Town of Rowe

Board of Selectmen

Minutes

Thursday, September 10, 2026 – 6:00 PM

Rowe Town Hall, Meeting Room #1

BOARD OF SELECTMEN: Joanne Semanie, Bill Baker, Ed Silva
TOWN OFFICIALS: Town Clerk Meg Pallotta, School Committee Matt Stine, Finance Committee Chair Dan Pallotta, NBSU Superintendent John Franzoni, Town Administrator Brooke Shulda
AUDIENCE: National Grid Rob Green - via Zoom participation

Call to Order: Chair Semanie called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

Announcement of recording devices: No recording devices.

* Selectman Silva stated that he had researched alternative options for road detail work in town and found that Fire Department members are eligible to perform details after completing an OSHA flagger course.

6:00 PM
Pole Hearing – Tatro Road

National Grid's Rob Green was not present at the meeting at 6:00 PM to discuss the Tatro Road Pole Hearing so Chair Semanie moved on to other business until his arrival.

New Business:

1. Surplus Property: Pontoon Boat and Trailer – Bid Opening

Three bids were submitted for the Pontoon Boat and Trailer. Resident Jay Williams placed the highest bid and was awarded the surplus property.

2. Special Municipal Employee Designation Update

The TA made minor updates to the Special Municipal Employee Designation documents reflecting the Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk as appointed positions.

MOTION TO ACCEPT: Chair Semanie moved to accept the updates to the Special Municipal Employee Designation, as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

3. National Flood Insurance Program – decide on participation.

The Board requested this item be added to the next meeting agenda.

Pole Hearing – Tatro Road

Rob Green with National Grid joined the meeting via Zoom at 6:20 PM. Because the petition was simple and there were no public objections, the Board voted to allow National Grid to move forward with the petition request on Tatro Rd.

MOTION TO ACCEPT: Chair Semanie moved to accept the pole petition requested by National Grid to install 1 SO Pole on Tatro Road at a point approximately 55ft southwest of the centerline of the intersection of Davenport Rd and to install one SO 35ft Class 4 Stub pole for the purpose of support for P77 with the removal of one tree guy wire. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

*Rob Green departed the meeting at 6:21 PM.

The Board returned to new business #4:

4. Viability of Rowe Elementary School

Discussion Participants: NBSU Superintendent John Franzoni, School Committee member Matt Stine, Finance Committee Chair Dan Pallotta

This discussion focused on Rowe Elementary School's long-term financial sustainability and future direction, including concerns about rising school costs, school choice tuition liabilities, potential regionalization opportunities, enrollment trends, and improving public engagement in discussions about the school's future.

School Choice, Enrollment, and Tuition Costs

Discussion centered on the Town's financial responsibility for student tuition costs associated with school choice placements. North Berkshire School Union (NBSU) Superintendent John Franzoni noted that Rowe could potentially bear tuition costs in certain situations involving middle and high school students attending schools through the school choice program. Franzoni stated that if enrollment capacity at Mohawk Regional School were reduced or seats filled, the Town could become responsible for additional tuition obligations for school choice students graduating from Rowe Elementary School.

J. Franzoni suggested that Rowe explore becoming a member of the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD), noting that membership could eliminate or significantly reduce this potential financial exposure.

Enrollment – Choice and Residential

Board members expressed growing concern about rising operating costs despite a relatively small resident student population, knowing school-choice students make up more than half of the school's total enrollment. Silva asked why the school currently enrolls more school-choice students than resident students and how those enrollments factor into the education of the resident student population. Selectman Baker said Rowe has fewer children, and he believed school-choice enrollment was intended to provide educational and social opportunities for resident students.

Student-to-Teacher Ratio

Selectman Silva asked Franzoni about the student-teacher ratio at Rowe Elementary School. Franzoni reported that the current ratio is 10 students per teacher. Silva then asked whether this was a typical ratio and whether other NBSU member towns or surrounding towns had similar ratios. Franzoni replied that it was not typical and that none of the other NBSU member towns had a similar ratio. Franzoni also mentioned that the state average is 18 students per teacher.

J. Franzoni reported that anticipated enrollment for the 2026-2027 school year is approximately 48 students. The group also discussed enrollment figures for neighboring districts and participating schools within the NBSU.

School Services

Franzoni briefed on developmental screenings for children ages three, four, and five. A majority of students attending Rowe Elementary School require additional services. Both screenings and additional services factor into the school budget.

The school also reported that it has discontinued accepting non-resident students into the pre-kindergarten program.

Potential Regionalization and School Study

Participants and board members briefly discussed potential regionalization and school studies with neighboring towns. The study would focus on evaluating long-term educational and financial options available to the participating communities and explore regionalization possibilities.

Community Engagement
Board members emphasized the importance of involving the broader community in determining the school's future direction, improving communication, and ensuring information reaches residents who may not regularly follow Select Board or School Committee activities.

Board members and School Committee member Matt Stine felt it was important for the Select Board and School Committee to meet jointly in the near future. It was agreed to meet jointly on October 8 at 3:30 PM.

*Franzoni departed the meeting.

Planning Board:
Planning Board member Matt Stine informed the Board that he will possibly request to be placed on an upcoming Select Board Meeting agenda.

*Stine departed the meeting.

Old Business:

1. Charlemont/Rowe Fire District: no update.
2. Fire District Expansion: next meeting TBD.
3. Shared EMS Services: next meeting scheduled for Wednesday, 9/16, at 1 pm.
4. Shared Police Services: next meeting scheduled for Monday, 9/21, at 5:30 pm. The TA informed the Board that she informed FRCOG that Rowe is not interested in participating in shared police services at this time.
5. Personnel Policy Manual: in progress, no update, no discussion.
6. Public Shade Tree Policy: in progress, no update, no discussion.
7. Bylaw: Limitations regarding non-residents serving on Boards/Committees/Commissions – no discussion.
8. Emergency Shelter – Rowe Elementary School – MOU: no update, no discussion.

STM Items: No discussion was held on the below-listed STM items.

1. Yankee Road Easements
2. Hazelton Road Easements
3. FY27 Berkshire County Retirement System Assessment Increase
4. FY26 unpaid invoices: School, Town Clerk, Amazon, etc.
5. FY25 unpaid FICA: Town of Clarksburg
6. Town Clerk Timestamp
7. Planning Board – Bylaws
8. National Flood Insurance Program - Bylaw

Ongoing Projects: No discussion was held on the below-listed Ongoing Projects.
<u>Roads/Bridges/Culverts:</u>
Hazelton Road Culvert: Proposed Tree Hearing date: 10/6 or 10/13 at 6:00 PM.
Steel Brook Road Bridge: no update.

Sibley Road Bridge: no update.
Tunnel Road Bridge: no update.
Monroe Hill Road Culvert: no update.
Yankee Road: no update.

Other Projects:

Oil Tank Removal: update available.
Town Hall Boiler Replacement: update available.
National Grid – 10W19: update available.
Streetlight Conversion: no update.
Record Organization: no update.
Verizon Decommissioning of Centrex Lines: no update.

Emergency Project:

Emergency Planning Meeting: meeting date scheduled for 11/05/2026 at 10:00 AM.
Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan: meeting date TBD; MOU/Agreement – refer to Warrants/Contracts.
National Flood Insurance Program: refer to "New Business" #3.

Warrants/Contracts:

1. Review and Sign Warrants - FY27 AP Warrant #04A and AP, Payroll, Deduction & NBSU Warrants #05.

Chair Semanie reviewed and signed the warrants.

2. FRCOG – Memorandum of Understanding – RE: Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan

MOTION TO ACCEPT AND SIGN: Chair Semanie moved to accept and sign the Memorandum of Understanding by and between the Town of Rowe and Franklin Regional Council of Governments regarding the updating of the Town's Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Mail:

1. None.

Minutes:

1. 08/27/2026 Meeting Minutes – minutes incomplete.

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, October 08, 2026 – 6:00 PM
2. Thursday, October 22, 2026 – 6:00 PM
3. Thursday, November 05, 2026 – 6:00 PM
4. Thursday, November 19, 2026 – 6:00 PM

Citizen Comments
Unforeseen Business (within the preceding 48 hours):

Unforeseen Business (within the preceding 48 hours):

Selectman Silva expressed continued concern about current Health Insurance Group rates and requested that the other Board members permit him to investigate alternative options in conjunction with the TA and the Treasurer. The other two members of the Board were in agreement and felt this was a good idea.

Adjournment: 7:18 PM

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,
Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: 11/05/2026

Approved by:

Ed Silva, Chair

Bill Baker, Vice-Chair

Vacant

Documents:

1. Agenda for September 10, 2026
2. Pole Hearing Support Documents
3. Pontoon Boat Bids
4. Updated Special Municipal Employee Designation Letter to State Ethics Commission
5. National Flood Insurance Program Support Documents
6. Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan
7. FRCOG: MOU RE: Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update