



Board of Selectmen's Meeting

Conference Room at Rindge Town Offices

Date: Wednesday, January 21st, 2026

Time: 6:00 pm

MEETING MINUTES

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

The chair opened the meeting at 6:02 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectmen's Announcements: Bob announced the P.O.O.R. Meat Raffle will be on Saturday, February 7th, starting at 1:30 p.m. at the Jaffrey American Legion.

Payroll: Bob motioned to approve the payroll for 01.15.2026 & 01.22.2026. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

Accounts Payable: Larry motioned to approve the accounts payable for 01.22.2026. Seconded by Bob, it passed 2-0-0.

Minutes: Bob motioned to approve the minutes from 12.03.2025, 12.10.2025, 12.17.2025, & 12.31.2025. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

Citizens' Forum: Bob opened the forum at 6:05 pm by reading the rules of order and closed the forum at 6:12 pm

Roni Hamilton, East Monomonac Road, stated that for 2 years now, 99.9% of the time, Mr. Coneys has not voted on Payroll and Accounts Payable. She then asked if they get someone else on the board who also refuses to vote, does that mean the employees and vendors do not get paid? Bob responded that the first week would be paid, but if they could not get votes after reconsideration, they would not be paid for the following week. Roni then asked what would happen if Bob or Larry were unable to attend the meeting. Bob answered that the votes could be continued for the following meeting.

Tom responded that in the past, he found falsified timecards that did not reflect the time the employee was at work. He was denied access to look at timesheets by the temporary Town Administrator, and he was accused and requested to be investigated. He will not rubber-stamp payroll without being able to verify it. He stated that the same applies to payables. The Board has no financial controls over spending, and the Town should have a purchase order system. He explained that last week the other two Board members rubber-stamped payroll from a prior week, and they were not made aware of it until he brought it up. Larry explained that the timecards were not falsified; they utilized accrued comp time. In that instance, it was used on a day they went home early. He advised Tom that his accusations are close to slander. Tom stated that he has a Right to Know request to the Town requesting documentation on when the comp time was earned, and he has not received a response. Roni added that from the start of his term, Tom made it clear that he wanted to run the Town like his private business, even though it is a municipality.

Roberta Oeser, Main Street, commented on the ambulance service. She suggested that one of the biggest things they should take into consideration is that Jaffrey does not have an emergency response team or a rescue vehicle like Rindge. Rindge also has full-time EMTs to respond. So, Rindge is essentially subsidizing the Town of Jaffrey so that they do not need to have full-time staff or an emergency rescue vehicle.

Karl Pruter, Jowders Cove Road, asked if the ambulance discussion would be open to the public. Bob responded that during

that discussion, they will likely allow comments.

New Business:

Presentation from Cheshire County Administrator's Office on "Cheshire County at a Glance." Document: Present were: County Administrator Chris Coats, County Commissioner Claudia Stewart, Chair of the Board of Commissioners Terry M. Clark, Finance Director of Cheshire County Sheryl Trombly, and County Commissioner Skip DiBernardo.

Chris Coates provided the board with an infographic (see attachment A). On the County website, all the recorded meetings are posted - <https://co.cheshire.nh.us/departments/commissioners/2025-meeting-minutes/>. There is a podcast that explains what the County does on YouTube, Facebook, Spotify, the County website, and Monadnock Radio Groups.

Maplewood Nursing Home offers assisted living with 20 apartments for 40 people. In the nursing home, they went to single rooms due to the increase in Dementia and Alzheimer's patients. They can have 150 patients but only have 115 due to a shortage of nurses. They are working with local colleges on an LNA to LPN to RN program and are also working with Visa Solutions to bring nurses from Canada for a three-year commitment. They utilize travel nurses, which costs millions of dollars, and started renting homes as a neutral payout for the travel nurses.

The Department of Corrections is located on the Keene-Marlborough line. There are three pods for males with classifications and one women's pod. The local average is about 60 to 70, and the Federal inmates average 45 to 50. The revenue accrued last year was about \$2.2 million, which goes back towards taxes.

Cheshire County EMS and Ambulance Services fell on their lap to build the program due to Towns that worked with a company that was closed by the IRS. They are working on the financial side of it, and on the operational side, they have contracts with 19 communities on some level. They have five ambulances 24/7 and a paramedic intercept. They are here to support communities the best way they can and offer services to everyone in Cheshire County. They also do interfacility transfers and all the transfers for Cheshire Medical. They offer a class for EMS and EMTs for licensing by the state. They have a wheelchair service through SMART Ride. They are projected to provide 13,000 wheelchair rides throughout the region this year. Their EMS program is fully staffed, and they have a file of EMTs interested in joining them. They have 2 new ambulances coming in late February. Larry asked if they had a schedule of fees for the Ambulance Services. Chris answered yes. The Chief and Deputy Chief give a presentation via invitation from interested parties only.

Connected Families is a program that started with a grant, which serves all of NH out of Cheshire County. It serves school kids who are struggling and at risk of out-of-district educational placement that can cost between \$2,000 and \$500,000 per student. They work with families to help the child stay in their community and with their family. It gives the students a much higher chance of success and provides continuity of care. They have a contract with the State of NH DHHS for a daily rate, which pays for the services. No taxes are used. It generates enough revenue to be put back towards taxes, so it pays for itself.

The Sheriff's Department has contracts with four towns, and the towns pay for the coverage. It does not affect what the other towns in the County pay. They changed the legislation for Cheshire County Community Power so that they could join the Community Power Coalition of NH. The HandyMan program started seven years ago and uses non-tax dollars. It provides the service of outfitting homes so hospital and nursing home patients can go home safely. They set aside \$40,000 a year for it and have served 50 homes in the last 6 years. They have received grants for the Monadnock Regional Rail Trail for all the work done on the trails outside of Keene. They have a grant team that is certified at the highest level and brings in millions of dollars a year. They also have a grant writing program to teach towns how to write grants.

Sheryl stated that the County is one of the largest employers in the region with approximately 465 employees. Chris broke down the table on page two regarding the increase in taxes from 2019 to 2025. In the past seven years, the overall increase has just been under 1%. They have received many major grants, which have removed items that would have been added to taxes. The largest project, which was entirely funded by grants, cost \$4.4 million to upgrade all towers for 911 Dispatch.

Sheryl explained that the majority of what the County does is statutorily driven. They are required to have a jail, a sheriff's department, a registry of deeds, and a county attorney's office. They are not required to have a nursing home, but they must pay for the non-federal share for residents receiving Medicaid care in a nursing home or at home. That bill alone is almost \$9 million. Many programs unique to Cheshire County are offset by grants, but the majority of what they do is statutorily driven, and taxes are raised to go towards those requirements. Chris stated that they have been working with Southwest NH District Fire Mutual Aid to update their communication infrastructure. They have currently raised \$2.8 million for the \$4.8 million project. None of those funds came from taxes.

Sheryl explained that the distribution of taxes needed to be raised is based on the equalized valuations of properties in all the Cheshire County towns and the City of Keene. The percentage that a town represents of the total equalized valuation is the percentage billed of the total that the County collects in taxes. So even if the County does not raise the total taxed amount, the apportionment of what a town pays may increase or decrease. The NH Department of Revenue Administration sets the equalized values and percentages.

Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, stated that the first question Rindge taxpayers will likely ask him is, since Rindge is at the farthest edge of the County and the second highest paying municipality, what are they getting for it? He asked how they convince residents they are the second, third, or fourth municipality receiving services. Sheryl explained that the taxes Rindge pays to Cheshire County do not support Cheshire County EMS, as we do not have a direct agreement with them. Terry M. Clark responded that they may want to address the structure of the tax system and explain how their taxes are determined. The State of NH determines the portion Rindge pays. Chris added that it is a fair question. 85.8% of what they do is statutorily required, which is the majority of what Rindge pays for. It is difficult to track the apportionment of service. There are situations and places where they are needed more, but they serve everyone in the County. They are trying to keep the burden off the taxpayer but cannot control many of the costs.

Karl Pruter, Jowders Cove Road, asked if the ambulance service is profitable. Chris responded that they are closer to turning a profit. When the delegation decided to move forward with the service, they set a 3 to 5-year ramp-up period to get the service where it needs to be. Operationally, they are at the highest level they can be in a short period of time. And financially, they have a clear understanding. They worked with Representative John Hunt to change the reimbursement by 350% for private insurers because they were paying less than Medicaid. They built a budget last year based on \$250,000 a month and are getting closer to \$300,000 a month. His goal is to build a budget that allows them to save money.

David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, stated he thinks of the county like the fire department or police department. They are there when you need them. He expressed appreciation for what they do. Sheryl stated that if they look at the services they provide, there is an entire section of RSA's dedicated to how the County needs to be run. The law forces the towns to contribute to support those necessary services and care.

Old Business:

Recommendations for 2026 Warrant: (See Attachment B) Tom requested that the articles be rearranged in order of financial importance, essentially, the highest-dollar items closer to the start of the warrant. Max agreed to do so. Tom expressed that the Ambulance service is a big issue and funding is needed. The revaluation article was taken off the warrant as requested. Tom recommended removing language in the Highway Department CRF article that specifies the purchase of a truck. If they keep the language, they can only use the money for that purpose. Bob pointed out that specific language is also included in the Fire Department Equipment CRF article. Tom stated they decided to remove that language at the previous meeting; he requested that it be adjusted.

Craig Clark, Fitzgerald Road, asked if the Fire Department CRF article needs a simple majority or a super majority, and asked why the Highway Department CRF article does not state it. Max responded that he would add the language majority vote required.

Article 4 – Fire Department CRF – The language “to be used to replace the 26-year-old brush truck” was removed. Bob stated that the explanation in the Voter’s Guide can state that the intent is to purchase a brush truck with the funds.

Article 5 – Highway Department CRF – The current version of the article did not have any language about adding money to the fund, but rather to be used for a specific purpose. Bob explained that the article was adjusted so that it gross budgeted the cost of the truck. Tom expressed concern about the increased request. Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, stated he thought they discussed the \$185,000 request, but they cannot get a truck for that amount, which is why it states \$243,000. Tom stated there is \$100,000 in the fund already. Dan expressed that they do not want to drain the fund entirely.

Roberta Oeser, Main Street, explained that they will encounter problems again if they adjust the language to add agents to expend because it is asking too much in one article. Using the \$100,000 from the fund reduces the request to \$116,000. They need to gross budget the cost if the Board decides to replace the truck because they are not agents to expend from the fund. She recommended adding a separate warrant article requesting that the Board be named as agents to expend. She thinks that the warrant article has a better chance of passing if they specify that the funds are being used to replace an 11-year-old truck instead of only putting money into the fund.

Bob stated that he is not sure that the \$243,000 amount will pass, let alone \$185,000. Karl Pruter, Jowders Cove Road, stated that last year they were only asking for \$150,000, and it failed. Bob explained that if they ask for the \$185,000, they would only need to use about \$32,000 from the fund. Tom agreed with adding the original \$185,000 to the fund. David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, stated that it helps if they bring what they need to raise below \$200,000 from the \$216,000. Especially since they have \$100,000. Larry commented that he does not want to see the fund drained and thinks Bob’s idea is a better option. Bob stated that they should be asking for at least \$50,000 every year to build up these funds for equipment that will be needed in the future.

Tom suggested going back to the previous revision and deciding on the purchase of the truck after the Town meeting. Bob asked Larry about the language “to be used to replace an 11-year-old six-wheeler”. Larry expressed concern that the truck may not be purchased if that language is removed, and if there is a whole new board. His other concern is that they are not communicating to voters what they will use the funds for. Bob responded that they can add language in the voters’ guide stating that the intended use of the funds is to replace the truck.

The amount requested was adjusted from \$216,521 to \$185,000. The language about the specific brush truck was removed. The language “to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Fund”, “And further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend,” and “majority vote required” in parentheses was added. The final warrant article states, “To see if the Town shall vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Hundred Eighty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$185,000) to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Fund previously established and further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund. (Majority vote required).”

Bob asked if any other articles need to be adjusted. Max stated the only other changes that were made from the previous meeting were to Article 3, the Operating Budget, to add the correct figures.

Article 11 – Land Use Change Tax – Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, confirmed with the board that the current percentage is at 100%, and they are looking to amend it to 20%. He then asked what the balance of the Conservation Fund is and why they are putting this article forward. Tom responded that a Rindge resident submitted the article, but it is not a petition warrant article. Roberta Oeser, Main Street, stated that it was submitted at the recommendation of the Selectmen, and she was the Interim Town Administrator at the time it was drafted. Bob stated that it is up to the voters to decide on this article. David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, responded that Conservation funds are roughly over \$400,000. He then asked why the language stating what the proposal was, what it was from, and the effective date was removed. Bob answered that they were not sure if having an effective date was legal. David explained that they should inform the voters of the

current percentage. Bob stated that they can add it to the Voter's Guide. Tom stated that he does not disagree with the intent of the article, but it should have been a discussion between the Board and the Conservation Commission.

Bob stated that the two petition warrant articles will be on the warrant as is; over 25 registered voters signed the petitions for each. They will be articles 15 and 16. Bob confirmed with Max that he will rearrange the articles in order of high dollar value to low dollar value. Bob motioned to place articles one through sixteen on the 2026 warrant. Seconded by Tom, the motion passed 3-0.

Tom commented that the proposed budget is only about \$16,000 over the 2026 default budget, so it will be another very challenging year to watch spending. Max explained that because the Board voted for a conservative increase, the contractual obligations almost exceeded the approved increase. Tom commented that they only came in under the default budget in 2025 because of the personnel that the Town lost over the course of the year.

Bob motioned to recommend 2026 Warrant Articles two through fourteen, with the revisions as stated to Warrant Articles Four and Five. Seconded by Tom, the motion passed 3-0. Max stated that he will send the warrant via email when completed. Bob requested that he have multiple people check the warrant.

New Business:

Presentation Assignments for 2026 Warrant Articles: This was tabled for the following meeting. Bob requested that the board members inform him of any warrant articles that they would like to present before the meeting. Once they receive the revisions and the correct numbering of the warrant, they will choose their assignments. The moderator will be given a copy of those assignments.

Acceptance of Unanticipated Revenue for Police Department (RSA 31:95-b III (b)): These were the cash donations given at the previous meeting to cover the bank charges. Bob motioned per RSA 31:95-b to accept the cash donation of \$50 to be used for the Police Department. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

Informational Items, Communications, & Updates:

Bob stated that they received a letter from the Jaffrey Rindge Memorial Ambulance (JRMA). They had offered \$16,000 to get them out of the red, but they refused and want the entirety of the \$27,000. If the Town does not pay and sign the agreement JRMA typed up by January 30th, 2026, they will not provide service to Rindge beyond February 20th, 2026. Bob asked the Board if they would like Max to send the letter and the agreement to the Town Council for review. He added that they have tried to get the charter or certificate of incorporation from JRMA but have not received it. Larry stated that they are a 501(c)(3), so technically, what the Town gave them is a donation. He questioned if JRMA would lose money from Mutual Aid if they refused service to Rindge.

Larry explained that a member of the JRMA board, Bob Schaumann, showed up unannounced at his house at 6:00 pm on Friday. He was out having dinner with his wife; his camera went off, showing Bob knocking at his back door. He told him multiple times through the camera that he was out of the house, and Bob could call him anytime after 8:00 am on Saturday. During the phone call with him the next morning, he told Bob that the Board of Selectmen would be willing to go up to \$100,000 if Jaffrey increased their payment to \$150,000. Jaffrey receives 62% of the calls, and Rindge receives only 38%. The amount offered is a 60/40 split. He has heard nothing back on that. He realizes he is only one vote, but he is willing to approve that offer if there is a vote taken. He does not know if JRMA will accept. The Town does have other options, including Cheshire County, that he will start looking into.

Tom stated that he spoke with Temple and they paid \$93,000 for their ambulance service in 2025 for 140 to 150 calls. He believes that Rindge is getting a bargain. Larry responded that the best scenario is to stay with JRMA for Jaffrey and Rindge, but he does not believe that Rindge should be on the hook for 50% of the calls when we only receive 40%. Bob stated that for each town, they expect \$125,000 in service. Rindge provides 419 annual calls, which is \$298 per call. Compared to

Jaffrey's 679 annual calls, they pay \$184 per call. Jaffrey pays \$112 less per call than Rindge.

Claudia Stewart, Sharon Place, asked if there was a discussion with the Town of Jaffrey about the payment imbalance and what would happen if JRMA does not provide the service. Jaffrey cannot afford to keep JRMA going on their own, and they would lose their service as well. Bob responded that discussion has not occurred this year, but that may be something they will do. Tom stated that Jaffrey will likely have an ambulance service in the next three years. Claudia agreed, but they will still need service between now and three years.

Tom asked if the Town has a physical contract with Mutual Aid. They handed the Town a bill for a \$50,000 increase, and it was just added to the budget. He wants to understand the comparison to JRMA. Bob stated that there was an agreement with Mutual Aid, and the setup was all done with Fire. Larry stated that it is not the same thing because we are not splitting the service like we are with Jaffrey.

Jim Qualey, Meadow View Road, asked if the 60/40 split has been typical for several years. Bob answered affirmatively. Larry explained that Rindge sends out an emergency response before the ambulance is called. Rindge pays for full-time EMTs to be on staff 24/7. Rindge and the ambulance are toned at the same time, but Rindge has a faster response time, so they can usually call off the ambulance if aid is turned down or the EMTs determine no ambulance is needed. The ambulance then does not have to come all the way to Rindge. Jaffrey does not do that; they automatically tone the ambulance for any emergency. It wastes a lot of JRMAs' money because many times they show up, and treatment is refused. Jim added that if the 60/40 split has occurred over a long period of time, he sees a valid basis for cost splitting. Tom stated that they should then charge us per call.

Karl Pruter, Jowders Cove Road, expressed that negotiations should occur between all three parties at the same time and at the same meetings. If the alternative for Rindge is paying \$1,000 a call for Peterborough, they will spend more than \$250,000 a year instead of \$125,000. He explained that the \$40,000 set aside was to meet the demand to reach \$125,000. Rindge kept the money in the fund to give JRMA if they provided service. Last year, they could not provide it, and \$13,000 of the \$40,000 went to Peterborough. The \$27,000 remaining is an obligation. The offer of \$16,000 was denied because JRMA feels they are owed the \$27,000. If JRMA collapses because of this, the alternatives for the Town and the taxpayers will be worse than the savings. Bob pointed out that it is not just the \$11,000 more that JRMA wants. It is going from the amount requested a few years ago of \$46,500 per year to \$125,000, which is more than a \$75,000 increase. Adding in the \$11,000, it would cost the town almost \$90,000 more. Bob further explained that the payment of \$125,000 from both towns was based on the premise that JRMA would work on providing 24/7 coverage, 365 days a year, beginning last February. Karl agreed and added that they have not been able to.

Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, stated it would be in everyone's best interest in the medium and long term to at least keep JRMA afloat. There is a middle ground to work from to create an MOA that works for all three entities. Each party needs to realize that they will not be able to get everything that they want. He expressed that gamesmanship has to stop on all three sides, and the first step is getting them all in the same room. The board approved for Max to reach out to all three entities.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 7:52 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Stenersen

Victoria Stenersen
Executive Secretary