MEETING MINUTES
FY2015 School Budget Hearing and School Committee Meeting

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

DATE AND LOCATION OF MEETING: Thursday, February 20, 2014 – 5:30PM, Rowe Town Hall

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

I. **MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY:** Chair Lisa Miller at 5:36pm. Chair Miller announced that because member Cindy Laffond is geographically distant she will be attending the meeting remotely via Skype. All votes will be taken by roll call due to remote participation taking place.

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF PRESENT: Superintendent Michael Buoniconti (MB), Business Manager Joanne Blier (JB), Director of Pupil Personnel Services Leann Loomis (LL), and Rowe School Principal Bill Knittle (BK). **ALSO PRESENT:** Board of Selectmen Marilyn Wilson, Susan Gleason and Noel Abbott; Finance Committee member Wayne Zavotka. **STAFF/AUDIENCE OF CITIZENS:** Patricia Tierney, Barbara Griffin, Gail May, Maggie Parent, Susie Zavotka, Rosie Gordon, Becky Richardson, Jodi Brown, Donna Flagg, Jenn Morse, Diane Broncaccio, Cameron Graves **NBSU personnel:** Jon Lev, Carrie Garibaldis, Heidi Dugal (joined meeting at 6:30pm)

II. **AUDIENCE/STAFF COMMENTS:** None

III. **MINUTES:**
- **December 19, 2013 meeting:** CL made a motion to approve the December 19, 2013 meeting minutes as written. LDB seconded the motion. Roll call vote to approve the minutes as written: LDB: yes, CL: yes, LM: yes. Motion unanimously passed (3/0/0).
- **January 16, 2014 meeting:** LDB made a motion to approve the January 16, 2014 meeting minutes as presented. CL seconded the motion. Roll call vote to approve the minutes as presented: LM: yes, CL: yes, LDB: yes. Motion unanimously passed (3/0/0).

IV. **FY2015 SCHOOL BUDGET HEARING:** The following FY2015 School Budget was presented:

Rowe School Local Budget		
Administration	$	8,825
Instructional	$	696,075
Operations	$	68,677
Student Support Services	$	96,343
Technology	$	8,600
Transportation (elementary bus only)	$	54,450
	$	932,970
Plus Revolving Accounts	$	122,308
Total Rowe School Local Budget	$	1,055,278
Shared Services		
Administration	$	40,254
Instructional	$	21,720
Operations	$	2,881

Student Support Services	$	2,782
Technology	$	9,821
Transportation (does not include cost of buses)	$	3,188
Benefits	$	22,534
Total Shared Services	$	103,180
TOTAL ELEMENTARY BUDGET (including Revolving)	$	1,158,458
Secondary Level Expenses (Mohawk & Tech)		
Instructional	$	-
Student Support Services (late bus)	$	15,000
Transportation (secondary bus only)	$	54,450
Tuition	$	349,000
Total High School Budget	$	418,450
TOTAL FY2015 SCHOOL BUDGET	**$**	**1,576,908**

TOTAL USE OF REVOLVING FUNDS	$	122,308
TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST AT ATM	$	1,454,600
	$	**1,576,908**

Wayne Zavotka of the Finance Committee stated that he was attending the meeting on behalf of the Finance Committee. He reported that the Finance Committee and the Board of Selectmen are doing the budget planning together as a team; the Finance Committee will meet and vote on their recommendations, and will also meet with the Board of Selectmen to finalize things.

Chair Miller stated that she was thinking a little money could be saved by getting rid of the .2 SPED Liaison position, saying that we don't have that many special needs children and could save money on this. BK stated that he recommended it be left in the budget because the SPED caseload is going up next year, and the SPED teacher does not have enough time to do her job and the liaison duties in her FT position. There are 6 IEPs now, and there will be 3 additional IEPs by the end of this year. In addition to the IEPs, there are 3 other students getting services. Next year the caseload will be between 10 and 12, depending on testing that will be done this spring. LM stated that compared to other schools it is not a very heavy caseload. BK stated that her time is taken up with servicing students. LL stated that she is concerned that when there are clusters of reviews that need to be done, the SPED teacher will not be able to meet with her regular students without the additional .2 liaison position. BK stated that when preparing the budget it was trimmed in other areas so that this .2 position could be kept. LDB stated that she is looking to the administrators on this and wants to follow their recommendation. LL reported that in conversations she had with the SPED teacher this year she indicated that she is handling the workload this year, but it is not ideal. BK stated that he had to sub for her several times this year so that she could get her reports out on time. Noel Abbott asked how much money this position represented. It is $10,000 for this new position. CL asked if there was someone else who could take over the SPED teacher's math duties so she would have time to complete SPED reports. MB responded that the budget was prepared using the 2.5% overall increase asked for by the School Committee, but If there is another target in mind he could come back with recommendations on how to get there. LM did not have a different percentage increase in mind, but was just looking where costs could be cut. BK stated that last year we made the request for a .2 liaison and a .2 interventionist, and we ended up with coming up with .1 and .1 instead. This year we decided that the .2 SPED liaison position was more important. CL asked again if anyone else could teach math. BK stated that there is no extra certified teacher available to teach math.

Wayne Zavotka stated that as he understands it the school can reallocate funds within their budget; and added that he feels the $10K is extraordinarily minimal compared to $1.454 million, although he appreciates the desire to reduce. JB stated that the town votes on the overall school budget number as a lump sum; however, the

school committee can approve the transfer of monies between instructional and operational line items throughout the year. Any transfers needed within the instructional line item can be done by school administration.

Reducing the budget by the $10,000 would bring the budget to an overall 1.8% increase. LM asked CL if she agreed with eliminating the SPED liaison position or would she like to table the matter. CL stated that she thinks the matter should be tabled for now, and she will think about it. LDB stated that she is not in favor of removing the position.

Copies of the budget were passed out to people present. LM asked if anyone had any comments or questions concerning the budget. Noel Abbott stated that he would rather see the School Committee ask for a 2.5% increase at this point because of variables throughout the school year, and that any leftover funds could be turned back at the end of the year. Marilyn Wilson stated that the School Committee has its own autonomy, and the only ones who can effect change are town meeting voters. Our role is to listen and to enter their data and requests into the spreadsheet.

Rosie Gordon asked if the $42K being requested to be used for rent and busing in case the new school isn't ready next fall shouldn't be coming from insurance funds instead. JB stated that it could come from insurance. It was put on the spreadsheet for information purposes only at this point—it is not included in the $1,454,600 being sought at town meeting. Susie Zavotka stated they have checked with the insurance company and these costs, if needed, will be covered by them. LM reported to LDB and CL that she spoke with Dan Pallotta recently, and he is requesting to meet with the School Committee sometime next month (March) to discuss contingency planning in general. Everything looks good and is on track and he doesn't think we will need it—this is just to formulate a "just-in-case" plan.

LDB asked the Selectboard if they had voted any increases for employees for next year. The Selectboard stated they had voted a 1.5% COLA increase (in line with the Social Security increase). There is no merit increase.

MB and JB gave a summary of the FY15 budget arrived at under instruction from the School Committee to come up with a 2.5% overall budget increase while maintaining level services.

- Firstly, they performed a bottom up review and came up with an 8.0% increase. They then worked on specific line items and worked that down to an overall 2.5% increase.
- The local elementary budget has a 6.8% increase—reduced to 2.1% by the use of School Choice funds. Of note is that Operational costs will be less with the new energy efficient building. The Shared Services (Central Office) budget has a (7.1%) decrease. Net elementary budget shows a 1.2% increase.
- The School Committee asked us to assume continuation of the Mohawk Central Office. The CO expenses went down 7%. CO Tech expenses went down due to reduction of staff from 4 FT to 2FT. Student Support Services include food services, and the FT food service director that services the three school districts is going from FT to half time. Instructional technology costs (software licenses, etc.) were moved from the CO budget to individual school budgets where they should be correctly charged, as they hold the licenses. There were also changes in CO staffing.
- Secondary budget shows a 3.7% decrease. Tuitions (Mohawk and Tech) are down slightly, and $15K secondary Spanish program line item was eliminated in consultation with the School Committee.
- The School Committee asked that we rely less on the School Choice revolving account for FY15 to offset the budget, to allow that fund to rebuild. It has been relied on heavily in the past few years.

Overall there is a .2% budget decrease; however, because less School Choice funds will be used for teachers' salaries to offset the budget, the overall request to town meeting will be a 2.5% increase over FY2014. FY14 used $160,287 of School Choice funds. FY15 will use $122,308, or $37,979 (23.7%) less than FY14. This will leave the School Choice fund at about $27K.

V. ACTION ITEMS

SCHOOL CHOICE SEATS: Principal Knittle made a recommendation to add open 12 school choice seats for next year:

Grade	Proposed students For 2014-15	Recommended School Choice seats	Total students Proposed for 2014-15
K	5	4	9
1st	5	2	7
2nd	4	2	6
3rd	8	2	10
4th	6	2	8
5th	7	0	7
6th	14	0	14
TOTAL	**49**	**12**	**61**

LDB made a motion that the Rowe School Committee vote to approve twelve (12) school choice seats for the 2014-15 school year as recommended by Principal Knittle. CL seconded the motion. Roll call vote to approve 12 school choice seats: LM: yes, LDB: yes, CL: yes. Motion unanimously passed (3/0/0).

FY2015 BUDGET: LDB made a motion that the Rowe School Committee vote to adopt the FY2015 elementary school budget of $1,036,150 with an additional $122,308 coming from the School Choice Revolving account for a total FY15 elementary budget of $1,158,458, and vote to adopt the FY15 Town of Rowe Secondary School Budget of $418,450 for an FY15 Town of Rowe Education Budget of $1,576,908. CL seconded the motion. Roll call vote to adopt the FY2015 education budget of $1,576,908: CL: yes, LDB: yes, LM: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

TOWN MEETING ARTICLE: LDB made a motion that the Rowe School Committee vote on the following town meeting article: To see if the Town will vote to authorize the School Committee, pursuant to MGL Chapter 44, Section 53E1/2, to use a revolving fund with a limit of $10,000.00 for the 2015 fiscal year to accept fees for School Programs for the purpose of offsetting department costs, in which any remaining funds may be rolled over into a similar revolving fund for fiscal year 2016, or take any action in relation thereto. Motion was seconded by CL. Roll call vote to submit town meeting article: LDB: yes, CL: yes, LM: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

BUDGET TRANSFER: CL made a motion to transfer $144.00 from Lease/Purchase of Equipment, $201.49 from Supt. Office Leased Equipment and $223.23 from Technology—Web Admin—Network Eng. for a total CREDIT of $568.72 TO Supt. Office Equipment Replacement to purchase a copier machine. Motion was seconded by LDB. CL asked what the total price of the copier is. JB stated that this is Rowe's portion only. The total cost is about $8,000-9,000 for one copier which should last 4-5 years. Copiers used to be leased; however, it would cost us about $2,000 more over the life of the lease than outright purchase. Roll call vote to transfer $568.72: LM: yes, LDB: yes, CL: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY: LM disseminated copies of a proposed Remote Participation Policy for a first read. LDB asked that the "first read" date be noted on the document. LM stated that Judy Willis will take care of this. Members will review the policy for action at the next meeting.

VI. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT:

BK gave an overview of his monthly report (attached). Cultural Study was narrowed down to South Africa or Egypt for next year. Depends on who they can get as artist-in-residence. Finished up winter enrichment. Had great help from parents and family members. Very successful. All AmeriCorps volunteers were brought to the school for one afternoon and all grades (Hawlemont & Rowe) were brought

together which was good. StarLab—a mobile inflatable planetarium—is going to be brought to the school via funds supplied by the Rowe Cultural Council. Hawlemont will also participate. Nature's Classroom takes place in May. Held Shelter-in-Place for Hawlemont staffer who had fallen, so this gave us a good hands on experience. Worked well in real life and as a drill. Educator evaluations are done. Will be reviewing them with teachers when they return from vacation. The system is good for classroom teachers, but we need to figure out how to approach and handle non-classroom teaching staff. Mr. Beebe took advantage of winter enrichment days and visited Bernardston Elementary School to view their high functioning use of iPads. Will also visit Gateway District that has a high-functioning iPad system. Use of Apps, etc., reviewed. Rent payment to Hawlemont due March 1st: Laurie was told that a portion of it should be charged to the school budget and a portion to the fire account. Is it lost wages? LM stated that it should be charged to the same account that the extra bus is charged to. She checked with Tom Donaldson twice and he said any increase over what we paid last year plus the amount we paid from the fire account last year should be charged to the fire account for this year. This comes to about $20K. $10,747 was paid from the fire account last year, and the rent increased $12,500 for this year. The sum of those [$23,247] should be charged to school fire account this year for Hawlemont rent. The remainder will come from the regular budget. CL asked why an advertisement was in the paper for a PE teacher. BK stated that the PE teacher has resigned and is already gone. This is a .2 position. Jodi Brown noted that the Rowe Cultural Council also funded another program for the school this year. BK thanked her for this.

VII: SCHOOL CALENDAR: MB now has firm dates for MCAS testing. That will necessitate swapping some professional learning days. He requested that Professional Learning Days be changed as follows: March 19 be swapped with March 26, and May 14 with May 28. LDB made a motion that the Rowe School Committee vote to change the School Calendar for the 2013-14 School Year by changing the March 19, 2014 Professional Learning Day to March 26, 2014 and changing the May 14, 2014 Professional Learning Day to May 28, 2014. CL seconded the motion. . Roll call vote to change the 2013-14 school calendar: LDB: yes, CL: yes, LM: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

VIII: SUPERINTENDENT'S REPORT: MB stated that most matters were covered during budget section. See report attached.

IX. FINANCIAL INFORMATION: See reports attached.

X: DIRECTOR OF PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES: See report attached.

XI: DIRECTOR OF CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENTS ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS: See report attached.

XII: REPORT OF CHAIRPERSON – NORTH BERKSHIRE SCHOOL UNION: LM introduced Superintendent Jon Lev of the North Berkshire School Union. He brought with him Carrie Garibaldis, Administrative Assistant/Business Manager, and Heidi Dugal, Principal of the Florida Elementary School. He had previously submitted a draft budget for the NBSU of $352,244.30. Copies were distributed again. Rowe's costs would be 15% of this, or $52,836.65. LM reported that she met with Supt. Lev to go over the budget to make sure that Rowe's needs would be met with what was being provided by the budget. CL stated she had emailed Jon one question she had. If we went with NBSU what would happen with our specialists? Can we work things out with the Mohawk district if need be? Jon responded that the biggest problem would be health insurance benefits. NBSU has part-timers that work in the different schools. The employees need to have a minimum of 20 hours in any one of the schools to get insurance through that school. They do not add the hours together worked at each individual school to get to the 20 hour minimum. If a part-timer works 20 or more hours in two schools, the school where the person works the most hours covers their health insurance benefits. The NBSU employees do get health insurance benefits through the Union, and the costs are charged to each school via the Union cost sharing. The way it currently works with the Mohawk Region schools is that employees' hours at the schools are combined and if they work a total of .5 FTE or more they are eligible for health insurance benefits. The costs for these benefits are charged on a pro-rated basis to the respective district(s) they work in via the shared services agreement. Supt. Lev stated that if there is a legal requirement to do things differently than is currently being

done then certainly they would make the appropriate changes. The NBSU also uses Russell Dupere as counsel. Supt. Lev will check with him.

LDB asked Supt. Lev to describe what research he has done to determine what the needs of the Rowe School District are. He replied that he has not done any research, nor has he been to the Rowe School, nor has he had any contact with any school staff or administrative personnel. His assumption would be that if Rowe does make a formal request to join the NBSU, at that point he would certainly look into the school at that time. LDB then asked how this move would be educationally better for our school district. He replied that he can speak to the three schools (4 towns) in the Union and what is being provided for them. It has been a positive experience for the students. They score well. The School Committees are extremely pleased with the job the Union is doing. He stated he hoped that the Rowe School Committee had looked into the NBSU to see what they have to offer. He added that he was approached by Rowe as a possibility of joining the NBSU. He did not seek out the Rowe School District nor try to recruit Rowe in any way. LDB again stated she was trying to figure out if there is any educational basis for the decision. She was hoping that Supt. Lev would have something, but stated that perhaps this is more a question for the School Committee chair. She then asked LM what the educational reasons for doing this are? BK seconded that question. He hoped that this would be positive for the Rowe students. LM replied that going with the NBSU would save $50,000. She would like to perhaps put some of this money towards rehiring the science teacher which was eliminated several years ago. She would see that as a gain for the school. LDB asked LM if during her research of the Union budget she saw any items that perhaps might not be covered. LM stated that there are some differences. There is no Food Services Manager. Therefore, if the cafeteria manager needs assistance the Union office would help out. Her understanding is that the Union staff will cover any area that is not specifically listed in the budget. LDB stated she does not see a business administrator, a bookkeeper, a treasurer, an early childhood coordinator. Are they built into the costs presented? Supt. Lev responded that Carrie is the business manager. Her salary is covered under the clerical line item. It also covers the part-time secretary/receptionist. The clerical line item also covers bookkeeping. He stated that the Union has 350 students PreK through 8th grade, and the Union staff covers the needs of the Union and the school. They have two Level 2 schools and one Level 1 school. They are all doing well. Level 1 is the top level out of 5 levels. Level 5 schools are generally taken over by the state.

Noel Abbott asked what levels the Mohawk schools are. MB responded that Heath is a Level 1; Rowe, Hawlemont, Sanderson, Colrain, Buckland-Shelburne are Level 2. Both Rowe and Buckland-Shelburne are on the cusp of being Level 1 schools next year.

BK asked about the curriculum coordinator position at $12,000. Is this a part-time position? Supt. Lev stated that it is a one day per week .2 position. That represents the need we have. Between the Superintendent and the principals a FT curriculum coordinator is not needed. LDB asked if the coordinator was also an early childhood coordinator. He replied that it is basically his position. He handles facility issues, curriculum issues. BK asked that he explain the SPED Director and SPED Coordinator. He replied that the SPED Coordinator helps cover some meetings and helps us to not spread ourselves too thin.

[Police Officer Hyytinen interrupted the meeting to alert people that the weather is deteriorating and roads are getting slippery.]

BK asked about the facilities coordinator. He thinks that perhaps the School Committee should consider that the cafeteria manager and custodian will have more responsibility, so that their pay should increase correspondingly, and that this would eat into the $50K savings. LM stated that that may be the case, but not necessarily. BK also noted that there is no director of technology. Supt. Lev stated that there is a tech coordinator that works in all three schools.

BK asked who at NBSU assists with grants. Supt. Lev replied that it depends on the grant. Between Carrie, the SPED director, the principals and himself they take care of all of the grant work. BK: Do you use E-SPED? Supt.

Lev: Yes. BK: Are you a member of the collaborative? Supt. Lev: We belong to the Berkshire County Roundtable. They have their own collaborative that is connected to MCLA.

Noel Abbott stated that it seems there are two different types of organizations. It seems that Mohawk is larger and more structured. NBSU is smaller and seems more fluid by its nature. It feels like a radically different culture. Supt. Lev: Yes, it certainly is. I am in each of the schools several days per week. Because of our smaller size it allows for different uses of the team. Noel: It seems that we would be seeing you much more frequently. Supt. Lev: Yes, that is correct. It works for our size. We only deal with PreK to 8th grade.

LDB: Since our students enter Mohawk in the 7th grade, how would you collaborate with the Mohawk District to maximize the educational interests of the students? Supt. Lev: We have a similar setup with Drury High School and McCann. We look at the entering 9th graders and determine what is expected at the high school. Our students do well. For example...in last year's graduating class from Drury, 8 of the top 10 in the class were from Clarksburg. Usually our kids are pretty far ahead of the other kids in the schools and are very well prepared.

BK: Does NBSU use PowerSchool? Supt. Lev: We use Redeker.

LL: Are SPED records kept at the schools or at the Union? Supt. Lev: They are kept at the schools. The Union has copies. The IEPs are sent out by the Union office.

BK: Is there a purchase order system? There is no purchase order system. The reason why the towns like the system we have is that each town has more control. The Union committee hires the Union employees. The superintendent actually hires the principals, but with recommendation of the respective School Committee. The school employees are employees of the towns.

Marilyn Wilson asked who reached out to Supt. Lev initially. CL responded that she made the initial contact.

BK: Does NBSU use a web-based program to coordinate the educator evaluation system? Supt. Lev: We do not.

LDB: Are any of your schools Race-to-the-Top schools? Supt. Lev: Yes. One school is in its second year, the other two are in their first year. LDB: Do you have software to help you manage that? Heidi Dugal: I download the template and do the work myself.

BK: Do any of the schools use work sampling program for early childhood assessment? Heidi Dugal responded [inaudible].

Noel: You mentioned MCLA. What is your interface with them? Supt. Lev: They work with all Berkshire County schools. A lot of the work is in professional development. They give us help via their science program. We get involved with grants with them. We just had a Common Core grant with their involvement. They write grants and guide us. Noel: Does Mohawk write its own grants or work with other organizations? MB: We write our own grants. Noel: Then it seems that you're utilizing services from MCLA that Mohawk would be providing on their own.

LL: Would Rowe be excluded with MCLA involvement since it's not in Berkshire County? Supt. Lev: No, because Rowe would be part of the NBSU, so would be covered. LDB: Is there an annual fee for collaborative services? Supt. Lev: Yes. It is under contracted services. The roundtable fee is $1800 split amongst the three schools.

LDB: I have a question for my committee. I'm wondering why the Rowe School Committee wants to leave the current three district agreement. CL: I would like more control over our school. We have lost control. LDB: Please describe. CL: I've seen it in the building. The purchase order system is horrendous. The control of our cafeteria. We have to serve the same meals/food that the whole district serves. It never used to be like that.

LM: I feel that things have not been in the best interest of Rowe a lot of times. It is hard to be specific. It's just how things are run. There is so much red tape. It seems like we are spinning our wheels lots of times. The science teacher is a big item for me. The extra money could fund that. LDB: I don't think that the School Committee has worked to try to change the things that they are not happy with. The process is the way it is because the School Committee allowed it to be that way. We as the committee control how we want to manage our school district. It is really up to the committee. What I'm hearing from you Lisa is that it seems to be a financial decision. If so, why did we not negotiate with Mohawk and Hawlemont? Before you said there was plenty of time. What is your reasoning now? LM: If they wanted to negotiate on price they would have. LDB: Every time Bob Aeschback has approached this committee, this committee has ignored him. CL: This is not about Bob Aeschback. This is the Rowe School. LM: When I worked on the three-district agreement it was difficult working with someone that didn't want to listen. Mohawk has not approached me with some sort of discount. Bill Loomis worked on this and they told him no. They told us what we were paying. There was no negotiation.

LDB: The Superintendent read a letter to this committee offering to work with Rowe. You had no response. LM: I don't feel we're being listened to. CL: Again, we don't have control over our school. We lost control when this administration came in and it has gotten worse and worse. That is my strong feeling. LDB: I still haven't heard what the educational benefit is, other than hiring a science teacher. LM: We'd be saving $50,000 per year. Over 5 years that's $250,000—a quarter million dollars. I think that's huge.

Donna Flagg: Have you looked at any other superintendencies? CL: I have a lot of respect for Jon Lev. It would be too expensive to hire our own superintendent. LM: I see an opportunity here with NBSU.

LDB: I appreciate you coming Jon. I have done some research on the NBSU. My concern as a school committee member, as a townsperson, and as a parent is that No. 1 we provide the best education we can. This is going to be a challenge with the new school and decreased enrollments. Forgive me if I'm skeptical with my committee abandoning a 40 year relationship without much discussion. LM: Let me be clear, if we vote to request to join the NBSU, they would have to vote to accept us. LDB: Certainly before that we would need some sort of agreement. LM: The next step would be to vote to ask to join the Union. Then Supt. Lev would work on an agreement that both school committees would need to accept. To leave the Union would take a vote on the school committee's part. Supt. Lev: I'm sure that could be part of the agreement.

LDB: Would there be any changes to the draft budget? Supt. Lev: I will take another look at it. I will check on the tech position. LM: We currently have $8000 in the local elementary budget and another $9000 in the central office budget for tech assistance. Supt. Lev: It's possible that with the technology budget that is part of your school you wouldn't need to use the Union tech position. BK: We do not have a tech position.

LDB: With respect to your expenses, what is the basis for the percent breakdown for each town? Supt. Lev: In general it's by population and services. None of the percentages have gone through the Union committee for approval. They are very close to what they would be though. Rowe is very similar to Savoy. It is not typical that changes to the percentages are regularly made.

BK: How are transportation contracts handled? Supt. Lev: Our office puts out the bids for transportation. The contracts are signed by the school committees.

Supt. Lev left the meeting. He was thanked for his input.

Rosie Gordon: I am totally shocked that with a $1.4 million budget that we don't have a science teacher. BK: Science is taught in each classroom by the classroom teachers. LM: That is because the position was eliminated. LDB: We previously had a separate science teacher. A while back the 5th/6th grade teacher retired. The science teacher took her position. The science teacher's position was not filled. Instead, each classroom teacher was then responsible for teaching science.

LM: It seems to me that looking back when we were looking into this, I was looking into hiring our own superintendency, which would be about $100,000. I haven't presented this because I don't think it is the best way to go. CL was looking into NBSU. LDB you could have looked into other options at that time, like staying with the central office. LDB: I attended the meetings but I was not authorized to negotiate. LM: You could have looked into it. LDB: I don't think tearing down a 40-year relationship is the way to go. LM: You could have looked into. You could have called a Mohawk school committee member. LDB: Will you or will you not negotiate with Mohawk? What is going to be different by going with NBSU?

Noel Abbott: In some ways the conversation is the symbol of a division that has existed within the town. There is a history of challenge and difference. It is unfortunate. Some relationships, I perceive, are extremely strained if not broken. If we go with NBSU, the children will still be in the Rowe elementary school. It will still be a department of the Town of Rowe. It would be a fresh start. It would be a very different cultural management system. Every change has its benefits and downsides, but it seems to me that it's time for Rowe to get a fresh start. As Jon has said, the children are happy and the school committees are happy, and the children are doing well. This town is unique in that it is a stand-alone school. There is nothing to lose by trying and perhaps a lot to be gained.

LM: If the other two members want to continue with the current arrangement then we can discuss that. LDB: I make a motion that the Rowe School Committee enter into negotiations to continue our current agreement with our sister districts. The motion failed for lack of a second. CL: I make a motion that the Rowe School Committee go into negotiations with the North Berkshire School Union. LM seconded the motion. BK: I'd like make two more points. I'd like to read something that the teachers put in their letter to the school committee I think back in October. Would the school committee consider asking the Mohawk district for a one year extension to give the school committee time to thoroughly consider all of the ramifications of making a change or staying with Mohawk? The second thing, if you're looking at the $50K you're going to save, I see a lot of that getting eaten up by things that we know. There may be other things we don't know about. If the tech position is not included that would be about $8,000. There may be an additional $3,000-5,000 for the cafeteria manager and custodian for added responsibilities. Whatever transition has to happen this summer—there will be costs for that. LM: Possibly, but the transition expenses will be one-time expenses. LM called for the roll call vote: LM: yes, CL: yes, LDB no. The motion to enter into negotiations with the NBSU passed (2/1/0).

LDB: Are you not willing to enter into negotiations? LM: No, but I would do what the committee wanted. LDB: Aside from the science teacher, please provide any educational advantage there is. LM: More money to the school itself for education and less to administrative costs.

Rosie: If the Berkshire people come in with figures that are different than what you thought, is there a backup plan? LM: The same plan we have always had. The central office would be an option. If that didn't work out then we could hire our own superintendent. There are also organizations that can be hired that handle administrative school matters. Donna Flagg: Can we explore both options at the same time? CL: If the administration at Mohawk wants to come back with some new prices and stop trying to take our money I would consider it. With what they did with our tuition and our agreement it seems that they just want our money.

LL: I think it would be helpful if you would sit with the teachers and answer their questions. LM: I am happy to take calls from anyone. I can't really meet with the teachers because I am not their boss. If they want to meet for tea then OK. LL: They had a list of questions. LM: They were all answered at the first meeting. Unfortunately many of the teachers were not at the meeting. CL: I thought they were supposed to get a copy of the meeting minutes: BK: They did get the meeting minutes. CL: Do the staff hire the Superintendent or do they work for the superintendent and school committee. They told us what they thought and we listened. Wayne: I understand that you are not their boss, but the school committee certainly has the responsibility to be stewards. It seems that as stewards it is vital to listen to feelings and thoughts of the staff. If there is not communication between the school board and those carrying out desires of school board, it can create

difficulties in accomplishing goals. LM: I'm not sure how appropriate it is to have a meeting with the staff. I'm happy to do that, but I'm stuck at how we could do that. BK: We could have a meeting at Hawlemont at the end of the school day. CL: I guess I would like to ask Michael that. We have always been told that we have to go through channels to speak with our staff. So, I guess we have to ask Michael if we have permission to do that. MB: Cindy, when you mentioned earlier that administration could put something together. If you want us to put something together, then you reach out to them directly, or direct me to do this. Also, given the unusual nature of what's going on here, absolutely you should talk to the staff. At the end of the day it is about supporting the educators—that's how we support the kids.

LM: Then should we have a school committee meeting to meet with them? LDB: Yes, post a meeting.

Noel: Wayne, I 100% get what you said and agree. That said, I want to talk to two aspects. Michael, I realize you aren't authorized as an individual to begin to negotiate. Yet, when you look at the structural basis, I can't see there can be any change to the numbers unless there is a large structural change. To expect different numbers to me isn't even in the realm of possibility, especially as budgets are generally already established. Also, frankly there is an elephant in the room which is the level of history that is something that in the short term might be very difficult to heal. MB: I don't think you can make any assumptions without a conversation. The three chairs should have a conversation.

XIII: Adjournment: At 8:15pm CL made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by LM. Roll call vote to adjourn: LM: yes, CL: yes, LDB: yes. Motion passed unanimously (3/0/0).

Respectfully submitted by Ellen Miller,

Signature: _____
Lisa A. Miller, Chair

Date Approved: April 24, 2014

Meeting Packet/Handouts:

- Agenda
- FY2015 proposed budget
- Minutes (12/19/13, 1/16/14)
- Principal's Report 2-20-14
- Superintendent's Report 2-20-14
- Superintendent's 2013 Annual Report
- FY2014 Operating Statement – Jan 2014
- Expense Report – 1/31/2014 to date
- Remote Participation Policy (first read)
- CES FY2013 Report article: *Guided Tours Start Here*
- Recorder articles: *Proposed Rowe school budget sees 2.5% hike (2-10-2014); Rowe School Committee to vote Thursday on new supt.?* (2-10-2014); *Private study: Rowe School spending highest in state* (1-23-2014); *Rowe principal gets contract renewal* (1-21-2014); *Rowe preschoolers get lesson in food service at Greenfield Grille* (2-21-2014); *Rowe votes 'no' on $100K reserve for school leach field (1-10-2014)*
- SF & West County News article: *Knittle's contract renewed (1-24-2014)*