



**Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes**

Thursday, January 16, 2025 – 1:30 p.m.
Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

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

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE: Gordon Cowie, Paul McLatchy Jr., Lockwood Reid II, Susan Gleason, Loretta Dionne, Robert Beaumier, Treasurer/Collector Ben Gelb (@ 2:10 pm), Planning Board Chair Matthew Stine (@ 2:15 pm, Franklin Land Trust Liam Creagan (@ 2:44 pm)

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT: Superintendent Lance Larned, Assistant Super Ken Shippee, Paul Plante, Kyle Shippee

ZOOM PARTICIPATION: Rosie Gordan, Park Commission Chair Laurie Pike (@ 3:11 pm)

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR: Brooke Shulda

Call to Order: Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

Announcement of recording devices: None.

Noteworthy Announcements: None.

1:30 PM APPOINTMENT: Highway Department – RE: Winter Roads Protocol

Vice-Chair Silva requested the Highway Department to join the January 16, 2025, Board of Selectmen’s meeting to review and discuss the winter roads protocol.

Winter Roads: Highway Superintendent Lance Larned provided a detailed explanation of his decision-making process regarding winter road cleanup. He typically initiates road maintenance when snow accumulation reaches between 3 to 5 inches. However, several additional factors influence this decision.

For instance, if a weather forecast predicts only 3 inches of snow, he may opt to delay mobilizing the crew until after the storm has passed. This approach allows him to conserve town resources effectively, as dispatching the crew unnecessarily could lead to increased operational costs.

Conversely, if a mild storm poses a potential risk to school transportation or public transportation safety, he prioritizes early deployment of the highway crew. By doing so, he aims to ensure that roads are cleared promptly, facilitating safe travel for all commuters.

Crew member Kyle Shippee and superintendent Larned emphasized that each winter storm brings unique conditions that must be evaluated carefully. Factors such as the timing of the snowfall, dealing with snow squalls, potential ice formation, the day of the week, and anticipated traffic patterns all play crucial roles in his decision-making process. Ultimately, his goal is to maintain the safety of the community while judiciously managing town resources.

**Ultimately, the decision regarding road cleanup is at the discretion of the highway superintendent.*

UNFORSEEN DISCUSSION – RE: Spring Cleanup & Roadside Mowing

Vice-Chair Silva requested the highway crew to review and discuss their plan for spring cleanup and roadside mowing.

Spring Cleanup: Superintendent Larned expressed that following the end of the winter season, the crew undertook a cleanup to remove debris from the roadside. This effort involved clearing away fallen trees, branches, and other materials that accumulated during the harsh weather. The team works diligently to ensure that the roadways are safe and accessible for travelers, and preventing potential hazards.

Roadside Mowing: Superintendent Larned stated that the absence of a "Grass Hopper" crew has created significant challenges for the highway department regarding roadside mowing and cleanup over the past several years. The crew relies on two pieces of equipment for mowing during the summer months: a side-arm flail mower and a rotary mower. He and the crew members expressed that both pieces of equipment are very slow, and that different roads require different mowing techniques. The Grass Hopper crew comprised several youth employees, which allowed some staff to clear a significant amount of brush and debris further into the woods line while enabling the other crew members to focus on weed whacking.

Vice-Chair Silva encouraged the highway crew to attend an upcoming expo to explore various types of equipment and consider purchasing an additional piece. He advised the crew to test the equipment at the expo. He emphasized the importance of attending the expo soon and reassured them that the Selectmen would secure the necessary funding.

Larned noted that the testing environment would be significantly different from local conditions, which could impact the feasibility of the equipment for in-town use. Larned mentioned that last summer, he and the highway crew attended an expo where they learned about different types of roadside mowing equipment. However, he pointed out that much of what was presented would not be suitable for the Town of Rowe, as the equipment was designed for flatter areas, such as mowing the center or sides of highways.

The Board of Selectmen proposed that the highway superintendent explore the possibility of advertising for a roadside mowing crew. This opportunity is open to anyone aged 18 or older, and the advertisements should not be restricted to only Rowe residents. This seasonal work is expected to begin tentatively in late May and conclude in late September or at the discretion of the highway superintendent and establishment of the suggested crew.

Selectmen Baker told the highway department to “watch their backs” as he has had some residents state, they don’t see the highway crew out on the roads first thing in the morning and would like to see them more visible in town.

Citizen Comments:

Susan Gleason expressed that the Board of Selectmen need better control over their meetings and should be the ones to “watch their backs.”

Resident Marilyn Wilson requested that the Town Administrator read aloud a letter that was emailed to her prior to the meeting. The letter read, *“My husband and I wish to thank our Highway Superintendent, Lance Larned, and the highway crew for their diligence in keeping us all safe here in the mountains with the serious winter weather we get. As I drive through other towns, it becomes obvious that our crew does a great job.”*

*Please note: Highway Department Crew members Lance Larned, Kenneth Shippee, Paul Plant, and Kyle Shippee, as well as residents Gordon Cowie, Paul McLatchy Jr., Lockwood Reid II, Susan Gleason, Loretta Dionne, and Robert Beaumier, departed the meeting at 2:08 p.m.

2:00 PM APPOINTMENT: Treasurer/Collector – Ben Gelb joined the meeting @ 2:10 p.m.

1. Highway Department Holiday Compensation & Overtime Rate and Policy:

Mr. Gelb informed the Selectmen that employees in the Highway Department receive time and a half in addition to their Holiday pay, and they are compensated for up to 4 hours whenever they are called into work on a Holiday.

2. Audit Recommendation Updates

The Town Accountant provided a list of ongoing updates based on the recommendations submitted by Roselli, Clark & Associates Auditing Firm following the audit conducted in August 2024. The list includes the following items:

1. Vendor expenses that are not being directly posted from the stabilization fund.
2. Closure of department projects.
3. Reconciliation of cash and receivables with the Treasurer.
4. Continued research on the deficit balance of \$16,163 to determine if it will be a permanent deficit.

5. Collaborating with the Treasurer on Police Detail deficits.
6. Working towards consolidating payroll deductions into one fund.
7. Reviewing stale balances to assess whether adjustments are needed in the ledger.

3. MIIA – Unemployment Coverage

Mr. Gelb expressed his belief that the town would greatly benefit from being part of the MIIA Unemployment Services Plan. He gave them an example of their helpful assistance with a recent unemployment claim, even though the Town of Rowe is not part of their service plan. The Selectmen requested that Ben request an annual cost before signing and submitting the participation application.

2:15 PM APPOINTMENT: Planning Board Chair – RE: Bylaw Revisions

Planning Board Chair Matthew Stine joined the meeting to review and discuss the proposed zoning bylaw revisions the Planning Board has brought forth.

The changes and additions include incorporating minor additions within Section 2 B, additions in Section 5 A, B, and C, the reservation of section 8 for future use, additional wordage to Section 9, and additions to Section 22 B.

MOTION TO APPROVE & REFER BACK: Chair Semanie motioned to approve refer back to the Planning Board, the proposed bylaw revisions submitted as written. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

*Please note Planning Board Chair Matt Stine departed the meeting at 2:44 p.m.

2:45 PM APPOINTMENT: Franklin Land Trust – RE: Highland Through Trail

Franklin Land Trust’s Liam Creagan joined the meeting to review and discuss the Highland Through Trail Land Access Outreach contract between the Franklin Land Trust and the Town of Rowe.

There were a few minor changes that Liam will revise and send to the Town Admin. The Selectmen requested that the Town Admin request town counsel review the contract prior to BOS signature. Vice-Chair Silva expressed the importance of receiving insurance certificates on behalf of any person or company prior to conducting any kind of work in town.

New Business:

1. Planning Board – Draft Bylaw Revisions – Please refer to 2:15 p.m. appointment entry.

2. Upper Pioneer Valley Veteran’s District – HERO Act.

The Board of Selectmen requested the Town Administrator to send this information to the Board of Assessors to prepare an analysis to figure out the impact of the proposed clauses’.

Selectmen Baker stated he will stop into the Upper Pioneer Valley’s Veteran’s District office to see if he could gather some more information.

3. FRCOG – Collective Highway Products and Services: Bids and Contracts for FY2026

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the Collective Highway Products and Services: Bids and Contracts, contract as written by FRCOG. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Old Business:

1. Fire Chief Succession Plan – No update. Not Discussed
2. Personnel Policy Manual Review – No update. Not Discussed

Road/Bridge Projects:

- Yankee Road: No update.
Hazleton Road Bridge: No update.
Tunnel Road Bridge: No update.
Cyrus Stage Bridge: No update.

Warrants/Contracts:

1. Chair Semanie was unable to review FY25 Vendor & Payroll Warrants #15
2. Franklin Land Trust – Highland Through Trail Contact – please refer to 2:45 p.m. appointment.
3. FRCOG – Collective Highway Products and Services: Bid and Contracts for FY2026 – please refer to new business.

UNFORESEEN BUSINESS:

1. Park Commission – Park vehicle.
Park Commission Chair Laurie Pike joined the meeting at 3:11 p.m. requesting BOS guidance on whether to fix the current park vehicle. The state of the

Mail:

1. Upper Pioneer Valley Veterans District – Hero Act – please refer to new business.

Minutes:

1. January 02, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the January 02, 2025, meeting minutes as written. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Silva, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

2. January 09, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the January 09, 2025, meeting minutes as written. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Silva, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

3. January 10, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN MINUTES: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the January 10, 2025, meeting minutes as written. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Silva, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Citizen Comments:

1. Please refer to 1:30 p.m. appointment.

Future Meetings:

1. Joint BOS & Fin Com Meeting - Thursday, January 30, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
2. Joint BOS & Fin Com Meeting – Thursday, February 06, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
3. Joint BOS & Fin Com Meeting – Thursday, February 13, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
4. Joint BOS & Fin Com Meeting – Thursday, February 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.
5. Joint BOS & Fin Com Meeting – Thursday, February 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Adjournment: 3:19 PM

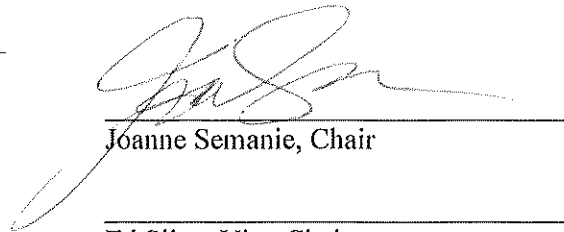
MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:19 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker, was unanimously approved. (Vote: 3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: February 27, 2025

Approved by:



Joanne Semanie, Chair

Ed Silva, Vice-Chair



Bill Baker, Selectmen

Documents:

1. Agenda for January 16, 2025
2. Planning Board – Bylaw Revisions
3. Veteran’s District – HERO Act
4. Franklin Land Trust – Highland Through Trail Agreement
5. FRCOG – FY26 Highway Collective Bids and Services Contract
6. January 02, 2025, Minutes
7. January 09, 2025, Minutes
8. January 10, 2025, Minutes