

**Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes**

Thursday, December 05, 2024 – 6:00 pm
Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>P</u>	<u>A</u>
Chair	Joanne Semanic		x
V-Chair	Edward Silva	x	
Selectmen	William Baker	x	

FINANCE COMMITTEE: no audience.
IN-PERSON AUDIENCE: no audience.
TOWN ADMINISTRATOR: Brooke Shulda
ZOOM PARTICIPATION: no audience.

Call to Order: Vice-Chair Silva called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm
Announcement of recording devices: NONE
Noteworthy Announcements: NONE

FY2026 Budget Distribution:

1. Budget Packets will be distributed to all department heads.
2. The Finance Committee Chair will review budget packet documents with department heads and advise them on submission expectations.
3. CIRRP Form and Definition.
4. Budget Assistance sign-up sheet.
5. Questions and Answers.

The scheduled Finance Committee meeting was canceled. To maintain momentum in the budget process, Finance Committee Chair Dan Pallotta authorized the Town Administrator to distribute the FY2026 budget documents to department heads on December 5th. This proactive step is intended to ensure that all departments have the necessary information to review and prepare for the upcoming budget discussions and to offset any potential delay.

New Business:

1. Personnel Policy Manual Review –
 - a. Vice-Chair Silva expressed concern about the Town Hall being closed on the Wednesday of Thanksgiving week, stating it reflected poorly on the town. The town administrator explained the handbook's guidelines and reasons for the closure on Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Personnel Manual wordage is as follows: "If a holiday falls on a day not normally worked by that employee, another day of that week will be considered a holiday that the part-time employee can take off at a pro-rated rate."

Reasons for Town Hall Closure the Wednesday of Thanksgiving week:

1. At the November 21st BOS meeting, Chair Semanic approved a vacation request submitted by the Treasurer/Collector.
2. Other Town Hall employees and members of different boards/committees/commissions working in the Town Hall were approved by their board to work another day of the week they normally do not work. It was stated that these employees did not fall under the purview of the BOS.
3. The Town Administrator would be the only employee working during the day on Wednesday, November 26th.
4. Town Hall is always closed on Fridays. Therefore, employees can take another day off, as stated in the employee handbook.

The TA said she would inquire with the BOS regarding any future closures and believes the handbook should clarify the BOS expectations.

The TA requested that this discussion continue in the presence of Chair Semanie.

- b. The Personnel Policy Manual needs many updates; when all necessary changes have been made, the TA will provide the BOS with a revised copy for review and approval. She is also requesting assistance from other fellow employees to review and give feedback on possible changes/additions to the manual.

2. Licensed Emails/Required Training -

The TA emphasized the importance of completing the monthly training provided by the town's outsourced IT company, NorthEast IT. She shared with the BOS how she found the training beneficial and shared her experience in identifying suspicious emails. She also informed the Board of Selectmen that she is working to schedule a required Cyber Security training for all employees in January. This training will also be offered to members of boards, committees, and commissions to enhance the cyber knowledge of town officials.

3. 2024 BOS Annual Report DRAFT –

Vice-Chair Silva and Selectman Baker stated that the draft shared so far looks good. Neither had anything they wished to add or correct. The TA said she would present the BOS with a final copy for review and approval.

Old Business:

1. Fire Chief Succession Plan – The town administrator scheduled a meeting with the Town of Charlemont regarding the proposed fire district.

Road/Bridge Projects:

Yankee Road:

The Town Administrator informed the BOS she had reached out to five environmental review companies. So far she's heard back from 3 companies, one of which is in the process of putting together a proposal.

Tunnel Road Bridge:

No update.

Hazelton Road Bridge:

The Town Administrator will reach out to K.P Law to inquire about the status of their discussion with Gill Engineering regarding the upstream structure at the bridge site. She hopes to have an update by the meeting on December 19th.

Cyrus Stage Bridge:

No update.

Potential FY25 STM Items:

1. Police Department – Cruiser
2. Transfer of Park Funds
3. Highway Dept. New Vehicle
4. Oil Tank Removal - maybe

Warrants/Contracts:

1. Chair Semanie was unable to review FY25 Vendor & Payroll Warrant #12

Mail:

None.

Minutes:

1. November 21, 2024, Minutes - TABLED

Unforeseen Business:

1. Vice-Chair Silva questioned the Town Administrator regarding her weekly hours worked. He stated that her hours listed on the town website were 8 am-4 pm Monday through Thursday. He also asked why she does not work on Fridays and why the highway department must work five 8-hour days; why do you not have to?

The Town Administrator’s response: The hours listed on the website indicate when I am available to the public. However, I often start my workday as early as 7:00 AM, or even earlier, and I frequently work beyond the public hours, which end at 4:00 PM. At times, much of my work beyond my public hours is done from home, where I check emails, respond to staff inquiries, and communicate via text messages or phone calls, etc. During the week of Board of Selectmen (BOS) meetings, my Thursday workday typically extends to 11-12 hours, depending on the length of the meeting and often offsets my already worked hours for that week. I do often work in the town hall on Fridays (mainly morning hours) and/or work from home on Fridays or sometimes Saturdays. I work in the office if I need to use specific resources and from home if I don’t. Those work-from-home hours could range from 6 to 0.5 hours.

2. Vice-Chair Silva requested that the DPW’s hours on the town website be updated to reflect their current “normal” hours worked. The TA stated she would have the Administrative Assistant make this update the following week.
3. Selectmen Baker asked for an update on audit recommendations. The TA said she would inquire with the town treasurer and accountant about any financial updates made since the financial check-in meeting and would provide an update at the December 19th meeting.

Citizen Comments:

None.

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, December 19, 2024, at 6:00 pm

Adjournment: 7:38 pm


MOTION TO ADJOURN: Vice-Chair Silva motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 pm. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)

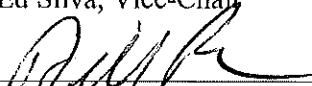
Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: January 02, 2025

Approved by:

Joanne Semanie, Chair


Ed Silva, Vice-Chair


Bill Baker, Selectmen

Documents:

1. Agenda for December 05, 2024
2. Personnel Policy Manual
3. Licensed Emails/Required Training/Cost per email
4. 2024 BOS Annual Report DRAFT