MEETING MINUTES

NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT: Rowe NAME OF COMMITTEE: Rowe School Committee

DATE AND LOCATION OF MEETING: Thursday, January 16, 2014 – 6:30PM, Rowe Town Hall

COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Lisa Miller (LM) and Lisa Danek-Burke (LDB)
PARTICIPATING REMOTELY (via Skype): Cindy Laffond (CL)

ALSO PRESENT: Superintendent Michael Buoniconti (MB), Business Manager Joanne Blier (JB), Director of Pupil Personnel Services Leann Loomis (LL), K-6 Director of Curriculum and Assessment Jennifer Lagoy (JL), and Rowe School Principal Bill Knittle (BK)

CITIZENS/STAFF: Susie Zavotka (SZ), Laurie Pike, Barbara Griffin, Maggie Parent, Lisa Lamore, Will Lamore

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY: Chair Lisa Miller at 6:35pm. Chair Miller announced that because member Cindy Laffond is geographically distant she will be attending the meeting remotely via Skype. CL stated that she had the agenda for the meeting, but not the meeting packet. She has given her address to Judy Willis so packets can be sent directly to her in Florida for future meetings.

Remote Participation: LM passed out copies of emails between her and Attorney Russ Dupere concerning remote participation, and copies of minutes of the 12/18/2013 Selectmen's meeting showing their unanimous vote to allow remote participation of all town boards and committees (see pg. 4). LM announced that when there is remote participation at a public meeting that all votes taken must be roll call votes.

1. **Audience of Citizens:**
   a) **Susie Zavotka, School Building Committee (SBC)** chair provided a 1 pg. report which covered the following:
1. **School Fire Deficit Account:** All Invoices paid from this account through late 2013 were placed in a binder by P3 and have been reviewed in detail by several people. Dan Pallotta of P3 has prepared a spreadsheet breaking out expenditures for this account into two categories: blanket policy items or "loss of income" items. During the review SZ said they did not find any items that needed action by the School Committee. Janice Boudreau will keep this binder updated with copies of invoices/warrants.
2. **YES Computer Invoice:** A $4,000 payment to YES Computers for some iPads purchased by the school was charged to the New School Construction account in error back in August 2013. It should have been charged to the capital account set up to purchase iPads for the school. The SBC had requested that this be adjusted but this has not been taken care of yet. SZ will contact town accountant Jackie Cashin to get this corrected. JB stated that she would have Sandy Gaffey at the CO check on this as well.
3. **Explanation of Insurance categories:** Loss of Income, Transition/Relocation and Blanket Policy are explained in the handout from SZ. Loss of Income was for 1st year (8-4-2012 to 8-4-2013) items outside of the school budget that are non-replacement items; not for replacement of contents that will be used in the new school building. The Transition/Location costs are for these types of costs from year 2 on. Maximum is $200K, and there is no expiration date. This includes Hawlemont lease costs over and above budgeted operations costs and the extra bus. $200K should be sufficient. Approximately $25K has been expended so far (mainly busing). Blanket Policy covers replacement of contents, and all costs associated with the new school building (design, construction, FFE, site work, etc.).
   b) **Staff Comments:** none

2. **Rowe SD/Hawlemont SD joint meeting:** meeting not needed

3. **Minutes:**
   a) **Nov 26, 2013:** Motion made by LDB to approve the minutes of the Nov 26, 2013 meeting as read. Motion was seconded by LM. Roll call vote to approve the minutes as read: Lisa Danek-Burke: yes, Lisa Miller: yes, Cindy Laffond: yes. Motion passed (3/0/0). Minutes were signed by LM and LDB. JB will bring to Judy Willis.
   b) **Dec 19, 2013:** Committee members will review these minutes and act on them at the next meeting.

4. **Action Items:** None

5. **Principal's Report:**
   a) **Report Cards:** Cards going home tomorrow (Jan 17th).
   b) **Winter Benchmark Assessments:** Will be done in the next few weeks and then data meetings will be held.
   c) **Preschool:** They have set up a restaurant in their play area for the new unit "The Restaurant." On Jan 21st they will be visiting the Greenfield Grill for a hands on experience. A parent of one of our preschoolers is co-owner of the restaurant and invited the students for a field trip to the facility to see how a restaurant really works—and they've been invited for lunch. Roberta Baker worked very hard on this program.
   d) **Winter Enrichment Program:** Finished second day of the program at Berkshire East. Went well.
   e) **Safety:** *Lockdown Drill* last Friday, Jan 10th. State Police came. They were very impressed with how smoothly, quickly and quietly the students and staff all did what they were supposed to do. A *Shelter in Place* drill will be held in February. 20:19
   f) **Professional Learning Day:** We had been working on writing. We are now transitioning to reading.
   g) **Library Grant:** BK reported that the school has been awarded a Dollar General grant for $20,000 towards replacing our Library. We are also being considered for one of two additional grants of $30,000 to be awarded in June for catastrophic situations, also through Dollar General. 21:01
   h) **New Building Status:** LDB asked if the slab had been poured yet. SZ responded that they had been held up because an additional grease trap that needed to be installed (new MA code item). They are working on the grease trap this week, and then will work on the slab. The walls can then start going up.

6. **Report of Chairperson:**
   a) **Superintendency Services:** LM passed out a document showing what the proposed FY2015 expenses for the North Berkshire School Union (NBSU) will be if Rowe is added. Rowe's portion of this proposed $352,244 budget would be 15% or $52,837. LM suggested that the next step be a meeting with Supt. Lev to determine if there are any items we have now that are not covered in this budget. LDB stated it is definitely a lower number than we have now, but that it is difficult to compare with what we are getting now. LM reported that Supt. Lev suggested having a meeting at his office in North Adams. LDB and CL agreed to meet and asked LM if she could get some proposed dates for the meeting. CL stated that Jan 28 & 29 are not good for her. It was agreed that LM would give Supt. Lev the emails of all three members so that a meeting date/time can be scheduled.
   b) **Remote Participation:** LM noted that in the packet she disseminated concerning remote participation there is an email from Attorney Dupere in which he recommends that the School Committee adopt a Remote Participation Policy. He provided a copy of the Williamstown School Committee's policy as a sample. It was agreed that LM will rework the Williamstown document for use by Rowe for discussion and possible adoption at the next meeting.

7. **Report of the Superintendent:**
   a) **Spanish Programs:** MB reported that he met with BK, Sue Kranz, Pam Adler-Smith, Elizabeth Buck and Lynn Dole to talk about what seems to be a disconnect between the two programs. Where we landed is that we're recommending that Rowe no longer contribute the $15,000 to the middle school Spanish program, and that the students essentially take one year off from Spanish in 7th grade. They can then elect to enter Spanish I in 8th grade and Spanish II in 9th grade. This way Rowe students can fully participate in exploratory programs that happen throughout the 7th grade year. LDB asked if for graduation requirements students would still need Spanish II and III...and that Spanish I still does not count as a high school language. MB responded yes. LL stated that some colleges require that you show you've taken a language for a certain number of years,

while some colleges require testing out of a language instead. She added that school transcripts will show which language classes have been taken; however, high school credits are only given for classes taken from the 9th grade on. LM stated that regardless of which language class you take (II and III, or III and IV), two years are required in high school. LL stated that is correct. CL asked MB if they found out what the disconnect is. Are they not getting what they need at Rowe? MB responded that they are two fundamentally different curricula (elementary vs. high school). At the high school there's a greater focus on grammar, reading and writing. In the elementary school it's really focused on speaking and interacting. They are completely different. He added that at the end of this meeting Sue asked about doing an evaluation of the Spanish program at Rowe; i.e., what do we want to get out of this program? BK added that we also talked about meeting with the two high school teachers on possibly a monthly basis to see about aligning the two programs more. MB added that beyond just learning how to speak a language, some of the analysis to take a look at is the other benefits. When you learn a second language there are educational benefits that come from that. Generally you have an increased global awareness and an elasticity that happens physiologically in your brain that helps you in other areas of your study. He thinks it would be good for Sue to put together a summary for the School Committee of what's there now and what the vision is. Then you can really talk about. BK added that the benefits extend to higher standardized test scores. MB added that the program as it exists is an apples and oranges comparison. The expectation that the students would go through their program at Rowe and then test out at Mohawk just wasn't aligned because grammar, reading and writing are not the focus at the elementary level. BK: How the adolescent's brain acquires language is different from how the elementary student's brain acquires language. You're looking at two different functions both in terms of teaching and learning. MB: The end result of our meeting was that we thought it made the most sense for Rowe students to take the 7th grade year off and save Rowe the money because the students are going to get the opportunities in language in the 8th grade. MB stated that Elizabeth Buck did say that the students from Rowe come with a greater vocabulary and are able to articulate because they have been speaking the language, but outside of that the students are on a fairly even playing field. CL: what does Rowe pay for? MB: Rowe pays $15K for 7th and 8th grade Spanish, but Mohawk is adding Spanish to the 8th grade curriculum. LDB: So at this point there is nothing to gain by continuing Spanish in the 7th grade because they are ending up in the same place, and there always has been a bit of an issue with some students and parents that they are missing that related arts sample block, which is good for them at that age. BK: Elizabeth, Pam and Lynn all felt that it would be beneficial for the Rowe 7th graders for acclimation and socialization reasons to be able to be a part of the larger crowd. LM: It seems that we are all on board with this. MB: That then gets the budget to the parameters that the school committee was looking for in the last meeting.

b) **District Improvement Plan Progress Report:** MB presented the first of two annual District Improvement Plan (DIP) updates:

Std 1. Leadership, Governance, & Communication: MB reported that Rowe participated in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) grant, and that BK has been heavily involved with the Mohawk administrators in this training for some time. JL added that one of the 1st grade levels has also been involved with PLC training, including Rowe staff.

Std 2. Curriculum & Instruction: Teachers have created and are beginning to implement student-friendly writing rubrics aligned to the Common Core. Teachers received additional educator evaluation training. Rowe staff participated in October 31 District In-Service.

Std 3. Assessment: At PreK/K level we've introduced assessments using Work Sampling. Teachers observe students and essentially produce a report card.

Std 4. Human Resources & Professional Development: Educator Evaluation contract language ratified by the Rowe Teachers' Association and the Rowe School Committee. Selected and implementing pilot District Determined Measures. Populated the first half of the school year Professional Learning Day calendar.

Std 5. Student Support: Interpretation of Fall 2013 Data has been completed. Staff have used the data and teacher recommendations to create instructional groupings for Fall/Winter 2013/14. The staff have participated in the grade level meetings that provide peer collaboration and sharing of effective interventions that support tiered instructional practices. Teachers will meet with BK in spring 2014 to review SMART goals and evidence of practices and student growth, and will begin work on setting SMART goals for 2014-15 school year.

Std 6. Financial & Asset Management: MB reported that the narrative in this section is new from what was reported previously, which was looking at the financial implications of two new positions—SPED Liaison position and Interventionist position, but they were not added. MB has now inserted here the Proposed FY15 budget within the parameters requested by School Committee: keep budget at maximum 2.5%, include decreased use of Revolving funds ($38K decrease) due to sustainability issues around School Choice, assume continuation of the 3DA and central office, take a look at the Spanish program at Mohawk, and separate out the fire-related items. He stated that all of these requests have been met. The next deliverables will be to meet with Selectboard to discuss the budget. CL asked why the School Committee would be meeting with the Selectmen instead of the Finance Committee, because the Finance Committee is charged with reviewing our budget, not the Selectmen. LDB stated that she assumed the meeting would be with the Selectmen and the Finance Committee, which is what typically happens. MB stated that he would correct that. In the past it had been a joint meeting with the three committees. CL stated the email she received about scheduling a meeting came from the Selectmen, not the Finance Committee. Several people stated the tentative meeting date was Thurs., Feb 13th at 6:30pm. MB stated that he will have Judy Willis reach out to Finance Committee Chair Dennis May to set up a meeting. The next deliverable will be the preparation of materials for the annual town meeting. MB will run the information by the School Committee at March or April meeting for their review and input. LDB asked Maggie Parent if the Finance Committee has discussed meeting with the School Committee. Maggie stated that it is going to be a joint meeting with the Selectboard and one or two of the Finance Committee members. She stated that Dennis May will not be able to make all of the meetings, and that in the past the Finance Committee has not even been involved.

c) **Principal's Contract:** MB reported that the he met with staff (two could not be there) and had a good constructive conversation. People were very professional. They shared where they thought Bill was strong, and where he needs improvement—everybody, of course, needs improvement. The overwhelming sentiment of the group—particularly from the classroom teachers—was Bill's understanding of the classroom and his support of teachers in improving their instructional practice. MB also met with three parents from the PTP (Donna Flagg, Janet Cowie and Jeff Parent) who shared similar sentiments. There was an emphasis on Bill's kindness towards the children and the children's responsiveness to him. The common theme that people want to help Bill improve on is around organizational types of things. MB asked Laurie Laffond in particular to really engage with Bill on this to help him, and added that he understands what it is to need somebody to help you get organized. MB stated he was very pleased with the overwhelming positive support for the work Bill has done and wanting to have him continue to lead the building, so Bill and MB entered into contract negotiations. MB then stated he was pleased to announce that Bill has signed a renewal contract for three years beginning July 1, 2014, and he then congratulated Bill. [applause]

8. **Financial Information—Report of Business Administrator: FY2015 Budget:** JB passed out an updated version of the budget spreadsheet (different from the version mailed in the packet to committee members). It changed in light of the conversation concerning the middle school Spanish program. It shows an overall 2.5% increase over FY14. She stated that following the last meeting BK took a look at the budget and the following changes were made: 1) eliminated the interventionist position for $10,000 which had been in teachers' salaries (no incumbent, so no reduction in work force), 2) reduced custodial supplies by $1000, 3) eliminated the technology upgrades at the central office $246 (Rowe's portion), and 4) changed Hawlemont rent from 5 months @ $7,211/mth to 4 months, and bus from 3 months @ $6,354/mth to 2 months for net decrease of $13,565. MB asked Susie Zavotka if she was pretty confident about the new school being ready for next year. Susie stated that she is still believing that we will be in there for the first day of school, but it's still early in the game. LM added that we do have the $200,000 for bus/rent, etc. JB stated that the rest of the numbers have changed because the Spanish program for $15,000 at the middle school has been taken out. It is now a 2.5% budget request to the town. She added that the total budget is actually a slight decrease of $2,500 from FY14; however, overall it's a 2.5% increase to the town because less revolving funds will be used. JB presented two pie charts for FY15 budget (budget by category, and budget by summary level—local vs shared vs secondary). JB asked that if anyone has questions that they please refer to budget line items when contacting her. MB stated that he will have Judy Willis mail packets to CL's

Florida address, and will have Judy email to CL any items to be used at the meeting that are not in the packet. JB stated that Negotiable Increases (Line 22) was adjusted. Increased by $4,848.

Changes:	Line 20 – Eliminate request for Interventionist	(10,000)
	Line 22 – Negotiable Increases	4,848
	Line 41 – Supplies	(1,000)
	Line 72 – Fire-related (rent)	(36,055)*
	Line xx – Fire-related (bus)	(19,062)**
	Line 77 – Custodial Supplies	(1,000)
	Line 196 – Central Office Technology Upgrades	(246)
	Line 234 – Instructional (middle school Spanish)	(15,000)

*Reduced to 28,844 and now shown separately on Line 277
**Reduced to 12,708 and now shown separately on Line 275

LM asked what will be left in the School Choice revolving account at the end of next year. JB stated balance at year end FY15 it is estimated to be $26,678 (see handout – School Choice Revolving Account History). It presumes revenue of $115,000 for FY2014 and $125,000 for FY15. JB stated it presumes two additional students @ $5,000 each for FY15, and that the number could grow, but it would be too risky to increase the number for budgeting purposes at this point. LDB: Essentially we have a budget increase of 2.5% mainly due to salaries at the local level. JB stated that the secondary level budget assumes two 8th graders will be going to Tech this fall. LL said the decisions about who is going to Tech won't be known until April.

LM asked if there were any other comments. CL stated that as a School Committee we shouldn't meet with the Finance Committee unless they have a full board. They won't be able to take any votes. MB asked how many members there are on the Finance Committee. LDB responded that it is a 5 member board, and they only have 3 members. LDB said she would like to see less use of revolving funds, but the only way we could do this is to cut programs or field trips, or go to town meeting with an increase larger than 2.5%. JB will have updated budget packets prepared. She stated the next steps are:

SchCom FY15 Budget Hearing/public comment:	Thurs, Feb 6th 6:30pm
SchCom FY15 Budget meeting w/FinCom:	Thurs, Feb 13th 6:30pm (tentative)
SchCom FY15 Budget adoption:	Thurs, Feb 20th 5:30pm (during regular meeting)

9. **Correspondence – Letter from Bob Aeschback:** LM reported that she and Marilyn Wilson received a letter dated January 8, 2014, from Bob Aeschback, Chair of the MTRSD School Committee, requesting a meeting of committee chairs (Rowe School Committee, Rowe Selectboard, Mohawk School Committee) to discuss Section IX Education of Pupils from the Town of Rowe within the Mohawk Trail Regional School District (MTRSD) Regional District Agreement; specifically Section (C) Tuition Basis for Pupils Grades 7-12 from the Town of Rowe. Judy Wilson will set this meeting up.

10. **US Army Corps of Engineers:** MB reported that in his work with Air Force Reserves he had attended a briefing with the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACE) explaining that public facilities (which includes schools that are frequently used as emergency shelters) will become "vital facilities." They are encouraging people that are in charge of these facilities to enter information on ACE's website (under the Emergency Power Facility Assessment Tool) indicating power sources available at our facility. In the event there is an emergency it will give the ACE appropriate information as to what is available on site. MB has asked Robin Pease to fill out this information for the Mohawk schools and Hawlemont, and said it should be filled out for the new Rowe School as well after the building is finished.

11. **Report of Director of Pupil Personnel Services:** Committee reviewed monthly report submitted by Ms. Loomis.

12. **Report of K-6 Director of Curriculum**: Committee reviewed monthly report submitted by Ms. Lagoy.

13. **Comments:** LDB stated that she appreciated the reports from Ms. Loomis and Ms. Lagoy.

14. **Handouts:** Recorder articles: *$100,000 sought for Rowe school septic backup; Editorial: Pay now or later in Rowe?; First-term Rowe selectmen won't seek re-election*

15. **Adjournment:** At 7:58pm LDB made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by LM. Roll call vote to adjourn: Lisa Danek-Burke: yes, Lisa Miller: yes, Cindy Laffond: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Miller,

Signature: _____
Lisa A. Miller, Chair

Date Approved: 2-20-14

Meeting Packet/Handouts: Agenda, Insurance Funding Update 1/17/14 (SZ), Minutes (11/26/13, 12/19/13), Principal's Report 1-16-14, FY15 Union Expenses with the addition of Rowe, BOS Minutes 12/18/13 re Remote Participation, Superintendent's Report 1-16-14, District Improvement Plan, US Army Corps of Engrs information on Emergency Power Facility Assessment, Report of Business Administrator, FY2015 proposed budget summary & detail, school choice revolving account history, proposed FY2015 field trips, SchCom Expense Report Jan 2014, Aeschback ltr dated 1-8-14, Dir. of Pupil Personnel Services Report Jan 2014, Dir. of Curriculum & Assessment Report Jan 2014, Recorder articles (3)—see Item 14.