

Annual Town Meeting FY2025 - Results
Town of Rowe
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Monday, May 13th, 2024 at 7:00PM
Rowe Elementary School

Moderator: Robert Clancy

Town Clerk: Kevin Balawick

Board of Selectmen: Chair Charles
Selectman Edward Silva

Finance Committee: Chair Daniel
Wayne Zavotka

Town Counsel: Jonathan Murray, Esq. – KP Law



Sokol, Vice-Chair Joanne Semanie ,

Pallotta, Loretta Dionne, Marilyn Wilson,

The Annual Town Meeting was held on Monday, May 13th, 2024 at the Rowe Elementary School, located at 86 Pond Road.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM by Moderator Clancy. In attendance were approximately forty-eight (48) voters and ten (10) guests. Moderator Clancy opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance. Moderator Clancy read out a brief greeting welcoming voters and guests to the town meeting. He then called for a moment of silence for those Rowe residents who passed away since the last Town Meeting. Those residents were: Ashley Brown, Florence Bjork, Francis Devine, Kevin Sprague, Alfred Morris, Divina Williams, Lillian Danek, Karl Besgen, Joanne Brown, Shirley Veber. Moderator Clancy thanked the town employees, board members both elected and the town hall staff for their service to the town. Tellers were not appointed.

Moderator Clancy asked for a sense of the meeting to permit certain department heads that are not registered voters to speak during the meeting: School Principal, Town Counsel, and Fire Chief. No objections were noted.

Assessor Chair Rick Williams spoke and said there were no changes that were not already published in the Goal Post.

ARTICLE 1: To act on reports of the Town Officers and Committees.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will vote to authorize, pursuant to G.L. c. 44, § 53E½ and the Town of Rowe General Bylaws, the following sums for **REVOLVING FUNDS**, or take any action in relation thereto:

Revolving Fund	Entity Authorized to Spend from Fund	Fees, Charges, or Receipts Credited to Fund	Program or Activity Expenses Payable from Fund	Restrictions or Conditions on Expenses Payable from Fund	Fiscal Years
Emergency Dispensing Site	Board of Health	Receipts Related to the Emergency Dispensing Site Operations	Dispensing medicines or medical supplies during an emergency	Limit of \$1,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025
Recycling Program	Board of Health	Receipts Related to the Recycling Program	Operation of solid waste and recycling programs, membership in and services of the Franklin County Solid Waste Management District, and the purchase of recycled content or environmentally preferable products	Limit of \$5,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025
Vaccine Services	Board of Health	Receipts from Insurance Billing	Vaccine Services	Limit of \$6,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025

School Programs	School Committee	Fees for School Programs	Offset Department Costs of School Programs	Limit of \$10,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025
Old Home Day	Old Home Day Committee	Receipts Generated by Old Home Day Activities and Programs	Expenses of Old Home Day	Limit of \$2,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025
Refuse Garden	Board of Health	Receipts Related to the Refuse Garden Operations	Operation of the town Refuse Garden	Limit of \$5,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025 and Subsequent Years
Planning Board Legal/ Consulting	Planning Board	Receipts Related to Fees for Special Permits and Other Work of the Planning Board	Legal consultation and representation	Limit of \$50,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025 and Subsequent Years
Park Programs	Park Commission	Receipts Related to Park Programs	Operation of programs run by the Pelham Lake Park	Limit of \$2,000.00	Fiscal Year 2025 and Subsequent Years

*Recommended by the Finance Committee vote 3-0-0
Recommended by the Board of Selectmen vote 3-0-0*

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to **AUTHORIZE** the **BOARD OF SELECTMEN** to apply for, accept, and expend federal and state grants as may be available, or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to **AUTHORIZE** the **TREASURER** to enter into compensating balance agreements during the 2025 Fiscal Year, pursuant to G.L. c. 44, § 53F, or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums and to set the stipends/salary compensation for all elected officials of the town as provided by G.L. c. 41, § 108, to be made effective from July 1, 2024, or take any action in relation thereto.

Elected Boards & Committees:

Board of Assessors (3).....	\$5,354.00
Board of Health (3).....	\$4,938.00
Board of Selectmen (3)	\$5,928.00
<u>School Committee (3)</u>	<u>\$4,564.00</u>
Subtotal Election Boards & Committees	\$20,784.00

Elected Town Officers

Constable	\$549.00
Moderator.....	\$439.00
<u>Town Clerk</u>	<u>\$13,835.00</u>
Subtotal Elected Town Officers.....	\$14,823.00

TOTAL ELECTED OFFICIALS' SALARIES FROM TAXATION\$35,607.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE OR APPROPRIATE FROM MLB Grant Account** the sum of **\$90,000.00** for the purpose of paying down **PRINCIPAL ON THE BROADBAND DEBT, RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the sum of **\$370,000.00** for the purpose of paying down **PRINCIPAL ON THE TOWN ROAD PAVING PROJECT**, and **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the sum of **\$59,782.00** for **INTEREST ON INDEBTEDNESS** for the 2025 Fiscal Year, or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **THE CONDUCT OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT**, including the charges and expenses of the various town offices, for the 2025 Fiscal Year, or take any action in relation thereto.

Administration

General Administration.....	\$166,744.00
Municipal Audit.....	\$8,000.00
Town Administrator	\$69,430.00
Administrative Assistant to the Boards	\$37,624.00
Town Hall Custodian Wages	\$14,282.00
Custodian Expenses	\$4,500.00
Maintenance Supervisor	\$13,005.00
Maintenance Sup. Operations	\$26,000.00
Snow Removal Wages.....	\$724.00
Legal	\$18,000.00
Treasurer/Tax Collector Salary	\$64,959.00
Treasurer/Tax Collector Operations	\$20,250.00
Assistant Town Clerk Stipend.....	\$1,200.00
Town Clerk Expenses	\$7,910.00
Conservation Commission	\$1,880.00
Council on Aging	\$8,000.00
Goal Post Editor Wages.....	\$6,926.00
Goal Post Operations	\$2,500.00
Veteran’s Services.....	\$5,207.00
FRCOG Services	\$31,163.00
Town Accountant	\$47,784.00
<u>Town Accountant Expenses</u>	<u>\$4,420.00</u>
Subtotal Administration.....	\$560,508.00

Board of Assessors

Assessors’ Clerk Wages.....	\$13,364.00
Assessors’ Reval/Annual Updates.....	\$10,000.00
Assessors’ Legal.....	\$25,000.00
<u>Assessors’ Operations.....</u>	<u>\$35,199.00</u>
Subtotal Board of Assessors.....	\$83,563.00

Planning Board

Planning Board Operations.....	\$1,500.00
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TOTAL GENERAL GOVERNMENT FROM TAXATION.....\$645,571.00

Explanation: 40% of the Town Accountant’s salary is paid by the Town of Monroe through a shared services agreement.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the sum of **\$30,000.00** to be used as a **RESERVE FUND**, pursuant to G.L. c. 40, § 6, for the extraordinary or unforeseen expenditures for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 9: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for the operation and maintenance of **PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES** for the 2025 Fiscal Year, or take any action in relation thereto:

Highway Department

DPW Salaries and Wages	\$305,740.00
DPW Operations	\$232,729.00
<u>Winter Roads</u>	<u>\$72,100.00</u>
Subtotal Highway Department	\$610,569.00

Other Public Works & Facilities

Street Lighting	\$6,000.00
<u>Dam Maintenance/Repair.....</u>	<u>\$1,200.00</u>
Subtotal Other Public Works & Facilities	\$7,200.00

Cemetery Commission

Cemetery Operations.....	\$18,500.00
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TOTAL PUBLIC WORKS & FACILITIES FROM TAXATION.....\$636,269.00

Passed by Show of Hands

ARTICLE 10: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from **MLB account** the following sums for **MUNICIPAL LIGHT PLANT STIPENDS** for the 2025 Fiscal Year, or take any action in relation thereto:

Municipal Light Plant Stipends

Municipal Light Plant – Manager Stipend.....	\$13,000.00
Municipal Light Plant – Deputy	\$3,000.00

TOTAL MUNICIPAL LIGHT PLANT STIPENDS\$16,000.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 11: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **PUBLIC SAFETY** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Police Department

Police Salaries	\$84,592.00
Police Officer Training.....	\$10,000.00
<u>Police Operations.....</u>	<u>\$13,000.00</u>
Subtotal Police Department.....	\$107,592.00

Fire Department

Fire Department Stipends & Wages	\$45,325.00
<u>Fire Department Operations.....</u>	<u>\$59,340.00</u>
Subtotal Fire Department	\$104,665.00

Emergency Management

Emergency Management Stipends	\$3,864.00
Emergency Management Operations.....	\$1,000.00

Generator Maintenance	\$3,500.00
Subtotal Emergency Management	\$8,364.00

Animal Control and Inspection

Animal Control Stipends	\$1,449.00
Animal Control Relief Officer	\$508.00
Animal Control Operations	\$550.00
Animal Inspector Stipend.....	\$532.00
Regional Dog Kennel.....	\$350.00
Subtotal Animal Control.....	\$3,389.00

TOTAL PUBLIC SAFETY FROM TAXATION \$224,010.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 12: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **PUBLIC HEALTH** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Public Health

Health Department Stipends and Wages	\$85,357.00
Board of Health Operations	\$78,646.00

TOTAL PUBLIC HEALTH FROM TAXATION \$164,003.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 13: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **PUBLIC SCHOOLS** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Education

Rowe School PreK-6 Operating Budget	\$1,211,732.00
Rowe School Secondary 7-12.....	\$612,629.00

TOTAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS FROM TAXATION \$1,824,361.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 14: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **ROWE TOWN LIBRARY** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Rowe Town Library

Library Wages.....	\$53,075.00
Library Operations	\$26,890.00

TOTAL ROWE TOWN LIBRARY FROM TAXATION \$79,965.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 15: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION OF PELHAM LAKE PARK** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Pelham Lake Park

Park Wages.....	\$140,004.00
Park Operations	\$23,700.00

TOTAL PELHAM LAKE PARK FROM TAXATION.....\$163,704.00

Passed by Show of Hands

ARTICLE 16: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **CULTURE AND RECREATION** for the 2025 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Culture and Recreation
Beautification \$1,500.00
TOTAL CULTURE AND RECREATION FROM TAXATION\$1,500.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 17: To see if the Town will vote to **RAISE AND APPROPRIATE** the following sums for **PENSIONS AND INSURANCE** for the 2024 Fiscal Year or take any action in relation thereto:

Pensions and Insurance
Franklin County Retirement Assessment..... \$197,039.00
Unemployment Insurance \$20,000.00
Group Health/Dental/Life Insurance \$700,000.00
Medicare Tax – Town Share..... \$27,000.00
TOTAL PENSIONS AND INSURANCE FROM TAXATION\$944,039.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 18: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from **ANY AVAILABLE FUND** the sum of **\$140,676.43** for the maintenance, repair, improvement, and construction of town highways, or any other purpose allowed under Chapter 90 of the General Laws, which amounts shall be reimbursed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through funds made available by Chapter 90 of the General Laws, or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 19: To see if the Town will vote to **TRANSFER** from **FREE CASH** the following sums for **SPECIAL PROJECTS** or take any action in relation thereto:

FIRE DEPT	New Engine Completion	\$21,849.00
FIRE DEPT	New Tanker Communications.....	\$18,736.00
FIRE DEPT	2003 Mack Tires	\$10,000.00
FIRE DEPT	Safety Building Exterior Paint	\$5,000.00
LIBRARY	Window Repair	\$5,000.00
LIBRARY	ADA Compliance Feasibility Study	\$50,000.00
PARK DEPT	Purchase and Equip New Truck	\$50,000.00
PARK DEPT	Bathroom Siding.....	\$6,500.00
PARK DEPT	Beach Sand	\$6,325.00
SCHOOL	Security Improvements.....	\$12,229.00
ADMIN	Attic Shelving	\$1,200.00
TOTAL SPECIAL PROJECTS FROM FREE CASH.....		\$186,840.00

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 20: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the Board of Selectmen to **ACQUIRE BY GIFT, PURCHASE, OR EMINENT DOMAIN** a fee simple interest in the property located on North Cemetery Road, as described in the deed recorded at the Franklin County Registry of Deeds in Book 1773, Page 289, for general municipal purposes, including, but not limited to, for cemetery purpose, and to **TRANSFER** from **FREE CASH** the sum of **\$20,000.00** to fund said acquisition, and to authorize the Board of Selectmen to enter into all agreements and execute any and all documents and instruments as may be necessary to effectuate the purpose of this vote, or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed with greater than two thirds in favor by Show of Hands

ARTICLE 21: To see if the Town will vote to incorporate a certain parcel of Town Land on Pond Rd (Map 201 Lot 38) into Pelham Lake Park to be used for park and recreational purposes , and to transfer care, custody, and control to the Park Commission.

The moderator took a sense of the meeting to see if voters would approve removing the “under the so-called Percy Brown covenants” phrase from the article. A motion was made to amend the article. Motion to amend passed by show of hands.

Explanation: This approximate 2 acre wooded parcel was previously acquired by the Town in 1997 per Deed Bk 3262 Pg 186. It is adjacent to and surrounded by Park land in the meadow/riding ring area but was never officially designated for park purposes.

Passed by Show of Hands

Recommended by the Board of Selectmen vote 3-0-0

ARTICLE 22: To see if the Town will vote pursuant to the provisions of G.L. c. 41, § 1B, to **CHANGE THE ELECTED TOWN CLERK POSITION TO AN APPOINTED TOWN CLERK POSITION**, to be appointed by the Board of Selectmen for a term not to exceed three years; provided, however, that such change shall not take effect unless it is also approved by a majority of the voters at the 2024 Annual Town Election; or take any other action relative thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands

ARTICLE 23: To see if the town will vote to **AMEND THE GENERAL BYLAWS** as follows:

By amending **ARTICLE II, SECTION 1 OF THE GENERAL BYLAWS**, by **STRIKING** the language indicated in double strikethrough below:

Section 1: The annual Town Meeting shall be held on the second Monday of May in each year; and election day on the following Saturday or a day within two weeks of the annual meeting as designated by the Selectmen, and on said election day there shall be elected by ballot in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 41, §6 and §7ⁱⁱⁱ , the following Town officers:

- A Moderator for three (3) years, when required
- ~~A Clerk for three (3) years~~
- A Tax Collector for three (3) years, when required
- One Selectman for three (3) years
- One Assessor for three (3) years
- One Member of the School Committee for three (3) years

- One Library Trustee for three (3) years
- One Member of the Park Commission for three (3) years
- One Member of the Cemetery Commission for three (3) years
- One Constable for three (3) years
- One Auditor for one (1) year
- One Member of the Planning Board for five (5) years
- One or Two Members (as required) of the Finance Committee for three (3) years

By amending **ARTICLE III, SECTION 1(E) OF THE GENERAL BYLAWS** by **INSERTING** the following bold and underlined language at the end of the bulleted list:

- **Town Clerk**

And by amending **ARTICLE III, SECTION 12 OF THE GENERAL BYLAWS** by **STRIKING** its existing language in its entirety and **INSERTING** in its place the following:

Section 12: Town Clerk

- A. The Board of Selectmen shall appoint a Town Clerk for a term of three years, who shall have all the powers and duties accorded under Massachusetts General Laws.
- B. The Town Clerk may appoint an Assistant Town Clerk in accordance with G.L. c. 41, § 19.
- C. The Town Clerk is authorized, only after consultation with the Board of Selectmen for purposes of clarity, to assign appropriate numbers or letters to bylaw sections, subsections, paragraphs, and sub-paragraphs, and also to make non-substantive editorial revisions to the bylaw for the purpose of ensuring consistent, appropriate sequencing, numbering, and non-substantive edits, provided that such editorial revisions shall be identified by a footnote or other convention without Town Meeting Approval.
- D. Any individual appointed to a position that has not been sworn in by the Town Clerk, Moderator, or a Justice of the Peace within 60 days of their appointment shall be deemed to have declined the position.

or take any action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands

ARTICLE 24: To see if the Town of Rowe is interested in pursuing the creation of a Fire District with the neighboring Town of Charlemont; Or take action in relation thereto. This is a non-binding resolution vote.

EXPLANATION: A Fire District is its own municipality and is operated under the Massachusetts General Laws governing Fire Districts. The structure is much like a town. There is a prudential board that oversees the district.

The district is established pursuant to a special act of the Legislature and is subject generally to the provisions of G.L. c. 48.^[1] The District is an independent entity not subject to the authority of the Board of Selectmen or the Town (Town). It conducts its own annual district meeting at which appropriations and other matters are approved.

The District elects a three-member Prudential Committee whose responsibilities are to expend the money the district meeting appropriates through a treasurer elected by the district. See, G.L. c. 48, s.71.^[2] Section

73 of G.L. c. 48 establishes a limited relationship between the Town and the District. Under s.73, the district clerk will periodically certify to the Town assessors the amount of taxes necessary to be raised, and in turn, the assessors presumably add this total to the Town tax bills. Section 73 provides that: the assessors, treasurer and collector of a town in which such district is organized shall have the same powers and perform the same duties relative to the assessment and collection of the money voted by the Fire District as they have exercised relative to the assessment, collection and abatement of town taxes. In effect, these town officers act as the agent of the district in the collection and assessment of taxes.

There are several factors that will influence the development of a fire district, however, typically the main driving factor is to bring smaller communities and unincorporated areas together under one fire service provider. This helps to provide better service to all the area while reducing redundancy in service and costs associated with this redundancy.

The next question you might ask is how can there be a redundancy in fire protection coverage? Every community needs fire trucks right? This is true however, often times small neighboring communities will have stations very close together because of the size of these communities. Each of these communities will have several types of fire apparatus as well to service each community. This close proximity and large number of apparatus causes an overlap in coverage based on time and distance. Stations staffing and apparatus are a big cost to each community. Having the ability to share these resources while providing better area coverage makes fire districts very effective.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 25: To see if the Town of Rowe would be interested in pursuing a shared Fire Chief with the Town of Charlemont, in the absence of the creation of a shared fire district. This position would allow for more hours to make the position more desirable to others. This is a non-binding resolution vote.

Explanation: Both Towns currently employ the same individual as Fire Chief. This would allow for a formal position with combined hours.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 26: To see if the Town would vote to **TRANSFER** the remaining sum of **\$44,368.76** from **FREE CASH** to the **OPEB STABILIZATION FUND**; or take action in relation thereto.

Passed by Show of Hands, Unanimous

ARTICLE 27: To transact any other business that may lawfully come before the meeting.

Moderator Clancy thanks Chair of the Selectmen, Charles Sokol for his time serving the town. Charles Sokol is not seeking re-election. Moderator Clancy mentioned Bill Baker running as a write-in candidate for Board of Selectmen.

Marilyn Wilson mentioned Meg Pallotta would be running as a write-in candidate for selectmen and that Sue Gleason would run as a write-in candidate for the finance committee.

Suzie Zavotka thanked Roberta Baker for her service to the town as a teacher at the elementary school. Suzie asked for a round of applause for Roberta who will be retiring at the end of the school year.

Ellen Miller asked about street light conversion to LED. Chair Sokol replied that the town is working with National Grid to replace the street lights.

Moderator Clancy reminded the voters to vote at the Annual Town Election on May 18th, 2024. A motion was made and seconded to dissolve the meeting and passed unanimously. The meeting was closed at 7:36 P.M..

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin Balawick, Town Clerk

May 24th, 2024

A True Copy, Attest: _____

Rowe Town Clerk