



Board of Selectmen's Meeting

Conference Room at Rindge Town Offices

Date: Wednesday, December 3rd, 2025

Time: 5:30 pm

MEETING MINUTES

Present: Chairman, Bob Hamilton, Vice Chair, Tom Coneys, Selectboard Member, Larry Cleveland, Town Administrator, Max Vandervliet, Finance Director, Helene Rogers, Executive Secretary, Victoria Stenersen, and members of the public.

The meeting was opened by the chair at 5:35 p.m. Bob motioned to enter into a non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (b) hiring and (I) legal. Seconded by Tom, it passed by a roll call vote: Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry – aye. The vote was 3-0.

The meeting returned to the public at 6:07 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bob. Bob motioned to seal the minutes from the two non-public sessions under RSA 91-A:3 II (b) & (I) indefinitely, because it may adversely affect the outcome. Seconded by Larry, it passed by a roll call vote; Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry - aye. The vote was 3-0.

Selectmen's Announcements: Bob announced that there was the P.O.O.R. Meat Raffle on Saturday, December 6th, 2025, at 1:30 pm, and the co-sponsor is the Rindge Crime Watch. He also announced that the Wreaths Across America event to place wreaths at the graves of the veterans in Rindge was on Saturday, December 13th, 2025, at 12:00 pm at the Hillside Cemetery. Larry stated that they placed about 260 wreaths and invited everyone to come to the event. The ceremony takes about an hour, and they place wreaths at the Hillside Cemetery, Meetinghouse Cemetery, and the Rand Property Cemetery.

Payroll: Bob motioned to approve the payroll for 11.27.2025 & 12.04.2025. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

Accounts Payable: Bob motioned to approve the accounts payable for 11.27.2025. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0. The accounts payable from 12.04.2025 were tabled due to several of the entries likely being coded incorrectly, and the purpose of a few of the purchases was unclear.

Minutes: There were no minutes for approval, tabled for now.

Citizens' Forum: Bob opened the forum at 6:13 pm by reading the rules of order and closed the forum at 6:18 pm.

Roberta Oeser, Main Street, stated that P.O.O.R. typically donates to Wreaths Across America, but they need to receive a request from them to donate. Operation Santa requested more funding from P.O.O.R. and should receive funding authorization for their request on Saturday. They are also concerned because many of the trees have tags left on them. The requests are all for children, and there are about 70 kids total. The trees are at the Library, Verizon Store, and Walmart. She asked those who have a giving nature to take a tag and purchase a gift. Larry responded that any more donations would be allocated towards next year and requested a donation from P.O.O.R. They have funds set aside for next year's wreaths, but did not want to push for funding when he will not be the location coordinator next year. He explained that the formatting of how Wreaths Across America accepts donations had changed. Previously, they got one free wreath for every two wreaths, but now they get \$5 to go towards a wreath. A wreath currently costs \$17 each and will increase in price next year. He does not want to pick and choose if they do not have enough wreaths. Roberta explained that P.O.O.R. gave \$600 to Wreaths Across America last year. Dan Colburn will be in charge next year.

Roni Hamilton, East Monomonac Road, thanked the Highway Department and Department Heads for doing a great job with the first snowstorm of the season.

Old Business:

Update on Fire Chief Hiring Process: Max stated that the final day of interviews is on Thursday, December 4th. By the end of the day, the hiring committee will bring forward a recommendation to the board for final approval.

New Business:

Finalization for New Municipal Attorney: Bob explained that our current council is retiring at the end of the year, so they have been looking into costs for other firms and attorneys. Of the four firms quoted, Max recommended Matthew Serge as the council from Drummond Woodsum at \$255 per hour. Tom motioned to go along with Max's recommendation of Drummond Woodsum for the Town Council. Seconded by Bob, the motion passed 3-0.

Refund for a Dump Sticker: Bob motioned to refund the purchase of the dump sticker. Seconded by Larry, the motion passed 3-0. The resident already had a dump sticker for this year and was trying to purchase one for 2026. They sent the sticker back to the Town. Roberta asked if they were going to reduce the price for the dump stickers until they start selling the new ones. She advised not to give out the punch card after the reduction in price. Bob motioned to reduce the dump sticker prices by 50% until the end of February. Seconded by Tom, the motion passed 3-0.

Assessing Firm Contract Update: Max stated that our contract with our assessing firm, Avitar is up at the end of the year. A request for proposals was put out on November 19th and only firms that work with Avitar's software can bid. MRI stated that they would answer after Thanksgiving, but he has not received a response. Max reported that he spoke with Chad Roberge, co-CEO of Avitar, on November 24th. Chad apologized for what "should have been better customer service" and "communication," and he asserted that if Rindge renews the contract, he will make sure Avitar does a better job of communication moving forward.

There was a discussion about the Avitar software that Rindge uses, the positives of potentially contracting with MRI, and the shortage of available assessment firms. Tom proposed renewing the contract with Avitar for only one year and reviewing it again next year. Bob stated that he would like to decide the following week. Max responded that he would circle back to MRI. There was agreement among the Board that using MRI for assessing services would be the best course of action if they submitted a proposal. Simon Moseley, Pine Eden Road, asked if it is possible to have a third-party assessor reevaluate the mobile home parks and the lakes to correct the valuations, even if Rindge renews the contract with Avitar. Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, commented on the lack of proposals and that renewing with Avitar may be better than switching. Roberta Oeser, Main Street, proposed adding the Board of Assessors to the warrant.

Approval of 2024 Abatements – Map 3 Lot 38-2, Map 6 Lot 75, & Map 6 Lot 99-4: Bob stated that these abatements were sent back to the Town from the BTLA for meaningful mediation. For the abatement on Map 3 Lot 38-2, it was signed off by the Board prior. The applicant wanted more for an abatement, so they applied to the BTLA. The BTLA gave the Board until December 8th to have meaningful mediation and send them a completed report. Tom recommended that the attorney respond on behalf of the Town for the abatement. Jennifer Helsel, Assessing Clerk, commented that she believes an assessor from Avitar will meet with the applicants the following day. Bob responded that they need to decide tonight, and if necessary, they can initial any updated abatements and revise their decision at the next public meeting. They will stand with all their prior decisions on the three abatements they signed off on.

Bob motioned to maintain their prior decision of accepting the abatement for Map 3 Lot 38-2 and the denial of the abatements for Map 6 Lot 75 and Map 6 Lot 99-4. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

Approval of Quote for Town Report and Voter's Guide: Victoria summarized the quotes received for the Voter's Guide and Town Report. For the Voter's Guide, R.C. Brayshaw quoted \$1,171, Silver Direct quoted \$800, and Minuteman Press

quoted \$1,531.60. All three of those quotes do not include postage. Victoria recommended going with Silver Direct because they gave the lowest quote and are the most local company. Bob requested that the voter's list be on the back, wafer-sealed, same quality paper, folded, and stapled, etc. Bob motioned to accept Silver Direct's proposal of \$800 for the 2026 Voter's Guide. Seconded by Tom, it passed 3-0.

For the Town Report, R.C. Brayshaw kept their quote the same as last year at \$4,591, Minuteman Press quoted \$4,747.40, and Kase Printing quoted \$4,296.80. Tom motioned to accept the quote from R.C. Brayshaw of \$4,591 for the 2025 Town Report. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

3rd 2026 Joint Session of the Board of Selectmen and Budget Advisory Committee

Bob opened the joint session at 6:53 p.m. Present from the Budget Advisory Committee were Daniel Whitney, Mark Hower, Casey Burrage, James Burger, Tina Sbrega, and Roberta Oeser.

Welfare's Proposed 2026 Budget: From Attachment A on page 11. Welfare Director, Mary Drew, commented on the \$1000 rent assistance line and how it is regularly overspent. Roberta explained that the line could be offset by the Buzzwell Hardy Trust Fund upon request to the Trustees from the Welfare Director. The fund should not be used unless necessary, because once it is used, the funds will not be replaced. The current balance is about \$33,000, and the entire principal is eligible for use. The overall 2026 requested welfare budget is flat. Mary explained the breakdown of the social agency support line listed in Attachment B. For the Home Healthcare lines, Mary sent a letter asking that they adjust their request because of the limited budget. How each agency is funded depends on whether they have a high Rindge case load, but the smaller requests typically get funded at 100%. Mary receives more requests than the Town can fund, so she finances the larger requests on a rotation. Mary has not received all the requests for 2026. Dan asked her to send the information on expenses over the previous years to him before the deliberative session. Mary explained the fluctuation in expenses year to year and the unpredictability. Mark asked if the town funds the food bank. Mary answered yes, it is under the Monadnock Food Bank/Community Kitchen, but she ensures funds are allocated to the Rindge Food Bank. The Rindge Food Bank is not only for Rindge residents but is for all NH state residents. Mary stated that this is not the only agency that does this, and she could request a report on the number of residents from each NH town to see the percentage of recipients from Rindge, to then allocate funds. Roberta thanked Mary for the great job she does.

Ambulance/Fire Department/Mutual Aid/Emergency Management Proposed 2026 Budgets:

The **Ambulance** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 7. Rick Donovan, Fire Chief, stated that JRMA indicated that their request is the same as last year, \$125,000. In 2025, the Town budgeted \$85,000. From a warrant article, \$40,000 was put in a Trust, and they paid for other ambulance services as needed with those funds to cover the deficiencies in service. They planned to evaluate the service of JRMA by the end of the year. The quality and quantity of service have greatly decreased. The chief they had is no longer with JRMA. The interim chief brought on a company called Great Brook EMS, which is helping fill in the personnel gaps. This started the week before Thanksgiving, and the service seems to be better. Rick suggested that Bob, Helene, and he review the financials and where they are at. Bob requested that the interim chief be included in the discussion. Roberta stated the 2026 default budget for the Ambulance line will be \$85,000. There was a discussion about potential outstanding bills from JRMA and Peterborough, the language of the warrant article that established the trust, the warrant article that added necessary funds when the proposed budget did not pass, and where the funds go. There was further discussion about needing an agreement on the dollar amount for 2026 with an ambulance service.

The **Fire Department** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 7-8. Rick stated that this will be his last meeting as he is retiring on December 31st. He then read a statement as written in Attachment C. After the 7th paragraph, Rick added that he recommends adding a Sunday per diem shift. This would add \$23,000 more to the 2026 proposed budget. This would help to prevent burnout for the call member and would be a big step towards retention. They also need to work on

recruitment. After the 8th paragraph, Rick stated that the training would include building software, and the training is necessary due to the large number of contractors in Rindge. After the 9th paragraph, he asked that the board and committee members consider the overages and not just the lines that are underspent, because his goal is to be responsible and not to go over budget. After Rick finished the statement, he suggested taking the current 2025 operating or amended budget and leaving it flat if the Board or Committee does not agree with his proposed budget. See Attachment D for the Fire Department's Wage and Benefit Request sheet. Rick stated that the Social Security and Medicare taxes, retirement, and insurance need to be verified. There is an increase in the Firefighter/EMT wages once the individual completes the Advanced EMT class and receives the certification. The total budget proposed for the fire department for 2026 is \$641,531. There was a brief discussion about the default numbers, the overall budget process, and the benefits calculations.

The **Mutual Aid** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 8. The invoice for 2026 is \$125,424.00 from Southwestern Mutual Aid. This is an increase of almost \$75,000. They explain in a letter that they used assessment values that were ten years old, so the proportions paid was incorrect. Rick stated he would like to see a spreadsheet with the breakdown of each town's bill. Typically, they only increase the bill by 3% annually. Bob stated that the distribution of bills should be based on call volume per town. The board agreed to budget \$125,000 for now, and Bob requested that Rick speak with Mutual Aid to get more clarity on the situation and why Rindge's bill increased so much.

The **Emergency Management** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 9. There was no discussion on this budget.

Rick stated he will send an email to Casey about the Capital Improvement Projects and call mutual aid for information and to request a meeting.

Historical Society Proposed 2026 Budget: On page 5. There were no comments or questions.

Health Officer/Code Enforcement Proposed 2026 Budget: Under the Executive Budget on page 1. Max suggested pausing on hiring for this position because it can be restructured within other positions that are currently in transition, like the building department and planning secretary. He does not want to hire a zoning enforcement officer until a decision has been made. Victoria is covering the position on an interim basis. The budget is \$12,000 for both positions. The zoning officer position could be a revenue-driving position. There was a discussion about the change in law for building inspection requirements.

Executive/Town Office/Assessing/Legal/Technology/Treasurer/Insurance Proposed 2026 Budgets:

The **Executive** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 1. There is an increase in the salary line. There were no questions.

The **Town Office** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 2. Max asked if there was an agreement on the number of hours the Finance Director will work moving forward. Roberta stated she would put 18 hours a week on average for the year.

The **Assessing** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 3. Roberta requested that Tax Liens and Releases be moved to Assessing from the Town Office, and to budget at least \$500. Bob stated there was a suggestion to use the Town Assessing Clerk for more of the pickups and other tasks to reduce the cost with the assessing firm itself. Max agreed that this would be a good idea as the assessing clerk works hard and is invested in learning. James suggested adding a professional development line. Roberta suggested to the assessing clerk that she get in touch with MRI to learn. She cannot get paid for the field training. Bob stated that they will keep the contracted line as is and transfer funds to the hourly line if needed.

The **Legal** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 4. Max explained that the rate with the new firm is about \$75 per hour less than the previous firm, which creates a meaningful difference. Roberta asked about encumbering funds from the legal line for 2026 for the current lawsuit. Tom stated they would need a contract or invoice for a specific purpose. Last year, the Town was requesting \$25,000, and Tom thinks it is a reasonable number. There was agreement among the Board.

The **Technology** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 3. Victoria stated she will get the invoice for the website

maintenance line to Max. Tina brought up the centralization of some of the expenses that are shared between departments. She suggested a shared Adobe account with multiple users. Roberta recommended purchasing a Microsoft Office Professional License, a one-time fee that is good for the life of the machine, instead of the \$14 per month fee for 33 users. Tom asked about looking into the cell phone cost. Max suggested budgeting as if they were holding the cost for now because it will take time to go through and prioritize finding savings. He added that they need to be methodical and plan for the long term due to the increasing costs. Max and James agreed to meet to discuss the technology budget. Roberta asked about the computer software of \$1,315 from the default of \$16,000. Tom stated that last year, the Town spent about \$10,000 from that line. There was a discussion about the computer hardware.

The **Treasurer's** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 3. There were no changes to this budget.

The **Insurance** Budget is found in Attachment A on page 5. There was a discussion about overall health insurance numbers, the ratio of benefits to wages, the need to find revenue sources to cover the increase in the required expenses, and the default budget.

Any Other Official Business: Max requested a non-public session.

Informational Items, Communications, & Updates: None

At 8:35 pm, Bob motioned to enter into a nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) hiring. Seconded by Larry, it passed by roll call vote, Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry – aye, the vote was 3-0.

The board returned to public session at 8:50 pm. Bob motioned to seal the minutes from the third nonpublic session, under RSA 91-A:3 II (b) hiring, indefinitely. Seconded by Tom, it passed by roll call vote, Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry – aye, the vote was 3-0.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Stenersen

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Executive Secretary