



Town of Rowe

Board of Selectmen

Minutes

Monday, October 06, 2025 – 6:00 PM

In Person at the Charlemont Town Hall Meeting Room & Via Telephone

ROWE SELECTBOARD:	Chair Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair Marilyn Wilson, Selectman Bill Baker
CHARLEMONT SELECTBOARD:	Jared Bellows, Kim Blakeslee, Wilder Sparks
ADMINISTRATION:	Charlemont TA Sarah Reynolds, Rowe TA Brooke Shulda, Star Atkinson
IN-PERSON AUDIENCE:	Greenfield Recorder Madison Schofield, Lori Shulda-Merrigan
TELEPHONE PARTICIPATION:	None

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

Announcement of recording devices: NONE

Noteworthy Announcements: NONE

Appointments:

6:00 PM - Charlemont Board of Selectmen – RE: Shared Fire Chief, ahead of potential Fire District, how sharing will work, position description, and memorandum of understanding to outline the process.

Charlemont Town Administrator Sarah Reynolds opened the meeting by outlining the history of shared fire services between the Towns of Charlemont and Rowe. Since 2019, the two towns have collaboratively managed fire chief services and have been actively exploring the formation of a two-town fire district over the past three years. During prior Annual Town Meetings for Fiscal Year 2026, both towns voted to advance legislation to establish a district. It is important to note that legislative approval could require up to or exceeding one year and could potentially lapse.

Sarah also discussed how Fire Chief Annear has made notable progress in enhancing emergency services across both towns since he took on his role. He has streamlined staff training programs, upgraded firefighting vehicles to ensure greater reliability and safety with fewer headaches, and implemented cost-effective measures that have improved the financial feasibility of fire services for both communities. She explained how Chief Annear has also offered to assist the two towns with the district transition and in finding a new full-time Fire Chief for the district.

Current Shared Fire Chief Situation: The current shared fire chief, Dennis Annear, will reach the age of 68 in May 2026 and will no longer be able to serve as fire chief for both towns. Both municipalities need to establish a short-term solution for an interim fire chief until the passage of legislation establishing the fire district. Charlemont Selectman Jared Below believes that either Charlemont or Rowe may have qualified and willing candidates to fill the position temporarily until the district legislation is enacted.

Salary for Interim Chief prior to District Passage: Both Charlemont and Rowe Selectboards agreed to consider internal candidates in both departments to see if there's a qualified person to serve as interim Fire Chief until legislation is passed. The salary or stipend will stay the same for FY27 and will remain unbenefited.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): The existing Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) requires the implementation of a clear and structured billing process to ensure an equitable 50/50 cost-sharing

arrangement between the two towns. Both towns' TAs will work collaboratively to revise the wording of the current MOU to reflect 50/50 cost-sharing.

Salary/Benefits for DISTRICT CHIEF: Both boards briefly discuss the future district fire chief salary, which has been suggested to be between \$70,000.00 and \$80,000.00 annually. TA Reynolds proposes reaching out to other local fire departments to determine whether this starting salary falls within the typical range for the position. The salary and benefits for this position will need further investigation, including clarifying the benefits split, as Charlemont pays 75/25 benefits and Rowe pays 85/15 benefits.

District Fire Chief Advertisement: It was suggested to advertise the position through the Fire Chiefs Association.

It was briefly discussed that residents of both towns express both concern and support for the two towns moving forward with the district. It should be noted that no control will be lost as both towns will have equal representation for the district and decisions made within it.

Current Shared Services To Do's:

1. Revise MOU
2. Pre-District Shared Interim Fire Chief

District To Do's:

1. Contact Surrounding towns RE:
 - a. Starting Fire Chief Salary
 - b. Position Advertisement

Continue investigating all other additional district costs.

Both towns were satisfied with the discussion, and both select boards motioned to move forward with appointing an interim fire chief from May 2026 until the district legislation passes, as well as to proceed with revising the memorandum of understanding between the two towns.

MOTION TO PURSUE: Chair Semanie motioned to pursue hiring an interim joint fire chief until fire district legislation has passed, with an updated Memorandum of Understanding. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Town of Rowe Board of Selectmen Business:

1. Fire District Legislation Letter of Support – This letter is intended to support the Fire District proposal to the legislature.

MOTION TO APPROVE AND SIGN: Chair Semanie motioned to approve and sign the Charlemont and Rowe Fire District letter of support as written. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Future Meetings:

1. Thursday, October 09, 2025 – at 6:00 PM

Adjournment: 6:33 PM

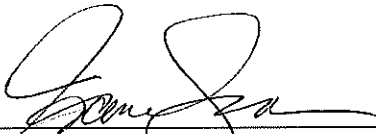
MOTION TO ADJOURN: Chair Semanie motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:33 PM. The motion, seconded by Selectman Baker, was unanimously approved. (vote: 3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

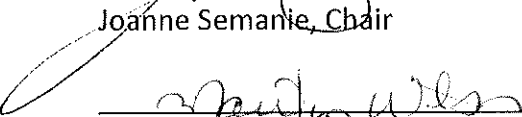
Brooke E. Shulda, Town Administrator

Approval Date: _____

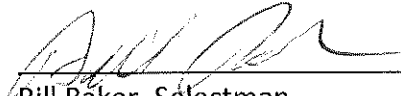
Approved by:



Joanne Semanie, Chair



Marilyn Wilson, Vice-Chair



Bill Baker, Selectman

Documents:

1. Agenda for October 06, 2025
2. Shared Fire Chief Services Memorandum of Understanding