

Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen
Minutes

Thursday, March 12, 2026 – 6:00 p.m.

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

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Joanne Semanie, Ed Silva Via Zoom Participation, Absent Bill Baker
FINANCE COMMITTEE: Dan Pallotta, Wayne Zavotka, Loretta Dionne, Jeff Bailey
LIBRARY FEASIBILITY STUDY COMMITTEE: Sarah Stine, Kathy Atwood, Justine Krumm Via Zoom Participation
ROWE SCHOOL COMMITTEE: Susie Zavotka, Matt Stine, Patrick Gonder, Rowe School Principal Jon Friedman
NBSU ADMINISTRATION: Jon Franzoni, Tara Barnes, Jordan Rennell
ZOOM PARTICIPATION: Lori Ledger

Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Recording Devices: No recording devices.

6:00 PM Appointment

Library Feasibility Study Committee

Library Feasibility Study Committee Member Sarah Stine provided the Select Board and Finance Committee with an update on the library addition and renovation estimate provided by SSV Architects and requested that an article be placed on the upcoming Annual Town Meeting (ATM) warrant to request funding for the project costs.

Stine indicated that the library addition and renovation project was estimated to cost \$1.89 million. Finance Committee Chair Dan Pallotta requested that she forward relevant documentation and offered to assist the committee in soliciting bids for the project to ensure an accurate funding amount is requested within the ATM warrant. Pallotta also volunteered to support the committee and the Town Administrator in preparing the ATM warrant article for the project.

Pallotta proposed financing the project by initially allocating a lump sum from capital stabilization funds to cover the first year's expenses. Subsequently, he suggested issuing a bond to finance the project's remaining costs, with scheduled repayments made gradually over each fiscal year, indicating that the Road Paving Bond is due to be paid off during the following fiscal year and that the bond could be picked up by the library project. Pallotta noted that this decision is ultimately decided by the town voters.

*The Library Feasibility Study Committee members departed the meeting at 6:09 PM

Budget Hearings:

1. School Committee

Tara Barnes, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services and Curriculum for Northern Berkshire School Union (NBSU), presented the school budget. She reviewed each section of the draft budget, which was distributed at the start of the meeting. Barnes explained that the budgets for Mohawk and Technical Schools are outside the control of the school committee and the union. She also noted that the Rowe Elementary School's budget decreased by \$6,204.13. Barnes mentioned that teacher negotiations are ongoing and hopes to have finalized figures for teachers' salaries and a final budget by March 23rd.

Finance Committee Chair Pallotta stated that he understands some portions of the school budgets are outside the control of the school committees and unions. However, he expressed concerns about the sustainability of a 6.65% increase. Pallotta also mentioned that in the previous fiscal year, he requested that the school budget account for

health insurance costs. Given the significant 40% increase experienced last year, he did not expect the school to absorb that cost into its FY27 budget.

Superintendent of Schools John Franzoni addressed the lack of rural aid and the rising costs of special education. He emphasized that these issues greatly affect small rural communities.

Special Project Requests: The School Committee submitted a request for \$30,000 for the following improvements to the Elementary School: resetting manhole frames and improving emergency vehicle accessibility on the south side of the building; concrete repairs on the sidewalk and exterior steps; and refinishing siding.

FY2026 Approved Budget: \$1,815,268.82

FY2027 Requested Budget (Draft): \$1,935,818.48

Projected Increase: 6.65 %

*The School Committee, Staff, and NBSU Administration departed the meeting at 6:49 PM

New Business:

1. Reserve Fund Transfer Request

The Tunnel Rd/Deerfield River Railroad owned Bridge was recently inspected by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT). Due to the poor condition of the bridge, MassDOT is requiring the Towns of Florida and Rowe to close the roadways and bridge (although the bridge is owned by the railroad) to all traffic on both sides. The bridge is the only access way for homeowners located at 14 and 22 Tunnel Road to access their homes. The railroad has made it clear that they will not allocate any funds to fix the bridge because they no longer have use for it and have no interest in helping the town cover potential costs for temporarily or permanently relocating the residents who live across the bridge. They have also stated that they will not assist the residents by providing a railroad vehicle to safely transport their belongings across the Hoosac Tunnel railroad trestle bridge.

Amount Requested: \$10,000

Reason for Request: Plywood – Quote \$1,645; requesting \$2,200 in case more materials are required.

Appraisal Services – Quote \$7,800

MassDOT agreed that plywood could be applied to the bridge for temporary pedestrian use to help residents move their belongings safely. The highway department will secure the plywood. The appraisal services are to appraise the two properties.

The Select Board reviewed the Reserve Fund Transfer Request prepared by the Town Admin. Chair Semanie and Selectman Silva agreed to approve the request as written.

Motion to Approve and Sign: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the Reserve Fund Transfer Request as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Silva, was approved. (Roll Call Vote: Joanne Semanie – Yes, Ed Silva – Yes, vote: 2-0-0)

The Finance Committee agreed with the proposed request and voted to approve the Reserve Fund Transfer Request.

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, April 16, 2026 – 6:00 PM – Vote FY27 Final Budget

Adjournment: 7:04 PM

Motion to Adjourn: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:04 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Silva, was approved. (Roll Call Vote: Joanne Semanie – Yes, Ed Silva – Yes, vote: 2-0-0)

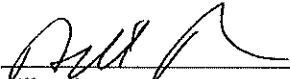
Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator


Approval Date: April 9, 2026

Approved by:

Joanne Semanie, Chair



Bill Baker, Selectman



Ed Silva, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda for March 12, 2026
2. Library Feasibility Study Handout
3. Department Budgets
4. Reserve Fund Transfer Request