



Town of Rowe  
Board of Selectmen  
Minutes

Thursday, October 31, 2024 – 11:00 am  
Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

| Position  | Name            | P | A |
|-----------|-----------------|---|---|
| Chair     | Joanne Semantie |   | x |
| V-Chair   | Edward Silva    | x |   |
| Selectmen | William Baker   | x |   |

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE: Board of Assessors Chair Rick Williams  
Town Administration: Town Administrator Brooke Shulda  
ZOOM PARTICIPATION: None

Call to Order: Vice-Chair Silva called the meeting to order at 11:07 am  
Announcement of recording devices: NONE  
Noteworthy Announcements: NONE

## Fiscal Year 2025 Tax Classification Hearing

Rick Williams, the Chair of the Board of Assessors, informed the Selectboard that Fiscal Year 2025 is an interim update year. Following an analysis of annual real estate sales, adjustments were made to the values of building lots and excess land, which increased by approximately 5%. However, there were no changes to the values of homes, yard items, and outbuildings.

The following factors influenced the town's overall financial situation for fiscal year 2025:

1. Total Town Valuation increased by 0.9%
2. Bear Swamp valuation remained unchanged in the third year of the negotiated settlement PILOT agreement.
3. Great River Hydro valuation decreased by ~17% because of the negotiated settlement PILOT agreement. All ATB appeals cases are to be withdrawn, and no abatement is required.
4. National Grid (NEPCO/MECO) valuation decreased by ~9.7% because of the revised easement valuation. All ATB appeals cases are expected to be withdrawn, and no abatement required.
5. *New Growth* of \$44,866,506 (final year of crediting Bear Swamp upgrades) resulted in a *Levy Limit* increase of \$454,970.
6. *Debt Payments (prin + int):* Broadband (\$97,117.) and Paving (\$422,665) = \$519,782

The Board of Assessors recommends that the Board of Selectmen adopt a Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) of 0.504, resulting in a Residential /C-I-P split tax rate of \$5.14 / 11.01.

**MOTION TO APPROVE: Vice-Chair Silva motioned to approve the Minimum Residential Factor of 0.504 and the Residential / C-I-P split tax rate of \$5.14 / \$11.01 as recommended by the Board of Assessors. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

## Review and Sign: Great River Hydro Settlement Documents

Rick Williams informed the Selectboard about the proposed settlement between Great River Hydro and Rowe/Florida/Monroe.

1. GRH accepted the FY24 valuation for Sherman of \$17,900,000 (represents ~50% increase over FY18 value)

2. GRH demanded a significant reduction in Deerfield No. 5 valuation to \$22,500,000 (represents ~50% increase over FY18 value). Their basis for this reduction is primarily due to significantly increased National Grid electrical distribution costs resulting from the No. 5 switchyard upgrade.
3. The above values are to be held constant for a 3-year duration through FY27 (similar to the agreement with Bear Swamp, the next Reval for all three towns is FY28).
4. No abatements will be required for the previous years under ATB appeal (FY19 through FY24).
5. All pending ATB appeals against the three Town's for FY19 through FY24 will be withdrawn.

Florida is the most affected by the Deerfield No.5 devaluation, holding the largest percentage of the facility at 48.4%. Monroe follows with 32.4%, and Rowe has 19.2%.

The alternative to accepting this settlement agreement is to move forward with the ATB trial scheduled for December. The estimated costs for legal and appraisal consultant support for the trial are projected to be between \$45,000 and \$60,000 for legal services and between \$53,500 and \$63,500 for appraisal consulting. The cost-sharing arrangement among the towns is as follows: Rowe would cover 70%, Florida 25%, and Monroe 5%. However, all three towns would need to seek town meeting approval to appropriate additional funds to cover these expenses.

Despite the confidence of our legal and appraisal advisors, there was no guarantee that we would win at ATB. While this was not the most desirable outcome, the three town Boards of Adjustment were inclined to minimize our risks and accept the GRH Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Agreement to resolve the issue and move past the conflict.

**MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN: Vice-Chair Silva motioned to approve and sign the "PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAX AGREEMENT" between the Town of Rowe and Great River Hydro LLC, as written. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

\*Please note BOA Chair Rick Williams departed the meeting at 12:07pm.

#### **Board of Selectmen Business:**

1. Yankee Road Federal Funding: designation of authorized signatory. **TABLED**

#### **Unforeseen Business:**

1. Treasurer Ben Gelb attended the meeting at 12:08 pm to address issues regarding payroll errors affecting school employees. Mr. Gelb explained the nature of these payroll errors to the Selectmen and outlined his plan to prevent them in future pay periods. He emphasized the importance of each employee double-checking their pay stubs during each pay period to ensure that all taxes and deductions are correctly withheld. If school employees had checked, this error could have been corrected sooner. It should be noted that whenever the Treasurer made any payroll tax or deduction error, that error was immediately fixed.

#### **Citizen Comments:**

NONE

#### **Future Meetings:**

Thursday, November 07, 2024

Thursday, November 21, 2024

Thursday, December 05, 2024

#### **Adjournment: 12:30 pm**

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: Vice-Chair Silva motioned to adjourn the meeting at 12:30 pm. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

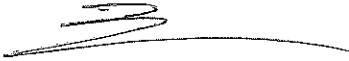
Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

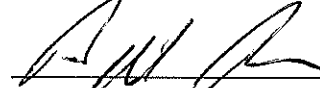
Approval Date: November 07, 2024

Approved by:

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Joanne Semanie, Chair



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Ed Silva, Vice-Chair



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Bill Baker, Selectmen

**Documents:**

1. Tax Rate Summaries Comparison: FY21-FY25
2. FY25 Levy Limit Table (from DLS Gateway)
3. FY25 MRF Options Scenario Worksheet (from DLS Gateway)
4. FY25 Assessors Mini-Recap Sheet