



**Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes**

Tuesday, June 10, 2025 – 10:00 AM

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

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

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE:

STATE REPRESENTATION:

State Representative Natalie Blais
State Representative John Barrett
Senator Marks' Office, Casey Pease
MassDOT District Highway Director, Francisca Heming
MassDOT Legislative Affairs, Daniel Racicot
MassDOT Right-of-Way Agent, Scott Burns
Rep. Blais' Staff Director, Corrine Coryat
Rep. Blais' Legislative Aid, Kelly O'Reilly
Rep. Barrett's Office, Kali Puppolo

TOWN OF ROWE:

Board of Selectmen Chair, Joanne Semanie
Board of Selectmen Vice-Chair, Marilyn Wilson
Board of Selectmen, Bill Baker
Town Administrator, Brooke Shulda
Highway Superintendent, Lance Larned
Fire Chief, Dennis Annear
Police Chief, Christopher Hyytinen
Public Safety Admin, Julie Shippee
Board of Assessors Chair, Rick Williams
Open Space and Recreation, Justine Krumm

TOWN OF FLORIDA:

Board of Selectmen, Neil Oleson
Board of Selectmen, Timothy Zelazo
Town Administrator, Joan Lewis

Call to Order: Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

Announcement of recording devices: NONE

Noteworthy Announcements: NONE

TUNNEL ROAD BRIDGE DISCUSSION

State Representative Natalie Blais initiated the meeting by asking all attendees to introduce themselves and state their positions.

Rep. Blais handed the discussion over to Rowe Selectman Marilyn Wilson, who presented a detailed history of the bridge, highlighting its initial construction and subsequent repairs over the years. She discussed the ongoing challenges faced by the town, including structural concerns and the impact on local traffic. Additionally, Wilson addressed issues related to town services, such as maintenance and accessibility, which significantly affect the residents living on the Rowe side of the bridge. Her insights emphasized the importance of resolving these matters to ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

There was significant discussion surrounding the ownership of the bridge, with both the Towns of Rowe and Florida unable to uncover any documentation that would establish their claim to it. Additionally, there is no evidence indicating that either town has officially accepted the bridge as a public thoroughfare. Current speculation suggests that CSX Railroad holds the title to the bridge. In light of this uncertainty, MassDOT has committed to having its legal team undertake an in-depth investigation into the bridge's ownership, contingent upon the approval of both towns.

The District Highway Director of MassDOT, Francisca Heming, has formally informed both municipalities, Rowe and Florida, that MassDOT is prepared to conduct an inspection of the bridge upon both towns' approval.

There was a question about what the two families who live on the Rowe side of the bridge would do if the inspection report required immediate closure of the bridge. A temporary solution was discussed, whereby residents would need to park on the Florida side of the bridge and walk across the bridge to safely reach their homes.

Both towns needed to make two decisions before the meeting concluded: 1. Whether to accept MassDOT's offer to inspect the bridge, and 2. If they wanted MassDOT's legal team to keep investigating ownership.

The Rowe Board of Selectmen left the meeting to reconvene in the Town Administrator's office at 10:51 AM. They briefly discussed the advantages of the two offers made by MassDOT and concluded it was the best approach.

MOTION TO ACCEPT OFFER(S): Chair Semanie motioned to accept the two offers made by MassDOT: 1. To inspect Tunnel Road Bridge, and 2. To continue investigating ownership of Tunnel Road Bridge. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

The Rowe Board of Selectmen departed the Town Administrator's office and rejoined the meeting at 10:54 AM.

Both the towns of Rowe and Florida informed MassDOT of their decisions to proceed with MassDOT's offer to inspect the bridge and continue investigating ownership.

Based on the bridge inspection report, a follow-up meeting will be held to determine the next steps.

Representatives Blais and Barrett, along with the officials from the towns of Rowe and Florida, expressed their heartfelt gratitude to MassDOT for its commitment to support both communities.

Adjournment: 11:00 AM

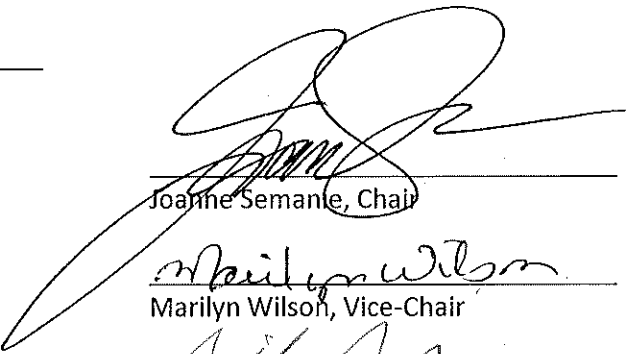
MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 11:00 AM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: June 26, 2025

Approved by:



Joanne Semante, Chair

Marilyn Wilson, Vice-Chair

Bill Baker, Selectmen

Documents:

1. Agenda for June 10, 2025