



**Town of Rowe**  
**Board of Selectmen**  
**Minutes**

Thursday, November 20, 2025 – 6:00 PM  
Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

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**BOARD OF SELECTMEN:** Joanne Semanie, Bill Baker

**TOWN OFFICIALS:** Board of Assessors Chair Rick Williams, Board of Assessors Ellen Miller, Town Administrator Brooke Shulda

**ZOOM PARTICIPATION:** Town Clerk Kevin Balawick, Ed Silva

**IN-PERSON AUDIENCE:** Greenfield Recorder's Madison Schofield

**Call to Order:** Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM

**Announcement of recording devices:** None.

**Noteworthy Announcements:** None.

**APPOINTMENTS:**

6:00 PM – Assessors – FY2026 Tax Classification Hearing

Assessors' Chair Rick Williams attended the meeting to inform the Selectboard of the Board of Assessors' recommendation on the FY26 tax rate. The Assessors recommend adopting a Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) of 0.500, which would result in a Residential/Commercial, Industrial, and Personal (C-I-P) split tax rate of \$ 5.24/\$11.42, reflecting a ~1.9% / 13.7% increase.

Tax Rate Recommendation Explanation:

Chair Williams stated that this year was an interim year. Based on the annual real estate sales analysis, residential valuation adjustments were made to building lot land values (adjusted up to approximately 13%), excess land values (adjusted up to approximately 5%), and home values (adjusted upward by 1 to 15% depending on house type). Yard items and outbuildings saw no changes.

Chair Williams also explained that the overall residential valuation has increased by ~10.9%. Both Great River Hydro and Bear Swamp are still under Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreements with the Town, so there were no changes to their overall valuations. The total Town valuation has increased by ~1.7%. The resulting Single Family Average Tax bill will increase by ~\$200 or ~13.1%. One newly constructed home was added to the tax base, the BOA authorization of a \$110,000 transfer from Overlay to Overlay Surplus for use at ATM, new growth of \$6,891,102 resulting in a Levy Limit increase of \$71,502, Broadband Debt (\$30,049) and Paving Debt (\$420,949) payments totaling \$450,998, and ATM/STM appropriations resulting in a Tax Levy increase of 4.6% over the prior year also contributed the Town's financial situation for FY26.

**MOTION TO APPROVE RECOMMENDATION: Chair Semanie motioned to approve the Board of Assessors' Tax Rate recommendation to adopt a Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) of 0.500 for Fiscal Year 2026. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote:2-0-0)**

\*Please note Assessors Chair Williams and Assessor Miller departed the meeting.

## New Business:

### 1. Selectboard Vacancy – Special Election

Town Clerk Kevin Balawick joined the meeting to recommend a special election date of Saturday, February 07, 2026, if the Selectboard decides to hold one to fill the vacant position on the Selectboard.

Selectman Baker was in favor of holding a special election to fill the vacancy and of the Town Clerk's recommendation.

**MOTION TO CALL SPECIAL ELECTION: Chair Semanie motioned to call for a special election to fill the Selectboard Vacancy at the recommended date of Saturday, February 07, 2026. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

### 2. Deputy Collector Services

The Treasurer/Collector, Jakob Voelker, provided the Town Administrator with an email explaining that the Town's current Deputy Collector, Point Software, will be discontinuing deputy collector services at the end of December. In his email, he informed that he has reached out to and plans to consult with Jeffery & Jeffery, a reputable family business that provides Deputy Collector Services. He noted the immediate need for these services and the timeline the Town is facing if action is not taken promptly.

### 3. Culvert Inventory & Assessment Report

In early spring, the Open Space and Recreation Committee initiated a Culvert Inventory & Assessment for the Town conducted by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The Town Administrator received the results of the assessment, noting that FRCOG staff had identified 558 culverts and drainage structures throughout the Town. She mentioned that 7% are in poor condition, 9% in critical condition, and 1% are inaccessible.

### 4. Town Hall Air Conditioner Window Units

With the update to the heating and cooling system in the Town Hall, there will be five window units left unused. The Town Administrator asked if the Selectboard has any ideas on how to handle the units or if she should draft a bid to put in the goal post for residents to have the first opportunity.

Selectman Baker asked if there was a way to use the air conditioning units to help elderly residents who lack cooling options during the summer months. Chair Semanie pointed out that while this is a good idea, it would require someone to bring the units to residents' homes, install them, uninstall them, and decide who should have priority.

Chair Semanie suggested offering them to other departments first, and, if any units remain, putting them out for bid to residents.

## FUTURE STM Items:

1. FY26 Mid-Year 20% Health Insurance Increase
2. Yankee Road – Parcel Donations

**Old Business:**

1. Fire Chief Succession Plan – Chair Semanie suggested meeting in person after the holidays.
2. Personnel Policy Manual – no update.
3. Franklin Land Trust: 08/23/2025 Bike Race Letter

The Town Administrator drafted a letter to the Franklin Land Trust (FLT) regarding the D2R2 bike race held on August 23rd. Since FLT did not provide a certificate of insurance as requested by the Park Commission, bikers were not following the rules of the roads, such as riding five or more abreast. The letter included a plan and rules requiring the FLT to meet with Town Public Safety Officials, including the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Public Safety Admin, before any future race is held in Town. This letter aims to keep both the bikers and Town residents safe as they drive through Town.

**MOTION TO SIGN & SEND LETTER: Chair Semanie motioned to sign and send the Franklin Land Trust letter regarding the D2R2 Bike Race requirements as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

4. Cliff Swallow – Point of Contact Letter - TABLED

**Ongoing Projects:**

Yankee Road: The Town Administrator informed the Selectboard that she has been actively collaborating with K.P. Law on the easement process and has scheduled a site visit as requested by Great River Hydro (GRH). The visit, involving Lamson Engineering, GRH, and Yankee Atomic, is set for Thursday, December 4, at 11:00 AM, to address any questions from the abutters, GRH and Yankee Atomic. She also noted the possibility that Yankee Atomic may not be an abutter, as the parcel identified as theirs is in question. Assessors' Chair Rick Williams has contacted the Town's mapping company, CAI-Tech, for assistance with parcel ownership clarification. Additionally, she indicated that further support from Pioneer Valley Planning Group or a similar entity may be needed to ensure the project continues to progress.

Tunnel Road Bridge: no update.

Sam Rice Brook Bridge: The TA informed the Selectmen that the Franklin Regional Council of Governments has agreed to place this project out to bid in December for an early spring 2026 start date.

Hazelton Road Culvert: no update.

Cyrus Stage Bridge: no update.

Oil Tank Removal: no update.

National Grid – 10W19: no update.

Town Hall Heating/Cooling System: The update on the Town Hall heating and cooling system has officially started.

**Warrants/Contracts:**

1. Chair Semanie Reviewed Warrants – FY26 Vendor, Payroll, Deduction & NBSU Warrants #10
2. Grid Wealth – 12 Month Fixed Rate Contract

The TA has been working with Grid Wealth to secure a competitive electric rate through a new proposed 12-month fixed rate at 0.13655 per kWh. Selectman Baker has verified whether this rate is truly competitive, and his findings confirm that it is.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT & SIGN: Chair Semanie motioned to accept and sign the 12-month Contract with Grid Wealth at the fixed rate of 0.13655 per kWh as offered. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

3. DEP Award Contract

For the past several years, the Town of Rowe has received \$6,000 in Grant funding from the Recycle Dividends Program in the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) for its continued commitment to recycling and waste reduction. This year, the Town has received another \$6,000 in Grant funds.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT & SIGN GRANT: Chair Semanie motioned to accept and sign the Grant Scope of Work between the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the Town of Rowe as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

4. Green Site Services Group, Inc. - Oil Tank Removal Project Award Contract

The Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) provided the Town with an Agreement between the Town of Rowe and Green Site Services Group Inc., on behalf of the Rowe Elementary School Oil Tank Removal Project.

**MOTION TO ACCEPT & SIGN: Chair Semanie motioned to accept and sign the agreement between the Town of Rowe and Green Site Services Group Inc., as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

**Mail:**

1. None.

**Minutes:**

1. October 09, 2025 – Meeting Minutes

**MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the October 09, 2025, meeting minutes as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

**Future Meetings:**

1. Thursday, December 04, 2025 – 6:00 PM
2. Thursday, December 18, 2025 – 6:00 PM

**Citizen Comments:** None.

**Adjournment:** 7:22 PM

**MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:22 PM. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair Wilson, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: 12/18/2025

Approved by:

  
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Joanne Semanie, Chair

VACANT, Vice-Chair  
  
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Bill Baker, Selectman

**BOS Documents:**

1. Agenda for November 20, 2025
2. Deputy Collector Services Email
3. Culvert Inventory & Assessment Report
4. FLT – Bike Race Letter
5. Grid Wealth Contract
6. DEP Award Contract
7. Oil Tank Removal Agreement
8. October 09, 2025 – Meeting Minutes