



Board of Selectmen's Meeting

Conference Room at Rindge Town Offices

Date: Wednesday, January 14th, 2026

Time: 5:30 pm

MEETING MINUTES

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

The meeting was opened by the chair at 5:34 p.m. Bob motioned to enter into non-public session per RSA 91-A:3 II (b) hiring. Seconded by Larry, the motion passed by a roll call vote: Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry – aye. The vote was 3-0.

The meeting returned to the public at 6:13 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bob. Bob motioned to seal the minutes from the nonpublic session under RSA 91-A:3, II (b) hiring until February 4th, 2026, because it could render a proposed action ineffective. Seconded by Larry, the motion passed by a roll call vote; Bob – aye, Tom – aye, Larry – aye. The vote was 3-0.

Selectmen's Announcements: There were no announcements from the Board.

Payroll: This was tabled as the Board received the previous week's payroll and not the payroll for the current week.

Accounts Payable: Bob motioned to approve the accounts payable for 01.14.2026. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

Minutes: The minutes were tabled for the following meeting.

Public Hearing on the Town of Rindge 2026 Proposed Budget and Warrant – RSA 32:5 & RSA 33:8-a

Bob opened the public hearing at 6:15 pm. See attachment A for the proposed budget referenced during this discussion. The 2026 proposed budget figure that was decided upon at the previous meeting was \$5,670,000.

Larry explained that the 2026 proposed budget is \$182,118 over the original 2025 default budget. He believes it is a fair budget for the Town, and most departments came in flat, with the fire department coming in under the default budget. They are hoping the budget passes this year, so it does not negatively affect the town.

Tom commented that he believes the \$125,000 should be in the proposed budget to pay for the ambulance service. He stated that they still have a \$27,000 outstanding bill, which he believes the voters approved to pay. Larry refuted that they agreed to \$85,000 for 2025. Last week, the Chair of the Board of JRMA admitted that the Town agreed to that number. The \$40,000 in the warrant article was set aside for ambulance services and was not earmarked for JRMA per se. Tom responded that the Voter's Guide was very clear, and the voters approved spending that money on the ambulance service. Bob stated that the Board found out last week what JRMA was requesting, so it is not included in the budget. He explained that JRMA's expected date to achieve 24/7, 365 days a year service was in February of 2025. It was not reached, so the \$125,000 would be an overpayment for the services that they provided.

Bob had asked Max to add the same warrant article as last year for the ambulance service. The total funding in the warrant article would be \$40,000 and would not be directed towards a specific ambulance service. The Town has a signed agreement with Peterborough Ambulance Service through July. Tom read the explanation of [Warrant Article 12 and Article](#)

[13 in the Voter's Guide](#) from 2025. There was further discussion about the disproportionality of Jaffrey and Rindge's payments to JRMA compared to the services rendered. Bob asked for public input on the budget.

Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, stated that he remembers a lengthy discussion last year that the \$40,000 warrant article was worded very carefully to ensure that it does not specifically state the funds are for the Jaffrey Rindge Memorial Ambulance. This was so that if the Town was no longer working with JRMA, they could still pay for a different ambulance service from that warrant article if needed. Roberta Oeser, Main Street, commented that the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) last year had voted not to recommend the warrant article until it was explained that it was not for JRMA but for any ambulance service if the Town had to change services. The BAC changed its vote after it was explained at the Deliberative Session. The Voter's Guide then came out after the fact, and what was written was not how it was explained at the Deliberative Session. Roni Hamilton, East Monomonac Road, reminded the Board that Rindge also uses Winchendon and Fitzwilliam's ambulance services.

David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, asked for clarification on increases for the Police Department with the 10 flat bonuses of \$7,100, or if it was a proportional percentage. Bob commented that the \$7,100 was not a bonus but an increase to the wages for each position. David commented that he is not comfortable with the flat increase across the different classifications and steps because it will disrupt the step chart, and it rewards the more experienced employees at a lower rate than the less experienced. Police Chief Rachel Malynowski responded that the \$7,100 is to bring Rindge's starting wage up to the average starting wage in NH. By increasing it across the board, it entices applicants and makes sure the new recruits are not paid more than current employees. Rindge is currently the lowest of advertising NH departments on Police App. Max added that the proposed Police wages line is about \$19,000 over the 2025 default, which is about a 4% increase. Roni Hamilton asked if the increase for the Police Department wages was \$90,000, and if so, would it affect the increases for the other employees. Bob responded that one of the original requests was a \$90,000 increase, and it would have affected the entire budget.

Max further explained that they need to calculate the wage increases based on the default because otherwise, the increases that occurred in the past nine months were illegitimate raises. Budget transfers and amendments that occurred after the last Town meeting shuffled the funds to give employees raises across multiple departments. These were one-time funds that could not be applied to the 2026 calculations. The goal of this budget was to solidify the raises that were given last year. There was further explanation of the difficulty of tracking these amendments because there was a lack of paperwork and documentation of the changes made.

Mark Hower, Sherwin Hill Road, asked about the Mutual Aid letter from last month and if there has been any discussion with them about reducing the \$125,000 request. Bob answered that chances are slim to none to get that reduced.

Richard Mellor, Able Road, believes that the Town needs a funded Police Department that has stability and growth potential in earnings. There is a demonstrated need for adequate entry-level wages, and to eliminate any increase in wages is inexcusable. Bob responded that raising the wages overall leaves the starting salary just a little bit higher than it is currently. Larry commented that the current proposed budget does not eliminate raises. His concern is that if the Town goes to a default budget again, then raises will not be possible for all Town employees. He stated that he did not previously understand this and historically voted for the default. But now, as a Selectman, he sees the ramifications of that because the Town has certain things that are required. He would like to give everyone what they request, but his fear is that the voters will turn down the budget due to the large increase.

Larry explained that from the Police budget, \$41,151 from the Health Insurance line was moved. He questioned whether that line was initially overbudgeted. Rachel explained that for the Police Department, when they have a vacant position, they budget for a family plan for health and dental insurance, and when they hire someone who only needs a single plan, there are cost savings.

David Drouin suggested providing details this year to help sell the budget. He thinks that last year the Town was a victim of voting no on the budget for the school, as residents may have interpreted it to include the Town budget. Larry stated that he has been working with Max on items that need to be given as selling points for the budget. They want to be transparent and explain well why they need funds for specific warrant articles and where they are with the budget. David continued that if they are going to set themselves back in the police department another full year, they won't be \$1,000 under the advertised salary, but \$2,000. He explained that the Town has expensive real estate, and there is an expectation of service, and they deserve a first-rate Police and Fire Department.

Tina Sbrega, Sandback Circle, commended Max for the work he has done and the Board of Selectmen for getting to a number that is acceptable to the voters. But there are cans that they are kicking down the road; at some point, they need to come up with a plan. From a police department perspective, she has only been in town for 8 years, and the Town has changed considerably. There has been steady population growth, traffic accidents have increased, and different types of crimes that did not occur ten or 15 years ago. Rindge needs a police force to protect and serve the citizens. If the Town cannot attract and retain police officers, and no one is applying, then what happens when the Town does not have enough officers to cover the shifts? She understands that they have significant financial constraints and they must do the best they can with the limited resources they have. She suggested having meaningful conversations throughout this year about recruitment and retention, because it is key. If turnover continues throughout all departments in the Town, it will continue to cost the Town more in terms of expertise, productivity, and monetary costs. She suggested coming up with a plan to get closer to solving the problems in the coming year. Larry responded that it is not just Rindge that is not getting candidates; Ashby, Swanzey, Keene, and Peterborough are also looking for officers. A part of the problem is that no one wants to be an officer anymore. There is a similar problem with finding medics for the ambulance service.

Dan Whitney stated that the \$183,000 is about 3% over the default budget. \$50,000 of that difference goes toward mutual aid, leaving only about a 2% increase to work with. There are department heads who have taken funds out of their operational budgets to provide employees' wage increases. There is no cushion in the proposed budget, but a budget that does not pass is still not a good budget. This is a proposed budget where no one won, because most of the lines that really went up, they could not control. He suggested that for the presentation from the Board at the Deliberative, they clearly state that the Town is staying well below the pace of inflation. There is no broad-based tax in NH to handle inflation, so it is all done through local property taxes. This is the current playing field they have. Dan referenced the 2025 Tax Rate Breakdown Pie Chart, see attachment B. He stated that in his experience the lowest percentage the school district took is 55% to 60%; he also noted how close the county is to the Town's percentage of taxes. He thinks they need to be more aggressive in communicating to the voters about what is going on and compare how much residents paid the Town for the past three years. Bob commented that if they removed the entirety of the Town budget, at the time that someone had questioned removing it, it was only a 16% decrease in the overall property taxes.

David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, asked what the 2026 default total budget would be. Max responded that it is still being adjusted but will be within a couple hundred thousand dollars of the proposed budget.

Jim Critser, Main Street, suggested that they sell the budget on what you get for the money you are spending in each department, and break it down for the legislative body that is making the decision. Bob stated that his question to many of those who ask about defending the budget is what they wish to live without. With a default budget, services will be more limited. Bob referred to Dan's earlier point about the County budget; they currently have over 500 employees. Larry added that the Town's 2026 bill to the County is \$2.9 million. Roberta Oeser, Main Street, stated that the residents are unaware that the budget for the Town is around \$5.6 million, but we only ask the taxpayers for \$3.6 million due to other sources of revenue, which is why we are closer to the County's percentage. Deni Dickler, Old Jaffrey Road, expressed that a major problem is that not many people go to deliberative and they may or may not read the voter's guide that is mailed to them. The ability to explain to people face to face is limited. She questioned other ways to engage with more people.

Bob stated that people are already working to sell the budget and to not just go to default because it is cheaper. His big selling point is what residents could lose in services by going to default. Tom compared the 2025 default budget numbers to the 2026 proposed budget numbers (View [2024 Town Report](#) and Attachment A). He added that in the 2025 default budget, there may be only partially funded positions. For the Highway Department budget, with Mike Cloutier's permission, they reduced the paving line to provide raises, and he also offered to forfeit his raise. Larry added that they were mandated last week to add \$30,000 to the budget, and they calculated the numbers to add raises to the budget.

Bob closed the public hearing at 7:21 pm.

Citizens' Forum: Bob opened the forum at 7:22 pm by reading the rules of order and closed the forum at 7:35 pm

Deni Dickler, Old Jaffrey Road, announced that there is a presentation on the birds of Rindge, sponsored by the Conservation Commission, this Saturday, January 17th, at 10:30 am. They will also announce the Conservationist of the year. On Saturday, January 31st, at 7:00 pm, there is a full moon hike at Tetrault Park.

SueAnne Iglesias, NH Rt 119, read a petition warrant article titled protecting the taxpayer. The article states, "To see if the Town will vote to call on the New Hampshire Legislature to protect local taxpayers by ensuring adequate state revenues for the essential services and by avoiding policies that shift costs onto local taxpayers. Further resolved, if this article passes, the Select Board shall send the results of this vote to the Governor and all members of the New Hampshire General Court who represent the Town within 30 days of the second session of the 2026 Town Meeting."

SueAnne explained that this question is proposed because recent state budgets have reduced or eliminated key revenue sources, forcing Towns and Counties to raise property taxes to maintain education, healthcare, county nursing homes, public safety, and infrastructure. These shifts burden working families, strain local budgets, limit flexibility, and undermine long term community prosperity. A state budget that prevents cost shifting and restores municipal revenue sharing eases the tax burden on local property taxpayers and strengthens communities. They have cut the Business Profits Tax and the Business Enterprise Tax. The NH business profit and enterprise taxes had mainly targeted large corporations. The NH Fiscal Policy Institute states that since 2016, the estimated total reduction in revenue is between \$795 million and \$17 billion. Last Thursday, they voted on another 0.5 reduction in that tax, which will take another \$23 to \$26 million dollars of revenue out. New Hampshire has the 6th highest property taxes in the nation. She hopes this is an article that all residents can support.

Roberta Oeser, Main Street, asked if they are going to vote on the warrant tonight, as there is incorrect information in some of the articles. She also had provided financial information to Max earlier that day that she knows he has not had time to relay to the Board. The board decided to have final approval of the budget as presented and vote on recommendations of the warrant articles themselves next week. Roberta added that the warrant articles do not require a hearing.

New Business:

Acceptance of Unanticipated Revenue for Police Department (RSA 31:95-b III (b)): Police Chief, Rachel Malynowski brought forward a request to accept two donations to the Police Department. There is one donation for \$250, anonymous, which is going into the Police Department Donation Account. The purpose of the account is to raise funds for constructing an impound lot, which they want to make without using taxpayer dollars. The second donation of \$1568 was a Board member's stipend and is to go towards the purchase of the data package for the speed signs. She is grateful for both donors.

Bob motioned to accept the unanticipated revenue under RSA 31:95-b presented by Rachel. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

Any Other Official Business:

Intent to Cut – Monadnock Sporting Club: David Drouin, Conservation Commission Chair, stated that the Conservation Commission has seen it before and is aware of the cutting. Tom motioned to accept the intent to cut for Map 17 Lot 8 at Sportsman Drive. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

Informational Items, Communications, & Updates:

Bob announced that there was a Town & Gown Meeting on January 13th. During that meeting, they announced that Bob Faas is the new Fire Chief and is temporarily part-time until he arrives in Town at the end of February. There was discussion on the football games and where they can drink when they attend the games. One idea was to bring your own booze, which falls under the Town Ordinance and/or a vendor which falls under state law. They left it up to the University to decide. They also had communicated the temporary process for Special Events Permits, which will return to status quo once the Fire Chief arrives. The next meeting is at the dining hall at the University.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Stenersen

Victoria Stenersen
Executive Secretary