



Town of Rowe
Board of Selectmen Minutes
Monday, June 16, 2020 –6:00 p.m.
VIA TELECONFERENCE

This meeting will be held via video conference, consistent with Gov. Baker's temporary modifications to Open Meeting Law.

REMOTE PARTICIPATION INFORMATION:

Video and/or audio

Meeting Host: zoom.us

Meeting ID: 288-065-7034

URL: <https://zoom.us/j/2880657034>

Telephone: 312-626-6799

Present: Chair Chuck Sokol, Vice-Chair Jennifer Morse, Ed Silva, Selectman and Executive Secretary Janice Boudreau

Audience: School Committee Chair Susan Zavotka, Principal Bill Knittle, Superintendent John Franzoni, NBSU Business Manager Jennifer Macksey, Matt Crowningshield, Mary Paige, Lauren Werner, Melanie Gokey, Joanne Semanie, Paul McLatchy III, Rosie Gordon

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order by Chair Sokol at 5:00 p.m. via remote participation.

MOTION: Roll call vote to call to order:

Chair Sokol: _____ **yes**

Selectman Silva: _____ **yes**

Vice-Chair Morse: _____ **yes**

Announcement of recording devices: two

Appointment: 6:00pm - Rowe School Committee to Discuss FY21 Budget

Explanation of the Curriculum:

School Committee Chair Susie Zavotka opened the meeting explaining the education process in the small school environment and optimal use of staff. Chair Zavotka reviewed a comparison chart that explained that the level of the staff has changed very little in 10 years.

Special Services:

The greatest change has been Special Services that are required to offer each individual and a greater awareness of special needs. Principal Knittle concurred with the identification of social emotional needs and having to add a state required Adjustment Counselor to address those needs. Knittle said it was a challenge for a small rural school to find these special services that are needed on a minimal basis.

Support Staff:

Chair Zavotka said the School Committee researched Support Staff and had put quite a bit of work looking at other school districts for comparison and also found that some of the staff in Rowe were grossly underpaid. They had worked to remedy those salaries that were very low.

Summary:

Chair Zavotka explained that the school has made adjustments over the years to remain on average with a 2% increase over the past 10 years and felt that there was responsible control over the budget while addressing required mandates from the state. She is concerned that it will change the value of the education.

Discussion:

Selectman Silva explained that due to the covid-19 said he would like to see a 10% reduction rather than 5%. He explained that throughout the state services are being cut and local aid and receipts will be reduced due to the pandemic. Silva said he wanted to keep the school running and get ahead of the curve and make budget cuts now. Using over \$300,000.00 of school choice to balance the budget, the Selectman expressed that it was not sustainable in the future.

There was a question about whether any money was saved in the last few months due to the Covid-19. Principal Knittle said there was no substantial savings this year. He further said that the 40% reduction for transportation costs will be unspent. Selectmen members reviewed the reduction in aid from the state and how it might potentially change the tax rate. It explained that using the 2010 figures that were recommended by some state officials it would increase the tax rate to closer to 6% tax rate.

Selectman Silva spoke about the lack of available property in town and does not anticipate growth in school age children in the future. Silva is concerned over the tax rate and that it may be a burden to some of the population.

Principal Knittle said that there is a concern if budgets are cut then the program will suffer and that the school is an investment in the town and in the future of Rowe. School Committee Member Mary Paige feels that looking at possibly cutting staff is not a possible and that it will have an adverse effect on the school.

Selectman Silva asked if there are there any programs you can chip away to reduce costs.

Business Manager Jennifer Macksey said that the budget format was changed this year trying to show more transparency and that it was difficult to compare the past expenditures in some areas due to providing breakdowns with more detail. Ms. Macksey said that moving forward it will be much clearer and that in the past school choice money was used to offset expenses and now it is used for educational purposes.

It was pointed out that the added expense to the town is close to \$300,000.00 for employee benefits.

Chair Zavotka asked about what other departments were asked to reduce spending and felt that the budget was cut without conferring with them and for no particular good reason. Ms. Zavotka said that it was important to provide an education that attracts kids and that you need a critical number of kids to make a good program.

Selectman Silva said it was important to trying to balance the budget for the future. Chair Sokol offered a compromise of somewhere around 2.5% and that there needs to be more information given to townspeople as to explain what goes into the school budget. The compromise was to reduce the School Nurse schedule to part-time and that there would also be a savings in the reduction of insurance benefits cost. The posted Annual Town Meeting Warrant had the school budget reduced by 5% and that citizens would have to be informed about the compromise of near 2.5% due to the consensus arrived at this meeting.

MOTION TO AMEND THE WARRANT ARTICLE: Vice-Chair Morse made a motion to amend the School budget Article to read Rowe School PreK-6 Operating Budget to \$1,020,262.00 on the Annual Town Meeting Warrant. The motion was seconded by Chair Sokol.

MOTION: Roll call vote Amend Article:

Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes vote: (3-0-0)

School committee, Bill Knittle, John Franzoni, Jennifer Macksey, Lauren Werner, Melanie Gokey left at 8:11 p.m.

Selectboard Business:

ATM Preparations and Review

Selectmen reviewed the Annual Town Meeting Warrant and decided who was going to present Articles. Details of the event were discussed to keep citizens safe.

Hazelton Rd. Tree Request:

Ellen Miller requested that the highway dept. replace trees on her property that she said were planted in the Bicentennial year. Administrative staff researched records to find no references to the trees or any specific spending for the Bicentennial event. Since they were on private property it was determined that nothing is required of the town to do.

Deficit Spending Request to DOR

Executive Secretary presented a letter to be signed by the Board to deficit spend in FY20 due to the Covid-19 pandemic spending that was unanticipated and unfunded.

MOTION TO SIGN LETTER: Chair Sokol made a motion to sign the letter to the Department of Revenue asking for permission to deficit spend due to the covid-19 pandemic unanticipated and unfunded spending.

MOTION: Roll call vote to Sign Letter:

Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes vote: (3-0-0)

Appointments for FY20 Town Clerk Requests:

MOTION TO APPOINT: Chair Sokol made a motion to appoint Willian Morse as Election Clerk, Ramon Luis Selectmen as Election Warden and Mary Paige as Election Teller as requested by Town Clerk. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.

MOTION: Roll call vote to call to Appointments:

Chair Sokol: yes
Selectman Silva: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: abstained (2-0-1)

1/12 Budget Review, Potential Approval: tabled until later

Accountant Contract & FY21 Payments:

There was discussion about the Shared Services Agreement for Accounting Services and that the agreement will not come into effect at the start of FY21 since the other towns have yet to hold their town meetings. It was decided to contact Charlemont to see if they were in favor of the Agreement.

Compensated Absences Tables: A revision to the Personnel Policy Manual was presented by Administrative Assistant to show prorated tables for full and part-time employees to better explain Compensated Absences and accruals.

MOTION TO ACCEPT AMENDMENTS: Chair Sokol made a motion to approve the amendments presented to the Personnel Policy Manual regarding Compensated Absences with one correction. Vice-Chair Morse seconded the motion.

MOTION: Roll call vote to Amend Compensated Absences on the Personnel Policy Manual:

Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes vote: (3-0-0)

Minutes:

Minutes of June 1, 2020:

MOTION TO ACCEPT MINUTES OF JUNE 1, 2020: Chair Sokol made a motion to accept the Minutes of June 1, 2020 with a correction. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.

MOTION: Roll call vote to Accept the Minutes of June 1, 2020:

Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes vote: (3-0-0)

Future Meetings: Chair Sokol said the next meeting would be on June 22, 2020 at 12:00 noon should the town meeting budget not pass and a 1/12th budget be needed.

Adjournment:

MOTION: Chair Sokol made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. The motion was seconded by Selectman Silva.

A roll call vote was taken:

Chair Sokol: yes
Vice-Chair Morse: yes
Selectman Silva: yes vote: (3-0-0)

Respectfully Submitted,

Janice Boudreau, Executive Secretary

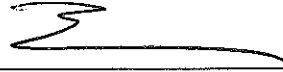
Approval Date: *JULY 13, 2020*

Approved:



Chuck Sokol, Chair

Selectman Jennifer Morse, Vice-Chair



Selectman Ed Silva

Documents:

- Agenda 06/16/20
- Employee Breakdown of Insurance – Town/School/Retirees
- Rowe School Committee Response to Town of Rowe BoS Decision to Cut FY21 Funding
- Deficit Spending Letter
- Appointment Request from Town Clerk
- 1/12 Budget Proposal
- Compensated Absences Tables
- Draft Minutes June 1, 2020