

**Rowe School Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, October 11, 2011**

The Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requires minutes for all school committee and subcommittee meetings. The recorded minutes are open to the public for inspection within 10 days of the meeting. Minutes are recorded to provide a brief overview that reflects the subject matter discussed and any decisions made. Motions made are to clearly indicate who made the motion and who seconded the motion. Record who was in favor, who opposed, or who abstained. The names of any person(s) appearing before the committee are to be indicated.

**Documents:**

October 11, 2011 Rowe School Committee Meeting Agenda

September 13, 2011 School Committee Minutes

Principal's Report – October 11, 2011 – Appendix A

Bill Loomis email dated 9/15/11, Subject: Re: Answers to your requests – Appendix B

Lisa Danek Burke email dated 10/3/11 Subject: Re: (blank) – Appendix C

Rowe Grants (FY11, FY12, and FY13 est.) – Appendix D

Superintendent's Report – October 11, 2011 – Appendix E

Michael Buoniconti email dated 9/23/11 (to all School Committees), Subject: Mohawk's 2011 MCAS Results (with attachments) – Appendix F

Rowe Elementary School District 5-Year MCAS History Report, 2007-2011 - Appendix G

Mohawk Trail Regional High School 5-Year MCAS History Report, 2007-2011 - Appendix H

Superintendent Evaluation Form, 7/1/10 to 6/30/11 – Appendix I

Superintendent Evaluation Form – Ratee Samples of Performance - Appendix J

Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment, 9/23/10 – Appendix K

MA DESE District Standards and Indicators – Appendix L

Report of the Business Administrator, October 2011 – Appendix M

Rowe School District FY12 Operating Statement, 09/30/11 – Appendix N

Rowe School District FY13 Projected Enrollment – Appendix O

Rowe School District FY13 Non-Union Wage Increase Options – Appendix P

Rowe School District Budget Request for the balance of the FY11 REAP Grant- Appendix Q

Rowe School District -- Staffing Summary – Appendix R

Rowe School Capital Plan, dated 10/5/11 – Appendix S

Rowe School Proposed FY 13 Field Trips – Appendix T

Emails re: Secretary resignation & position – Labeled "Report of the Chairperson A" – Appendix U

Three-District Shared Expense Agreement – Labeled "Report of the Chairperson B" – Appendix V

MTRSD Calculation used to establish Rowe Tuition Rate - Labeled "Report of the Chairperson C" - Appendix W

Bill Loomis email dated 10/7/11, Subject: Fw: Letter to DESE (Rowe Transportation), (with attachments) – Appendix X

Correspondence (from Chairman Loomis)/ Labeled "Handouts A, B, C, D, E, and F" – Appendix Y

**1. Call to Order:**

Attendees: Bill Loomis, Lisa Miller, & Lisa Danek Burke (School Committee), Michael Buoniconti (Superintendent), Joanne Blier, (Business Administrator), and Bill Knittle (Principal).  
Bill Loomis called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**2. Audience of Citizens:**

Audience: Paul McLatchy, Cindy Laffond, Leonard Laffond (left early), Patricia Tierney (left early), Noel Abbott (arrived late).  
Chairman Loomis recognized the Audience. No comments from Audience.

**3. Approval of Minutes:**

Approval of the September 13, 2011 School Committee Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made by Lisa Danek Burke and seconded by Bill Loomis to accept the Rowe School Committee Meeting Minutes from September 13, 2011.

**Discussion:** Lisa Miller questioned the minutes page 3 (Section 7 A. 4) RE: statement that 2½% increase would be the School Committee's goal for the FY13 budget increase. Lisa Miller did not recall the School Committee setting a 2½% goal for overall budget at the meeting. Lisa Danek Burke agreed and suggested to eliminate the last part of the sentence in Section 7: Financial Information A. 4). The sentence would read "The school committee instructed the central office to provide a FY13 budget that would not eliminate staff or reduce programs" eliminating the words "and with a 2½% increase as a goal".

A motion was made by Lisa Danek Burke to amend the motion to include the change to sentence described above. Lisa Miller seconded. Unanimous yes vote.

Superintendent's choice of words.

The Superintendent welcomed the feedback, but explained this was the first time Rowe did not meet AYP and the wording of his letter intended to strike a balance of informing the public of an issue and also being encouraging. (Ref: Michael Buoniconti email dated 9/23/11 to School Committee Re: Mohawk's 2011 MCAS Results with attachments – See Appendix F)

- B. **2011-2012 Principal Goals** – Principal & Superintendent are working on a 3<sup>rd</sup> goal.
- C. **Green Repair Program**- The Superintendent added that all 8 member towns have now all agreed to the roofing fixes at Mohawk, the expected reimbursement from state is 63% (3.5 million total cost), and that all work should be completed by the beginning of school Sept 2012.
- D. **Superintendent Evaluation** – The Superintendent handed out a blank evaluation form (Superintendent Evaluation Form – Appendix I) and a sample of performance (Superintendent Evaluation Form – Ratee Samples of Performance - Appendix J). In addition, an electronic version of evaluation form has been emailed to each committee member.

The Superintendent requested Lisa Miller obtain an opinion from the State of MA Ethics Commission on what her role ought to be in this review process. Lisa Miller stated she already did a disclosure form and presented to the Committee in July and feels there is no conflict. The Superintendent feels there is a potential for a direct conflict, but the request to the Ethics Commission for an opinion must be from Lisa Miller. Lisa Miller agreed she would contact the Ethics Commission again and get something in writing.

The Superintendent reviewed the Conditions for School Effectiveness Self-Assessment – Appendix K, and the MA DESE District Standards and Indicators – Appendix L.

7. **Report of the Business Administrator:**

Business Administrator Blier reviewed her submitted report (Report of the Business Administrator, October 2011 – Appendix M), including the following:

- A. **FY 12 Operating Statement** – Appendix N. The Committee discussed the \$63,000 budget shortfall on this year's budget. Chairman Loomis proposed a Nov./Dec. special town meeting (STM) requesting funding to cover the budget shortfall from Stabilization with the intent to replenish Stabilization after Free Cash is certified. Chairman Loomis stated he would contact Town Coordinator Ellen Miller to set a date for a STM. Chairman Loomis asked the Superintendent and Business Administrator to come up with potential budget cuts should the town not approve a budget increase. The Business Administrator asked the Committee for suggestions on items to cut or not cut from budget.
- B. **FY13 Budget** – The Business Administrator reviewed the Rowe School District projected enrollment – Appendix O.

The Business Administrator reviewed the Rowe School District FY13 Non-Union Wage Increase Options – Appendix P. The Committee discussed the non-union staff wage increases. Chairman Loomis referenced his email to the Selectmen regarding guidelines for wage increases. Selectman Paul McLatchy stated that he could not speak for the other two selectmen but he was intending to follow through with the current policy to match the Social Security increase for town employees and thinks it will be 3-3.5%.

**A motion was made by Bill Loomis and seconded by Lisa Miller for budget purposes to set the Non-Union wage increase for FY13 at 3.0%. Unanimous yes vote.**

The Business Administrator and Principal Knittle reviewed a budget request for the balance of the FY11 REAP Grant (Ref.: Budget Request for the balance of the FY11 REAP Grant- Appendix Q). Principal Knittle reviewed the request and need for additional SPED math instruction (.04 FTE), 5.75 hours per week of unmet SPED I.E.P. needs, additional Professional Development in the area of writing, and additional guided reading books. Lisa Danek Burke asked if a position(s) would be advertised for the additional instruction. The Principal & Superintendent said it would be an internal advertisement.

**A motion was made by Lisa Danek Burke and seconded by Bill Loomis to authorize spending of FY11 REAP Grant for \$10,041 (Ref: Appendix Q). Following discussion, Lisa Danek Burke amended the motion to set a combined spending total for Professional Development and Supplies at \$5,160, seconded by Bill Loomis. Unanimous yes vote.**

The Business Administrator reviewed the Rowe School District -- Staffing Summary – Appendix R. The proposed changes are marked with an asterisk (\*). This document is missing 0.20 FTE for Art. The Central Office and the Principal will use this for building the FY13 budget and would welcome any recommendations from the Committee. Based on input from the Committee, the Superintendent indicated the presented budget would be a level-services (pro forma) budget. The Committee can then assess what that percent increase would be and could then revise the budget with a given percent increase.

The Business Administrator reminded the Committee that the loan payment for the ESCO Project with Siemens will be higher next year.

The Business Administrator discussed the Grants (Ref: Rowe Grants – Appendix D) and the estimation for the

FY13 grants. The grants have been slowly shrinking each year and will go down in the next year.

The Business Administrator reviewed the Rowe School Capital Plan, dated 10/5/11 – Appendix S, including the items that are proposed in the coming years.

Noel Abbott asked about the status of paving the parking lot and requested the School Committee spend the money allocated for paving put toward the cost of window replacement. The paving is going out for sealed bids due to the cost and will not be considered until spring 2012. Cindy Laffond asked if it could be brought to Town Meeting to request the money approved for paving be used for the tuition shortfall. It was explained this couldn't be done since the funding for the paving was from the Capital Stabilization Account for capital expenditures only. Chairman Loomis asked Noel Abbott to talk with Jack Packard, Rowe Energy Committee Chair, about the school windows, including window options, funding that may be available and energy savings payback time. The Committee completed further review & discussion of the Rowe School Capital Plan.

The Business Administrator reviewed the Rowe School Proposed FY13 Field Trips – Appendix T with the Committee and indicated the Committee must provide the parameters for the field trip budget, i.e., how much to charge families, fundraising goals, etc.

8. **Report of the Chairperson:**

Chairman Bill Loomis noted it was 9 pm and was getting late, as the Supl. had to be back at Mohawk no later than 10PM to pick up his son and he would like to talk about **Report of the Chairperson** items A, B, and C only.

- A. **Vacant Rowe School Committee Secretary position** – (Ref. Emails re: Rowe School Committee Secretary resignation & secretary position – Report of The Chairperson A – Appendix U.) Chairman Loomis reviewed the vacancy & indicated he would prefer to have someone local versus at Mohawk High School, that the stipend is \$600, and main part of the position are the meetings & minutes. Superintendent Buoniconti noted the secretary would have to work with the Chair of the Committee to develop the agenda and then Judy Willis could compile the information for the meetings. Chairman Loomis was invited by Superintendent Buoniconti to meet with him & Judy Willis to review the process & duties of the position and outline a job description. Pam McManis offered to do the min. until they found a permanent secretary. Lisa Danek Burke didn't feel it was a good idea to bring her in for a short time so Lisa will continue doing the minutes until the Committee can hire a secretary.
- B. **Draft proposal of the Three District Agreement** – Chairman Loomis reviewed information in "Report of the Chairperson B" – Appendix V, which included the existing and proposed Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) Three-District Shared Expense Agreement. The "Report of the Chairperson B" included two other items that were not referenced at the meeting: 1) a Memorandum from David Newell to Bob A., Scott P, and Bill L, dated 09/21/11, Re: Amplifying my observations regarding Rowe Transportation and 2) an email reply from Michael Buoniconti, to Bill Loomis in response to an email from Bill Loomis – Subject: three district agreement requested information, dated 09/27/11. Lisa Miller referenced Chairman Loomis' email to the Committee regarding the letter from David Newell to Christine Lynch at MA DESE (Appendix X) and felt the committee cannot discuss this until a response to this letter is received. The Committee discussed shared expense costs and some of the proposed changes. Chairman Loomis recommended tabling this discussion and indicated he would continue to look at this and work on his own calculations. Chairman Loomis stated he would contact Bob Aeschback with some of the concerns regarding proposed changes to the Three District Agreement.
- C. **2011-2012 Rowe Tuition Agreement** (Ref: Report of the Chairperson C - Appendix W) - Chairman Loomis reviewed the Mohawk School Committee tuition rate for FY12 noting approval by the MTRSD School Committee on 09/14/11. The previous year's tuition was \$8,619 and this year it is \$9,229. Chairman Loomis indicated he has spent a lot of time looking at this and it is part of Section 9 of the Regional Agreement. Chairman Loomis believes that Rowe should pay their fair share, but when transportation is factored in, Rowe appears to be paying too much. Chairman Loomis will continue to evaluate and will bring to a future meeting. Noel A. stated, he would appreciate if Michael and Joann for not getting in the middle of this you both have a responsibility to all the schools. This puts you in a to advocate for or against any party or to even have any party any information puts you in a clear conflict of interest in your positions in your jobs, in your loyalty and contractual responsibilities. The thing I would suggest when you are communicating you can communicate out to all parties simultaneously and this is for Bill, not Paul but for the Rowe School Com. as a body and the MTRSD Com. to basically work it out. The only thing I would say is that the whole purpose of the 3 District Agreement that actually became codified about 3 or 4 years ago as I understand it is that there were some ways of working this piece out. Even though Rowe doesn't have a vote on the Mohawk School District Rowe basically has protections contractual protections and so it isn't that I very clearly take exception to the statement that the Mohawk School Com. determines what Rowe owes and Rowe just has to pay it. It doesn't work that way. There were two clearly types of agreements that create a very different practice. In terms of the formula that formula was informal until 4 years ago then it got codified and there is an attempt to bring it forward but I would very clearly and very strongly urge you not to advocate for any position there because you simply are restrained from doing so. You simply can't. If you disagree with that I would like to know that. Do you

~~in private what I just said you can't keep in Joann and Michael~~ Supt. Buoniconti did not disagree. Superintendent Buoniconti encouraged Chairman Loomis to consider what the costs might be if Rowe were to join the Mohawk District (Grades 7-12). Chairman Loomis indicated the Business Administrator was to provide cost estimates for Rowe being a District Town (grades 7-12). The Business Administrator confirmed this was done and Chairman Loomis requested this data.

**No other listed Agenda items were discussed, including the following:**

9. **Unfinished Business**
10. **New Business**
11. **Subcommittee Reports**
12. **Correspondence/Handouts**

Chairman Loomis asked if there was anything else, including, from the Audience of Citizens. Lisa Miller asked about the school pictures and noted they seemed more expensive this year. The Business Administrator stated that we changed photo companies because the past company would charge families extra and then provide "kick-back" benefits to the School. The new company was asked to provide a lower cost to families with no additional benefits to the school.

Lisa Miller indicated there was a parent concerned about hand washing in the Primary Class and thought there may be something wrong with the faucet. Principal Knittle indicated he has not been made aware that a problem exists, and would like to help, but the parent should bring the issues directly to him.

13. **Adjournment:**

**A motion was made by Bill Loomis and seconded by Lisa Danek Burke to adjourn at 9:40pm.  
Unanimous yes vote.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Lisa Danek Burke

Approved:

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William Loomis, Chairman

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Lisa Miller, Vice Chairman

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Lisa Danek Burke, Secretary