Rowe Finance Committee
October 15, 2020
5:30 P.M. via Remote Participation
Joint Meeting with the Board of Selectmen

Present: Chair Wayne Zavotka, Vice-Chair Loretta Dionne, Christopher "Selmi" Hyytinen, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike
Selectmen: Chair Charles Sokol, Vice-Chair Joanne Semanie
Other Attendees: Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau, Assessors Chair Frederick Williams
Audience of Citizens: None

Note: Due to the national COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held via remote participation as authorized by executive order of the governor. All votes are taken via roll-call vote.

Call to Order: Chair Zavotka called the Finance Committee meeting to order at 5:32 P.M., with a quorum of the committee present.

Note: Due to an important personal phone call, Mr. McLatchy did not participate in the following portion of the meeting. This next section (Tax Rate Hearing) was written by Executive Secretary Boudreau.

Tax Rate Hearing: Board of Assessors Chair Rick Williams explained that he had received revised Cherry Sheets of estimated state aid from the State after completing Minimum Residential Factor (MRF) and it did not affect the MRF calculation. Williams said the MRF was set at 0.6429. He further explained that there was money built up in the Assessors Overlay Account to cover any abatements that may occur since there were some appeals pending at the Mass Appellate Tax Board pertaining to tax years FY19 and FY20. Due to Covid-19 the Board has not met. He recommended the overlay funds remain and be added to in the coming year.

Total Town Valuation increased by about 0.14% to $516,129,500.00
New Growth of $21.52 million resulted in a levy limit increase of $182,828.00

Williams recommended a residential rate of $5.33 and a commercial/industrial/personal rate of $8.64.

MOTION TO SET MINIMUM RESIDENTIAL FACTOR: Chair Sokol made a motion to set the Minimum Residential Factor to 0.6429 for FY21. Vice-Chair Semanie seconded the motion. Roll Call Vote: Chair Sokol- yes Vice-Chair Semanie- yes (Vote: 2-0-0)

Board of Assessors Chair Williams said the excess levy capacity was at $796,927.40. With the tax rate set the Tax Collector can get bills out to taxpayers next week.

Budget Spreadsheet: Members discussed the possibility of using a new budget spreadsheet, as there were some issues with last year's format. Mr. McLatchy felt that the format was less

important, as long as it was uniform across the board. In the past, different departments had different cover sheets containing varying information and detail.

Executive Secretary Boudreau asked when the budget worksheets should go out, regardless of the format. It was agreed that since the budgets would be due on January 1st, the spreadsheets should go out by roughly November 6th.

Capital Improvement, Repair, and Property Plan (CIRPP): The CIRPP is all set and ready to go, and copies of the form and information have been sent out with the invitation for the roundtable next week.

Funding Levels: After discussion about the impact(s) that the Covid-19 Pandemic may or may not have on funding, a motion was made by Chair Zavotka that the Finance Committee aim to continue funding at a 2.5% increase unless income levels cannot be held, and make reductions if needed. The motion was seconded by Ms. Pike, and the roll-call vote was unanimous in favor:

Wayne Zavotka	Aye	Christopher Hyytinen	Aye
Laurie Pike	Aye	Paul McLatchy III	Aye
Loretta Dionne	Aye		

The Board of Selectmen then voted to concur with the Finance Committee's recommendation.

Cost of Living Adjustment: Mr. McLatchy clarified that he would not be taking part in the discussion as he is a town employee and would be recusing himself, but remained for note-taking purposes. The Social Security Administration has released its 2021 COLA at 1.3% for retirees. In the past, this has been used as a guide for determining the COLA for town employees, but has not always been adhered to. Vice-Chair Semanie said she was torn as she would like to see it at 2.5%, but the recommended number is 1.3%. Chair Sokol also would like to see it at 2.5%. He noted that the town is not obligated to choose any particular number, and that the SSA's COLA is just a guide. The Board of Selectmen then voted to recommend a 2.5% COLA for town departments. The Finance Committee took no vote and made no recommendations.

Tractor Purchase: There is a special town meeting coming up that is requesting money from the Capital Stabilization Fund to purchase a new tractor for the school. Mr. Hyytinen stated that he would like to see a form or process for equipment replacement that includes reaching out to other departments to see if they would like the use equipment, and how to balance that against potential trade-in values. Members agreed that this was a good idea, as the town does not want to invest too much money into old equipment, but might be able to get additional use out of it. The Finance Committee expressed concerns that residents may take issue with this article as a tractor was bought for the school not that long ago. They want to make sure that people who are requesting funds are present to answer any questions that may arise on town meeting floor.

Next Meeting: The committee will meet on October 20th for the roundtable discussion.

Adjourn: A motion was made by Ms. Pike and seconded by Mr. McLatchy to adjourn the meeting at 6:49 P.M. The roll-call vote was unanimous in favor:

Wayne Zavotka	Aye	Christopher Hyytinen	Aye
Laurie Pike	Aye	Paul McLatchy III	Aye
Loretta Dionne	Aye		

Respectfully Submitted,
Paul McLatchy III, Secretary
With contributions by Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau

Approved: December 8, 2020

Paul McLatchy III, Secretary

Unable to be signed by entire committee due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

- Agenda
- Town Meeting Warrant

Town of Rowe, MA
Rowe Finance Committee
October 15, 2020
Joint meeting with Board of Selectmen
Virtual Meeting @ 5:30pm

REMOTE PARTICIPATION INFORMATION:

Meeting Host:	zoom.us
Meeting ID:	288-065-7034
URL:	https://zoom.us/j/2880657034
Telephone:	312-626-6799

1. Call to Order
2. Observe Tax Rate Hearing (Between Board of Selectmen and Board of Assessors)
3. FY2022 Budget Process:
    a. Review Budget Process Calendar
    b. Review CIRPP letter
    c. Review and approve calendar for committee/department hearings
    d. Goals for FY22 Budget
    e. FY22 COLA Recommendation
    f. Funding Levels
    g. Budget Spreadsheets/Formats
    h. How to Compare FY22 Budgets With Prior Budgets
4. Equipment: Reuse vs. Trade-in Policy?
5. Special Town Meeting Article Review, If Necessary
6. Any unforeseen business from the last 48 hours
7. Adjourn

Wayne Zavotka, Chairman

Posted and filed at 9:30 AM on Tuesday, October 13, 2020 by Paul McLatchy III

SPECIAL TOWN MEETING

Town of Rowe
Commonwealth of Massachusetts

FRANKLIN, SS.

To either Constable of the Town of Rowe in the County of Franklin,

GREETINGS:

In the name of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, you are directed to notify and warn the inhabitants of the Town of Rowe, qualified to vote in the elections and town affairs, to meet at the Rowe Fire Station Parking Lot in said Rowe on **Saturday, the Twenty-Fourth of October at 12:00 P.M.** and to act on the following articles:

ARTICLE 1: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **MUNICIPAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $130,000.00 for the **FORD HILL CULVERT PROJECT**, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The town has received a $500,000 grant to replace the culvert on Ford Hill Road. Estimates for engineering and construction range from $500,000 to $630,000. It is unlikely the entire $130,000 will be needed, but the town cannot proceed until full funding is in place. Any unspent funds will be returned to stabilization upon project completion.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the Board of Selectmen

ARTICLE 2: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $29,500.00 to replace the **SCHOOL TRACTOR**, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The school's tractor needs extensive repairs totaling almost $7,500. It is not ideal for the hilly terrain of the school, which has already resulted in an accident. This new tractor is better equipped for the school grounds and will allow for snow removal during winter months. As of now snow cannot be cleared until either the existing tractor is repaired, or a new tractor is purchased. This equipment can also be used at the Park.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the School Committee

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **MUNICIPAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $9,000.00 to install **SECURITY AND MONITORING EQUIPMENT** at the Rowe Elementary School, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The school needs additional cameras within the building as there currently are none. This project will also include sensors and alarms for the refrigerator/freezer so that if they should fail during a period of time when the school is not open (i.e. the weekend, a vacation, etc.), someone will be notified to avoid the loss of potentially thousands of dollars in perishable food.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this project was delayed during budget season. It was initially slated to be spent from Free Cash, but as it has not been certified for FY21, it will need to come from other funds. It is the intent of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to replenish these funds from Free Cash when it is certified.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the School Committee

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **MUNICIPAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $3,500.00 to pay for **CEMETERY LAND LEGAL FEES**, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The town appropriated funds to purchase land to expand the North Cemetery. However, there are additional costs involved to ensure the land is cleared for purchase.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, this project was delayed during budget season. It was initially slated to be spent from Free Cash, but as it has not been certified for FY21, it will need to come from other funds. It is the intent of the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee to replenish these funds from Free Cash when it is certified.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the Board of Selectmen

ARTICLE 5: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $26,000.00 to replace the **PARK STRUCTURE AND SAND**, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The wooden park structure is over twenty years old and needs replacing. This will also require additional sand to level the structure area.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the Park Commission

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote to **APPROPRIATE** from the **CAPITAL STABILIZATION FUND** the sum of $15,000.00 to purchase, install, and/or program **EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT**, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The county will be transitioning to a new radio system operated by the state as the existing network is failing and cannot be repaired. New radios will be needed to operate on this system. These funds help to augment grant moneys from the state to purchase better radios and necessary accessories.

NOTE: 2/3 Vote is required to appropriate from a stabilization fund.

Requested by the Fire Chief

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote to **TRANSFER** from the **TOWN NURSE WAGES** line the sum of $3,750.00 to the **BOARD OF HEALTH OPERATIONS** line, or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: The Board of Health needed to have the compactor ramp paved before fall. While there were excess funds in the Nurse's wages line due to a lack of a nurse, the Board was unable to expend these funds directly and therefore spent out of their operations. This transfer replenishes those funds.

Requested by the Board of Health

ARTICLE 8: To see if the Town will vote to **ACCEPT** the provisions of **CHAPTER 54, SECTION 16A OF THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL LAWS**:

In any city or town which accepts this section, if the warden, clerk or inspector, or the deputy of any such officer, if any, is not present at the opening of the polls, the city or town clerk may appoint a person to fill such vacancy who shall be an enrolled voter of the same political party as the absent officer, if any competent person enrolled in such party is present and willing to serve.

or take any action in relation thereto.

Explanation: Acceptance of this general law allows for the Town Clerk to make appointments on election day if there are any last-minute vacancies in staffing. Otherwise the Board of Selectmen is still the appointing authority for all election workers/officers.

Requested by the Town Clerk

ARTICLE 9: To transact any other business of a lawful and pertinent nature that may come before the meeting.

And you are directed to serve this warrant by posting up attested copies thereof at the **Rowe Town Hall** and the **Rowe Transfer Station** in said Town, fourteen days at least before the time of holding said meeting.

Hereof fail not, and make due return of the Warrant, with your doings thereon, to the Town Clerk at the time of said meeting, as aforesaid.

Given under our hands this First Day of October, Two Thousand and Twenty.

ROWE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Charles Sokol, Chair

Joanne Semanie, Vice-Chair

Edward Silva, Selectman

A true copy, Attest:

Julie Shippee, Police Chief

FRANKLIN, SS.

Pursuant to the within Warrant, I have notified and warned the inhabitants of the Town of Rowe by posting up attested copies of the same at the **ROWE TOWN HALL** and the **ROWE TRANSFER STATION, FOURTEEN** days before the date hereof, as within directed.

Julie Shippee, Police Chief

10.5.2020
Date