

Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 – 6:00 PM
Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Joanne Semanie, Bill Baker, Ed Silva

TOWN OFFICIALS: Police Chief Christopher Hyytinen, Administrator Brooke Shulda

KP LAW ATTORNEYS: Jeff Blake, Katie Klein (via Zoom Participation, departed at 7:00 PM)

IN-PERSON AUDIENCE: Thomas Houghtaling, Nevin Houghtaling, Levin Hardison, Heather Houghtaling, Deb Houghton, Melissa Houghtaling, *three other participants joined the meeting, of which 2 names were unable to be read, and one that did not sign in – a copy of the sign-in sheet is attached.

Call to Order: Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM

Announcement of recording devices: None during open session, but one (1) device was utilized during the executive session for administrative purposes and was turned off at the time of the adjournment of the executive session.

At this time, Chair Semanie requested that anyone present in the meeting room or participating via Zoom exit the meeting, as the Select Board will be entering into executive session.

Town Attorney Jeff Blake remained in the meeting room, and Attorney Katie Klein remained on Zoom for participation in the executive session.

Executive Session: In accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 30A, § 21 (a)(3) to discuss litigation strategy and in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, § 21 (a)(6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property.

AT 6:03 PM, Chair Semanie entertained a motion to enter into executive session in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, § 21 (a)(3) to discuss litigation strategy and in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 30A, § 21 (a)(6) to consider the purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property (14 Tunnel Road, 22 Tunnel Road, 0 Tunnel Road) and, and declare that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the body and will convene in Open Session. I will entertain a motion. The motion was moved by Selectman Baker and was unanimously approved. (Roll call vote: Bill Baker – yes, Ed Silva – yes, and Joanne – yes, 3-0-0)

Adjournment: At 7:15 PM, Chair Semanie moved to adjourn the executive session. The motion was moved by Selectman Silva and was unanimously approved. (Roll call vote: Ed Silve – yes, Bill Baker – yes, Joanne Semanie – yes, Vote: 3-0-0)

*The recording device was turned off.

The Board of Selectmen has reconvened into Open Session

Tunnel Road/Deerfield River Railroad Bridge:

Nine participants joined the meeting to voice their concerns about the closure of Tunnel Road Bridge following an inspection and rating test conducted by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

The Bridge is the only route for two property owners (Thomas and Melissa Houghtaling, and Levin Hardison) to access their homes. One home is currently occupied full-time.

Chair Semanie expressed sympathy for the situation and said that, unfortunately, we do not have much information at this time. The only known detail is that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has stated that it will close the bridge after the inspection and rating test, as the reports determined the bridge to be in severe and dangerous condition. She added that the Select Board is currently exploring options and hopes to have more information for the two property owners after meeting with MassDOT on Friday, 2/27.

APPOINTMENT:

Police Chief Christopher Hyytinen –

1. Continue discussion RE: Wage & Salary increase request for Police Department Position(s)

Police Chief Christopher Hyytinen joined the meeting to continue the discussion of the wage and salary increase request with the Select Board. The Select Board has reviewed the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) wage and salary assessment and feels Chief Hyytinen's request to increase the position wages for FY27 is reasonable.

MOTION TO APPROVE: Selectman Silva motioned to approve increasing the Police Department wages by moving their positions on the Town's wage and Salary Chart to Grade J, Step 0, and the Police Chief position to Grade L, Step 2, as requested. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

2. Continued discussion RE: "Part-time Fill-in, Special or Reserve Officer" title, potential role, and possibility of future appointment.

Public Safety Admin Julie Shippee (not present at the meeting) researched and asked other police chiefs in the area what the title of a possible "Fill-in Officer" should be. It was recommended that this position should be called a "Special or Reserve Officer".

The Select Board agreed that this position would be helpful for the Town. Chair Semanie stated that if Chief Hyytinen wished to add the position, he would need to submit a formal written recommendation.

Cruiser Update: While attending the meeting, Chief Hyytinen informed the Select Board of a couple of corrections to the new cruiser: emergency lights and horn. He also distributed two quotes for snow tires and outlined his proposed purchasing plan. Additionally, he mentioned that he is exploring options to upgrade the radar gun and acquire body cameras for the department.

*Chief Hyytinen departed the meeting at 8:04 PM.

New Business:

1. Shared Fire Chief Job Description – Review & Sign - TABLED

Old Business:

1. Fire Chief Succession Plan – not discussed.
2. Personnel Policy Manual – no update.
3. Town Clerk Job Description – no update.

FUTURE STM Items: Not Discussed

1. Yankee Road – Accept Easement Parcel(s) – no update.
2. FY26 Mid-Year 20% Health Insurance Increase – Likely to be added to 5/11/2026 ATM Warrant.

Ongoing Projects:

Road/Bridges:

Yankee Road: Refer to Warrants/Contracts #2.

Zoar Rd. Bridge over Sam Rice Brook: Refer to Warrants/Contract #3.

Hazelton Road Culvert: no update.

Steel Brook Road Bridge: no update.

Cyrus Stage Road Bridge: no update.

Tunnel Road Bridge: no update.

Other Projects:

Oil Tank Removal: no update.

National Grid – 10W19: REMINDER: Project Open House scheduled for **Wednesday, March 04, 2026, from 6 – 7:30 pm** at the Rowe Elementary School.

Warrants/Contracts:

1. Review and Sign Warrants - FY26 AP Warrant #16A and, AP, Payroll, Deduction & NBSU Warrants #17.
2. Yankee Road Project – Clerk of the Work – Foresight Land Services, Inc. - Proposal for Construction Phase Services

The Select Board reviewed the Proposal for construction services for the Yankee Road Reconstruction Project. The Town Administrator explained that the cost of these services ranges from \$55,000 to \$115,000, noting that they are needed to complete the project.

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN PROPOSAL: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the proposal for Construction Phase services for the Yankee Road Reconstruction project as submitted by Foresight Land Services Inc. The motion, seconded by Selectman Silva, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

3. Award Contract – Zoar Road Bridge Repair

The Select Board reviewed the award contract for the Zoar Road Bridge repair prepared by FRCOG. During the February 5th Select Board meeting, the Select Board voted to award the project bid to Clayton D. Davenport Trucking Inc.

MOTION TO APPROVE & SIGN CONTRACT: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the contract between the Town of Rowe and Clayton D. Davenport Trucking Inc for the repair of the Zoar Road Bridge over Sam Rice Brook, as written by the Franklin Regional Council of Governments. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Mail:

1. None

Minutes:

1. January 21, 2026 – REVISED Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings

MOTION TO APPROVE AND SIGN REVISED MINUTES: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the REVISED meeting minutes for January 21, 2026, as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

2. January 29, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Select Board Business
3. January 29, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings
4. February 05, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Select Board Business
5. February 05, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings

MOTION TO APPROVE AND SIGN MINUTES: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the meeting minutes for January 29, 2026 (Select Board), January 29, 2026 (Joint Select Board/Finance Committee), February 5, 2026 (Select Board), and February 5, 2026 (Joint Select Board/Finance Committee), as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, March 12, 2026 – 5:00 PM – Selectboard Meeting
2. Thursday, March 12, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearing
3. Thursday, March 26, 2026 – 5:00 PM – Selectboard Meeting
4. Thursday, March 26, 2026 - 6:00 PM – BOS/FINCOM FY27 Budget

Unforeseen Business (within preceding 48 hours): None.


Adjournment: 8:15 PM

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

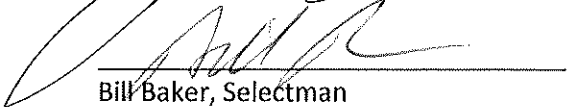
Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: April 2, 2026

Approved by:



Joanne Semanie, Chair



Bill Baker, Selectman

Ed Silva, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda for February 25, 2026
2. FRCOG Municipal Wage & Salary Survey – Franklin County Police Departments
3. Additional Officer Title Email Thread
4. Shared Fire Chief Job Description
5. Yankee Road – Construction Phase Services Proposal
6. Zoar Rd. Bridge over Sam Rice Brook – Award Agreement
7. January 21, 2026 – REVISED Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings
8. January 29, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Select Board Business
9. January 29, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings
10. February 05, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Select Board Business
11. February 05, 2026 – Meeting Minutes – Joint BOS/FinCom Budget Hearings