



Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes

Thursday, January 29, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.

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

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Joanne Semanie, Bill Baker

FINANCE COMMITTEE: Dan Pallotta, Loretta Dionne, Wayne Zavotka

TOWN OFFICIALS: Police Chief – Christopher Hyytenin, Public Safety Admin – Julie Shippee, Fire Chief – Dennis Annear, Town Administrator Brooke Shulda

ZOOM PARTICIPATION: Justine Krumm, Madison Schofield – Greenfield Recorder

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE: None

Call to Order: 6:00 pm.

Announcement of recording devices: None

Noteworthy Announcements: None

Selectboard Meeting Minutes for the Joint Selectboard/Finance Committee Meeting

Budget Hearings:

1. Animal Control Officer – Not present at hearing.

The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee reviewed the FY2027 Animal Control Officer (ACO) Budget. The ACO has requested a \$790 increase in the budget. Both the Select Board and Finance Committee have questions regarding the increase in the ACO relief, operations, and conference lines.

FY26 VOTED: \$1,880

FY27 REQUESTED: \$2,670

2. Police Department

The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee reviewed the FY2027 Police Department Budget. Chief Hyytenin mentioned that there has been an increase in the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' (FRCOG) communications services. At this time, the percentage increase/decrease in the police department's budget cannot be determined, as the Public Safety Admin's (PSA) wages were not included in the submitted budget. Chair Pallotta informed Chief Hyytenin that PSA wages are part of the police department's budget and should be included in the PD budget each year.

Chief Hyytenin expressed his desire to increase police department wages to better reflect the POST trainings mandated by the state. Finance Committee Chair Pallotta stated that he would need to bring this request before the Select Board, as they are the appointing authority and responsible for making such decisions. Chair Semanie requested the Town Administrator to add this topic to the next meeting agenda and request that Chief Hyytenin provide said request in writing.

FY26 VOTED: \$102,260

FY27 REQUESTED: UNKNOWN at time of hearing

3. Municipal Light Plant (MLP)

The MLP Manager, David Dvore, submitted an informational budget that is distinct from the Town's budget, as the MLP maintains its own operating budget and revenue sources separate from the Town's General Fund. Mr. Dvore clarifies that no requests need to be included in the town budget for annual town meeting approval, since revenue generated from MLP operations is allocated solely to fund the MLP budget. This budget approval process requires only the endorsement of the Select Board acting as the ML Board.

4. Fire Department

The Board of Selectmen and the Finance Committee reviewed the FY2027 Fire Department (FD) budget. The Fire Department's budget has been requested to be significantly increased for several reasons.

Fire Chief Salary: The Towns of Rowe and Charlemont are currently in the process of establishing a fire district and are seeking to hire a full-time fire chief instead of a part-time one. To attract qualified candidates, Charlemont and Rowe have discussed a salary range of \$70,000 to \$80,000. Please note that legislation has not yet been approved for the district, and the towns are working on a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the joint hiring of a full-time chief. It is anticipated that once the district is established, the district commissioners will appoint the shared individual as the district fire chief.

Fire Department/Emergency Medical Personnel: The Fire Department has recruited 7 new firefighters within the past 6 months, increasing the personnel budget.

Emergency Medical Equipment: Request to increase this budget by \$2,500 for EMS Software. Chair Pallotta requested that this figure be removed from the operations budget and added to the EMS Upgrade Capital Improvement Repair, and Property Plan Request Form (CIRRP).

FD Operations: Requested to increase by approximately \$10,000; new requests: EMS software (see above entry), and inventory software. Slight increases in equipment testing and vehicle maintenance (engines), and a \$7,000 increase in personnel protective gear.

Shared Fire Chief Vehicle: The current vehicle is shared with the Town of Charlemont and requires maintenance to address existing issues. The agreement between Charlemont and Rowe is to maintain the vehicle and maximize its longevity, at least until the Fire District is established.

Capital Improvement, Repair, and Property Plan Requests (CIRPP):

1. EMS Upgrade: Chief Annear proposed upgrading the new Emergency Response vehicle with equipment that would allow the Town to license the vehicle as a non-transporting ambulance. He explained that this approach allows for a much higher level of care to be provided while awaiting the arrival of a transporting ambulance on scene. Amount Requested: \$40,000
2. Generator Replacement: The Fire Department's generator requires replacement due to its undersized capacity and repeated failures during critical operations. The proposed new generator should be three-phase and correctly sized to support the building's requirements, ensuring reliable and continuous operation. Amount Requested: \$50,000

FY26 VOTED: \$114,017

FY27 REQUESTED: \$171,145

New Business:

1. Reserve Fund Transfer Request – Fire Chief Recruitment

The Board of Selectmen submitted a Reserve Fund Transfer Request for \$7,000 to fund a professional services agreement for fire chief recruitment, as the current fire chief will retire in May.

The Finance Committee approved the Reserve Fund Transfer Request as submitted by the Select Board. (vote: 3-0-2)

Unforeseen Business

Citizen Comments

1. School Committee Member Matt Stine attended the meeting to inform the Select Board and Finance Committee of an upcoming meeting between the Northern Berkshire School Union (NBSU) member schools at Abbott Memorial School on Monday, February 02, 2026, at 6:00 pm. The meeting was requested by the Clarksburg Select Board regarding NBSU budgetary responsibilities and costs.

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, February 05, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Budget Hearing
2. Thursday, February 12, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Budget Hearing
3. Thursday, February 26, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Budget Hearing
4. Thursday, April 16, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Vote FY27 Final Budget

Adjournment: 7:20 PM

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was approved. (vote: 2-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: 2/25/2026

Approved by:



Joanne Semanie, Chair



VACANT, Vice-Chair



Bill Baker, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda for January 29, 2026
2. Department Budgets
3. Reserve Fund Transfer Request