  - Updates to the Personnel Policy Manual
  - Updates to Policies Manual
2. Updating Job Descriptions with Wage Chart Column Assignments
3. Bylaw Review

**Appointment 6:00 p.m.: Principal Knittle and School Committee Chair Zavotka:**

**Discussion about Winter Snow Removal at Rowe School:**

There was discussion about the snow removal at the school and the problems they were having with the contracted service. DPW could not use their plows as they were too large for the property and they had to contract out. Issues arise due to the plowing going over what the custodian has already done. Principal Knittle said he had talked with the Contractor and Highway Superintendent about the problem. Principal Knittle said a bench was damaged by the plow. It was decided to write out a description of the scope of work and have a contract put together by Principal Knittle to resolve the matter and present it to Highway Superintendent and the Board of Selectmen for review.

Fire Chief Discussion:

Principal Knittle said he had difficulty obtaining a response from the Fire Chief for two items: to work with school custodian to train him on the fire pump system. He also had no response for a review of a fire pit design and would like feedback on the addition to the outdoor classroom. Selectmen Chair Sokol said to email a request and copy the Board to document.

Tent:

Executive Secretary said that the town tent was damaged at the school last year and wondered if the town could share the replacement tent for future activities. It was agreed to discuss further once the pandemic threat was gone and activities resumed.

Rowe Principal Bill Knittle and School Committee Chair Susan Zavotka left the meeting at 6:37 p.m.

**Appointment 6:30 p.m.: Tax Classification Hearing:**

Board of Assessors Conduct Tax Classification Hearing to Establish Tax Rate:

Assessors' Chair Rick Williams presented recommendations for fiscal year 2022 for setting the tax rate. He explained that per Dept. of Revenue (DOR) criteria, the Town continues to be eligible to shift the tax burden from Residential to Commercial-Industrial-Personal taxpayers by utilizing a split tax rate, accomplished by the Board of Selectmen adopting a Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) of less than 1.0 at a Tax Classification Hearing. On September 27, 2021 the Board of Assessors voted to recommend the adoption of the minimum allowable MRF of 0.6438. The resulting tax rates are 5.33 residential and 8.69 commercial-industrial-personal.

Residential Values:

Chair Williams further explained that there was a big change in the town real estate sales which has resulted in an increase in home values by 30% and outbuilding values increasing in value by 50%. Land values remained unchanged.

Appellate Tax Board:

Chair Williams said that the abatements that were filed in 2019, 2020 and 2021 have not been resolved by the Appellate Tax Board (ATB) due to Covid-19 and the courts being closed. The result is that the town must maintain the Assessors' Overlay Account at \$600,000.00 to prepare and protect the town of court decisions.

Excess Levy Capacity:

The Assessors reported excess levy capacity to be at over \$800,000.00 which is a dramatic change from the past when budgets were extremely tight. Rowe is the second lowest tax rate in the state and tax bills will be sent in mid to late October.

**MOTION TO ADOPT: Following discussion, Chair Sokol made a motion to adopt a Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) of 0.6438 as recommended and approved by the Board of Assessors. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.**

**Roll call vote: Chair Sokol: yes Selectman Silva: yes Vice-Chair Semanie: yes (vote: 3-0-0)**

The Tax Classification Hearing ended at 7:15 p.m.

Assessors Chair Rick Williams left the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

**Appointment 7:00 p.m. Police Chief:**

Training Requirements for the Police Dept. :

Police Chief Shippee presented information about the new regulations imposed on all police officers in Massachusetts. It requires that Police Officers complete an additional amount of training as required by the Municipal Police Training Committee (MPTC). It can be taken through the MPTC Bridge Academy consisting of:

- approximately eighty (80) hours of online curriculum
- four (4) examinations on the course material
- forty (40) hours of in-person firearms training
- forty (40) hours of in-person defensive tactics training
- forty (40) hours of in-person emergency vehicle operator course.

The total program is approximately two hundred (200) hours. All testing will be proctored at an MPTC testing site. It begins October 1, 2021 and runs through June 30, 2024.

Due to the time constraints, this year only, MPTC is allowing access to the online eighty (80) hours of curriculum with just proof of a scheduled medical exam so people can get started right away. The entire Bridge Academy Training Program must be completed on or before June 30, 2022, for individuals with last names beginning with the letters A-H.

Last Names beginning with I-P certification expires July 1, 2023

Last Names beginning with Q-Z certification expires July 1, 2024

There was discussion about the condition of the second cruiser (Toyota 2011) which is having issues including rear brakes, exhaust leak, starter issues. Chief Shippee said that, as part of the training, for the in-person emergency vehicle operator course, a cruiser will be required for the week and if the 2<sup>nd</sup> cruiser is not repaired, that would leave the town without a cruiser for the week. Chair Sokol requested that Chief Shippee find out if Rowe could apply for a hardship case and use a vehicle provided by the training facility. There were also some fees involved with providing standard equipment requirements for attending the training.

Following discussion, it was agreed to ask Finance Committee to attend next meeting to discuss funding options, including a Reserve Fund Transfer.

**Unforeseen Business (within preceding 48 hours)**

MLP Manager David Dvore asked to speak with the Board to complain about how Executive Secretary had not acted quickly in response to a request he made to have Town Counsel review an easement for the Petrie Road Project for an underground conduit to secure redundancy for the town broadband before winter. He also said he was not on the agenda as he had asked. Executive Secretary said she was short-staffed and had multiple items that were on deadline. She also learned from Town Counsel that a formal town vote would be required for the easement. Following discussion, it was agreed to contact Town Counsel to finalize a license to be used in the interim and the Board of Selectmen agreed to meet as soon as it was received to sign.

David Dvore left the meeting at 8:08 p.m.

**Selectboard Business:**

**New Business:**

**MVP Designation:**

Rowe received formal Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Certification by the state which may make it possible to apply for future grants. It requires that a committee meet once a year to discuss progress and future plans.

**Meeting Report – Fire Chief Shared Services:**

An initial meeting with Charlemont took place with Charlemont Selectman Giard and Town Administrator and Janice Boudreau and Vice-Chair Semanie. Discussion centered on succession planning for Fire Chief when he reaches retirement age. A first step was to review the Job Description and MOU agreement and meet again to continue discussion.

Boundaries of the Town Vote:

Town Clerk requested to have the Board vote to confirm the boundaries of the town as part of the single Precinct confirmation vote completed at last meeting.

**MOTION TO CONFIRM: Chair Sokol made a motion to confirm the 'Precinct 1 Rowe Town Boundary Description' form. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.**

**Roll call vote: Chair Sokol: yes Selectman Silva: yes Vice-Chair Semanie: yes (vote: 3-0-0)**

Finance Committee Chair requested appointment of a 5<sup>th</sup> Person: Tabled until next meeting

**Old Business:**

Burn House Training Clean-Up – Demolition Quotation Review:

A quotation from Hilltown Demolition LLC was reviewed by the Board for cleaning up the debris left remaining from the Rowe Fire Dept. training exercise completed on July 31, 2021 on 17 Middletown Hill Road. According to contract, cleanup was to be completed in 10 days following the structure burning. Selectman Silva said it was a situation the Board inherited from a prior Board of Selectmen and needed to be dealt with.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT QUOTATION: Chair Sokol made a motion to accept the quotation from Hilltown Demolition LLC of No. Adams, MA for \$5478.00. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.**

**Roll call vote: Chair Sokol: yes Selectman Silva: yes Vice-Chair Semanie: yes (vote: 3-0-0)**

Chair Sokol and Vice-Chair Semanie invoked the Rule of Necessity as the property owner is a family member.

The Board of Selectmen asked that Executive Secretary contact Hillside Demolition and arrange the details of the clean-up.

**Warrants/Contracts:**

1. Review Warrants FY22W7 and FY21PW7: Vice Chair Semanie would review on Friday.

**Unforeseen Business (within preceding 48 hours)**

Chair Sokol said the Board received an email from Treasurer who said she had an unpleasant exchange with a citizen who was angry about a tax bill. She asked the Board to consider what could be done to inform citizens about the Code of Conduct Policy in the future. There was discussion about the safety as she had expressed some fear about the exchange and that incidents were occurring that made employees feel threatened. Vice-Chair Semanie said she would write something up to be included in an upcoming Goal Post regarding the Code of Conduct Policy for visitors.

**Executive Secretary/Administrative Assistant Updates:**

Executive Secretary Updates:

Janice Boudreau reported on the status of the Yankee Road Project. There had been some significant deterioration since Engineer Kin Lam of Lamson Engineering preliminary design study from 2019. He was able to complete the pre-contract worksheet to meet the September 30, 2021 deadline for submission to the MassWorks

program. He recommended the next step was to have a surveyor conduct a survey of the embankment slope and revise the design accordingly and will provide a proposal before the snow comes.

**Next Meeting:**

Next Meeting would be Thursday, October 14, 2021.

**Adjournment:**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Sokol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m. The motion was seconded by Vice-Chair Semanie and unanimously accepted. (Vote: 3-0-0)**

Respectfully Submitted,


Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

Approval Date: October 14, 2021

Approved:

  
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Chuck Sokol, Chair

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Ed Silva, Selectman

  
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Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair

**Documents:**

1. Agenda September 30, 2021
2. BOS Minutes September 16, 2021
3. Rowe Plow Letter
4. Oct 2021 GP Assessors News
5. FY22 – Levy Limit Table
6. FY22 Classification Hearing Recommendation
7. FY22 MRF Options Table
8. FY22 Assessors Mini- RECAP
9. Tax Rate Summaries (FY19-FY22)
10. MPTC Bridge Academy Questions and Answers
11. Draft Policies Handbook
12. Personnel Policy Manual Draft Update
13. Hilltown Demolition Quotation
14. Memo re: MVP Designation
15. MVP Progress Report Sample
16. Town Clerk: Town Description Map
17. Town Clerk: Town Description
18. Executive Secretary Updates