

Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen – Minutes
Wednesday, January 16, 2019 – 6:30 pm
Rowe Town Hall - Hearing Room 1

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair May at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Chair Morse, Vice-Chair Dennis May, Member Sokol and Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau

Audience: Cemetery Commission: Jim Williams, Jay Williams and Earl and Myra Carlow

Library Director: Molly Lane, Library Commissioners Cathy Schneider, Becky Bradley

Planning Board: David Roberson, Chair

Finance Committee: Wayne Zavotka, Chair, Paul McLatchy III, Laurie Pike, C. Selmi Hyytinen, Loretta Dionne

OPEN MEETING

Announcement of recording devices & noteworthy information: one recording device

Yankee Road: Chair Morse informed the two boards that the engineering report for Yankee Road has been received from the engineering firm Lamson Engineering. It is over 200 pages long, and the company requested a meeting to review. In the meantime, estimates to repair/replace the road range between \$600,000 and \$1,300,000. It was agreed to meet on Friday, February 1, 2019 at 1:00 p.m.

FRCOG: There will be a meeting at 7:00 p.m. on January 31, 2019 at Greenfield Community College hosted by Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to discuss the county's current emergency radio situation. The existing system needs replacement. There are two options, one to replace the current system that no longer can be repaired or join the Commonwealth 800 MHz System. It is likely to be a great expense for the area towns. Interested individuals should register to attend the meeting with FRCOG in advance.

Cemetery Budget: Commissioners Earl Carlow, James Williams, and Jay Williams were in attendance. They requested level funding, or \$15,000. This will be split with \$10,000 for maintenance and \$5,000 for special projects. They are hoping to replace the wooden fence at the West Cemetery, though the possibility of prevailing wage being a factor may affect the total cost. The Commission is looking into purchasing the materials with this year's budget, and paying for the labor out of next year's budget.

The Commission has been receiving requests for additional lots in the North Cemetery. Currently there are none left to sell. Commissioner Williams offered to sell the town one acre of abutting land to the town so that it could expand the cemetery. Members present suggested a number around \$4,000-\$5,000 with the land being cleared. The Finance Committee voted to recommend that the town buy the land and pay to have it cleared.

Library Budget: The Library Trustees are requesting a total budget of \$70,365. The library is a unique budget in that it must be funded at 2.5% increase over the average of the last three years in order to maintain its certification. If the town loses its certification, it loses access to interlibrary loan, the bookmobile, and other services.

Members of the Finance Committee discussed the director's line, which called for a 5% merit raise increase. The Finance Committee had voted unanimously at its last meeting to not support merit raises at this time. Trustee Bradley explained that perhaps the wording was incorrect, and that the increase was being sought as Ms. Lane had completed additional

certifications. This has resulted in higher qualifications for the position, and is therefore a salary adjustment that was discussed at the time of her hiring, rather than a merit raise.

The utility bills have gone down thanks to the installation of heat pumps and insulation projects through the Green Community. This has allowed for the money to be allocated to other lines.

The Trustees will be presenting requests in the next year for projects to add to the Capital Improvement Plan. They are working on getting cost estimates.

Planning Board Budget: Chair Roberson explained that the Planning Board has requested a budget of \$17,000, with \$2,000 for operations, \$10,000 for legal expenses, and \$5,000 for stipends. The Planning Board recently voted that they will no longer publish The Goal Post after July 1st, and therefore are not asking for funding for it.

The operations line has been doubled to \$2,000 as the board is hoping to hold hearings on its zoning bylaw proposals before the next annual town meeting. There are numerous posting and legal requirements, as well as the cost of mailing the proposal to residents (Chair Roberson estimated that the proposed changes are roughly 60 pages).

The legal line has been doubled to \$10,000, as the board will be seeking town counsel review on all zoning changes before presenting them to the voters. In addition, if a special permit should be sought for a large-scale project, the board may need additional legal funds. It was noted that it might be difficult to increase budgets that may not end up being used. A suggestion was made about possibly appropriating money to a revolving fund, which could then be rolled over to build up a reserve.

A stipend was requested by the Planning Board. They are asking for \$5,000, or \$1,000 per member. Chair Roberson explained it would be a nice way for the town to say “thank you” and to appreciate the time put in by members. Mr. McLatchy said that he was not 100% behind the amount as there are other boards and committees (including the Finance Committee) that met more frequently than the Planning Board and were not paid. He did support a stipend for the Planning Board, but did not offer an amount. A concern was raised about other unpaid boards possibly asking for stipends. It was then suggested that perhaps stipends as a whole should be reexamined.

Wage Survey: Chair Morse suggested a wage and salary survey be conducted which would look at job descriptions and offer recommendations on wages and steps. This was recently done in Ashfield for \$6,000, and has led to a step system that sets wages for roughly five years. This has made budgeting more predictable. Mr. Hyytinen brought up a concern about whether current practices take into account prior experience and education. For example, is a new hire being paid the same rate as someone who has been working for the town for a few years? He suggested that job descriptions be uniform in their format, and that wages for new employees be looked at when hiring.

Park Budget: Ms. Pike and Mr. Hyytinen briefly stepped out of their role of Finance Committee members and into their role as Park Commissioners to present the Park’s budget. Most of the increases have come from an increase in minimum wage, and the other positions that have had to increase as well to maintain parity. Overall, the Park is requesting an increase of only 1.55%.

The Commission is looking to add the replacement of the tennis court to the CIP in the next five years. They are hoping to replace it with a multi-functional area, rather than just two tennis courts. There are grants available to help pay up to 50% of the costs, but they require the town to have an open space plan, which is a considerable undertaking. Commissioner Pike will look into what is required, and an open space committee will likely be appointed in the near future.

Municipal Light Plant Budget: Selectman Chuck Sokol presented the MLP budget as the deputy manager. The budget being requested totals \$7,800. \$1,000 is for the Wired West dues, which is level-funded from previous years. Two new lines, \$6,000 for a manager stipend and \$800 for travel expenses, were requested.

The stipend being requested has been asked for due to the large amount of work the manager has done and will be required to do for the building and maintenance of the network. The current manager, David Dvore, is also representing Rowe on the Wired West executive committee and will be attending many meetings on the town's behalf. It was agreed that there should be a job description created for the position.

The travel costs line will be used to reimburse anyone who is traveling on behalf of the broadband effort.

A question was raised about whether there would be any funds coming back from the operation of the network. Deputy Manager Sokol explained that it would all depend on the subscription rate, and the costs associated with running everything. If more towns sign on, fixed costs will be reduced for each town, possibly resulting in excess revenue being returned to the town. If the expenses remain high, it's possible the town will see no income from this endeavor.

The town will also need to consider how it wants to budget for the replacement of equipment, approximately \$100,000 worth every ten years.

Fire Truck Sale: The Selectmen will be meeting with Fire Chief Dennis Annear.

Terms: Members will need to speak with the town clerk to find out which terms are up for election this year. As Ms. Pike and Mr. Hyttinen were appointed to fill vacancies, they will be required to stand for election in May regardless.

MINUTES

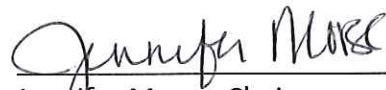
1. Board of Selectmen Minutes- tabled until next meeting.

AJOURNMENT: Seeing no further business, Chair Morse made a motion to adjourn the Meeting at 9:04 p.m. The motion, seconded by Vice-Chair, was unanimously accepted. (3/0/0)

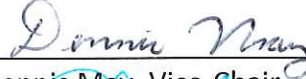
Janice Boudreau
Executive Secretary

Approval Date: February 20, 2019

Approved:



Jennifer Morse, Chair



Dennis May, Vice-Chair



Chuck Sokol, Select Board Member

Documents:

- Agenda 01-16-19
- Library Budget
- Planning Board Budget
- Parks Budget
- Municipal Light Plant Budget