

**Town of Rowe  
Board of Selectmen  
Minutes**

| <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        |          |

Thursday, February 27, 2025 – 6:00 p.m.

Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1 & Via Remote Participation

- FINANCE COMMITTEE:** Marilyn Wilson, Susan Gleason, Wayne Zavotka, Dan Pallotta  
**SCHOOL COMMITTEE:** Chair Susie Zavotka, Vice-Chair Matt Stine, Member Beth Balawick  
**SCHOOL ADMIN:** Principal Bill Knittle  
**IN-PERSON AUDIENCE:** Treasurer/Collector Ben Gelb  
**ZOOM PARTICIPATION:** FinCom Member Loretta Dionne, Accountant Angela Garrity, NBSU Superintendent John Franzoni, NBSU Assistant Superintendent Tara Barnes, NBSU Business Manager Lisa Blackmer, NBSU IT Manager Josh Arrico  
**TOWN ADMINISTRATOR:** Brooke Shulda

**Call to Order:** Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Announcement of recording devices:** NONE

**Noteworthy Announcements:** NONE

## Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Hearings

### 6:00 PM Budget Hearings

#### 1. Rowe Elementary School/School Committee

Susie Zavotka, the Chair of the School Committee, presented the Rowe Elementary School Budget to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. She began by explaining to both the Selectboard and the Finance Committee that certain budget items were beyond the control of the School Committee. These include the tuition for Mohawk Trail High School, which is set to increase by 7.24% for FY26; the tuition for Franklin/McCann Technical School, which will decrease by 35.33% for FY26; high school transportation costs, which will rise by 9.65% for FY26; and elementary school bus transportation, which will see an increase of 9.12% for FY26. Chair Zavotka emphasized that the elementary school budget is largely within the control of the School Committee.

The School Committee and Administration left the meeting unsure how to integrate the increased health insurance costs into the budget. The Finance Committee Chair was not present to clarify his expectations.

School Committee Vice-Chair Matt Stine distributed a draft copy of the Elementary School capital improvement maintenance schedule he created.

\*Please note the School Committee adjourned and departed the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

### 7:00 PM Budget Hearings

#### 1. Accountant

Accountant Angela Garrity presented the accountant budget to both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. The accountant's salary has significantly decreased, as the accountant's services are no longer shared with the Town of Monroe, although the salary will be increased

once the Board of Selectmen vote on the COLA. The request is to keep the accountant expense line level-funded while proposing an increase in the software license line. Overall, the accountant's budget has decreased by \$15,974.00.

\*Please note Accountant Garrity left the meeting at 7:06 p.m.

## 2. Treasurer/Collector

Treasurer/Collector Ben Gelb presented the Treasurer/Collector budget to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. Treasurer Gelb has requested to level fund the Treasurer/Collector operations. The annual salary increase will be reflected once the Board of Selectmen votes on the COLA increase.

\*Please note T/C Gelb joined the meeting at 6:55 p.m. and departed the meeting at 7:08 p.m.

## 3. General Administration/Board of Selectmen

Town Administrator Brooke Shulda presented the General Government budget to the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee. Anticipating that both the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Finance Committee (FinCom) may deny her proposal, the Town Administrator requested a one-time increase for the Administrative Assistant, Custodian, and Snow Removal positions, as she believes these roles deserve higher compensation.

In addition to these personnel increases, a few budget line items have been adjusted:

- IT Consultants: Increased by approximately \$1,600 due to the addition of another licensed email user for the Public Safety Administration.
- Town Administrator Dues and Trainings: Increased by \$750.
- Legal Expenses: Increased by \$7,000, with \$5,000 requested by the Planning Board and an additional \$2,000 requested by General Administration to cover increased costs and ongoing legal matters.

Various Assessments have seen increases and decreases, over which the town has no control, including those for veterans, the regional dog kennel, and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG).

Insurance costs have seen significant increases: Group Health insurance rates have risen by 18-20%, depending on the HMO or PPO plans selected. Additionally, she informed both the Board of Selectmen (BOS) and the Finance Committee (FinCom) that over the past three years, the town has not allocated the appropriate funds for the Berkshire County Retirement System Assessment on behalf of the Northern Berkshire School Union (NBSU) School System. The assessment for FY26 is \$10,552.

Miscellaneous Costs: An increase of \$2,000 is requested for streetlights, while Beautification and Dam Maintenance remain level-funded, and no funds are requested for Gracy House.

The Town Admin provided the BOS and FinCom with the following list of projects for FY26;

- Town Hall Front Door Replacement \$25,000
- Record Management Services \$15,600
- REQUIRED IT Upgrades \$15,345
- Town Hall Lighting Upgrades \$15,000
- SCHOOL Oil Tank Removal/Installation \$300,000

**Citizen Comments:**

NONE

**Future Meetings:**

Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

**Adjournment:** 8:19 p.m.

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:16 p.m. The motion, seconded by Selectmen Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

Respectfully Submitted,

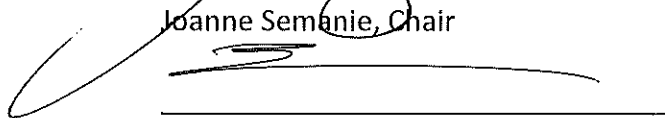
Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: April 10, 2025

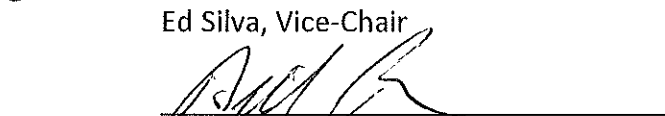
Approved by:



Joanne Semanie, Chair



Ed Silva, Vice-Chair



Bill Baker, Selectmen

**Documents:**

1. Agenda for February 20, 2025
2. Rowe School Committee FY26 Budget Submission Documents
3. Treasurer/Collector FY26 Budget Submission Documents
4. Accountant FY26 Budget Submission Documents
5. Board of Selectmen/General Administration Budget Submission Documents