



Board of Selectmen's Meeting

Conference Room at Rindge Town Offices

Date: Wednesday, January 28th, 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 meeting was opened by the chair at 6:03 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Selectmen's Announcements: Bob announced the P.O.O.R. Meat Raffle will be held on Saturday, February 7th, at 1:30 pm at the American Legion in Jaffrey. He also announced that the Town is still in discussions with the Jaffrey Rindge Memorial Ambulance (JRMA) and other ambulance providers. If JRMA discontinues service, there are contingency plans in place to ensure ambulance services are provided.

Consent Agenda: Nothing for Consent Agenda

Citizens' Forum: Bob opened the forum at 6:04 pm by reading the rules of order and closed the forum at 6:47 pm

Eric Dunphy, Paradise Island Road, asked if that was the only information that will be given regarding the JRMA ambulance service. He asked about an email that he received regarding the differences in costs. Bob responded that he has not seen that email and that the ambulance service is not on the agenda tonight. Eric asked what the town's intention is with ambulance services. Bob reiterated that the Town is still in discussions with JRMA and other ambulance providers. Eric asked if that would be public. Bob responded that the decision will be made public. Eric asked if the money spent to JRMA goes to an enterprise fund or to the Jaffrey general fund. Bob answered that the Town designates and sends the money to JRMA. Eric asked if JRMA is a department of Jaffrey. Bob Schumann, Chair of the JRMA Board, answered no; it is a private non-profit organization.

Judy Unger Clark, Fitzgerald Road, stated that last year's warrant language was unclear about where the money was allocated, and the warrant article this year is written the same. She requested that the explanation in the voter's guide be clear about where the funds are going. She asked that 6 or 7 mostly unbiased and fair members of both communities meet to negotiate and come to a consensus about what is needed. As two communities, they could come together and raise funds for JRMA. Max requested that they not be distracted by what is circulated on social media. He stated that he met with the Chief of JRMA, Adam Langlois, and the Jaffrey Town Manager, Jon Frederik, last Thursday. He and Adam have a productive working relationship; they may not be aligned at this time but are working towards a resolution. Judy highly recommended that the Selectmen refrain from posting their personal views on Facebook. Larry responded that it was nothing personal and was all factual.

Eric Dunphy, Paradise Island Road, then asked if there was a contract with JRMA. Bob answered that the Town did have a memorandum of understanding with JRMA.

Robert Martin, Old Cathedral Road, stated that JRMA has been in business serving this community for 75 years and strongly voiced concern about hearing that the Town was meeting with Swanze. He expressed gratitude for the Police Department, local Firefighters/EMTs, and JRMA for their excellent service. He conveyed his frustration and disbelief that

they are considering going with a different service. He is shocked that Rindge is not paying them what they are due. Max responded that he made a very valid point but also shows the need to wait for formal communication from the Town. They would never entertain the idea of having an ambulance respond from Swanze. Bob stated that they did not meet with Swanze, but they did meet with Cheshire County Ambulance Services. Max added that they might have the service in Rindge, but the Town cannot speak to that right now because a decision has not been finalized.

Mike Whitehead, Jay Drive, asked who decided not to go with JRMA or pay the bill. Bob responded that ultimately the Board would make the decision, but they are still in discussions with JRMA and other ambulance providers. Mike asked why they were even thinking about it. Bob responded that they were stuck with less than one week to decide and not all facts are public. Mike said that they need to pay the bill. Bob thanked the EMT's who were in attendance and stated that they do their job very well; the problem is the administrative side. Larry stated that it is not a reflection on the EMTs.

Eleanor Martin, Old Cathedral Road, stated that her understanding was that the two 2025 warrant articles referred to JRMA because the Town has used only them for years. She stated that the burden is on the Board to indicate the possibility that the Town would utilize another service. She expressed gratitude for the response time and the excellence of JRMA when she needed their service. The voters only have limited information and do not know the problems the Board has with JRMA, but they should know more. Robert Martin added that the numbers they were approving last year came from JRMA's numbers. Eleanor continued, she believed she was approving the \$38,500 not included in the default budget for JRMA, and the \$40,000 was a safety net if the Town had a bad year but was for JRMA. She added that it was incumbent upon whoever is writing the articles to make the intent clear. Larry responded that he agrees the Town should do a better job at communicating with the public and the Voter's Guide should specify the intent. He then asked Eleanor if JRMA responds to every ambulance call that Rindge requests. Eleanor answered that she believes they respond to every call they are available for and can, and that if they can't, there is a backup. She stated that she assumes the backup is Peterborough. Larry added that Fitzwilliam and Winchendon also fall under the Town's mutual aid umbrella. The Town pays mutual aid annually, so if they respond, the Town does not have to pay them. But if Peterborough responds, the cost per run is \$1,000. Last year, Peterborough took 13 calls. The \$40,000 set aside was used to pay for other ambulance services when JRMA cannot respond. Eleanor commented that it would have been so much nicer if the residents could have known that. Larry agreed with her. Eleanor and Robert Martin stated that the \$38,500 was to pay JRMA if the budget defaulted. Bob responded that the \$38,500 went to JRMA, plus the \$46,500 in the default budget. Larry added that the Town paid JRMA the \$85,000 they agreed to last year. Bob commented that Tom was the one vote on the Board not used because the two other board members voted for the \$85,000.

Craig Clark, Fitzgerald Road, asked if the significant sticking point in their discussions was the service ratio of 60% to Jaffrey and 40% to Rindge. Bob responded that part of the sticking point is receiving 24/7 service for the Town of Rindge from JRMA. Craig added that based on his recollection, last week he had also said that Rindge did not receive the same level of service that Jaffrey did, but they are asking Rindge to pay the same amount as Jaffrey. Bob added that it is part of it.

Fred Dodge, South Woodbound Road, stated that he is aghast that they are talking about this amount of money for an ambulance service other than Rindge. He asked if the Town can utilize Rindge's paid certified EMT's for the service. Bob responded that the Town of Rindge responds with a rescue vehicle and two EMT's for all medical calls. JRMA responds if ambulance services are needed, but we do not have licensure to transport or a physical ambulance. JRMA and Rindge are toned out at the same time, and JRMA is called if they are not needed. Rindge has around 13 to 16 EMTs and a few AEMTs.

Lisa Wilkinson, Forristall Road, is a member of JRMA but spoke as a taxpayer. She stated that there are not many houses that the EMT's respond to where they do not know the person they are taking care of. There is something to be said for that kind of connection and community building. She understands that staffing has been an issue at times. They are not immune to employment issues that every business seems to have had post-COVID. There is a new chief, lieutenants, and a captain. Since the Chief started a month ago, she believes they have not missed any calls. She stated that as a taxpayer

and knowing the cost of emergency services, if Rindge contracts with another service, it will cost the taxpayers a tremendous amount more than what Rindge is paying for currently.

Zachary Cord, a JRMA member, stated that from his understanding, JRMA asked Rindge for \$125,000, and through negotiations they settled on \$85,000. The \$40,000 set aside in the trust fund brings the total to \$125,000. From a perception standpoint, it is understandable that the public would assume any money left over in that fund would go to JRMA. He stated that intentionality and perception matter. He added that people need to know that each town's request is for ambulance readiness and not necessarily mobilization. The number of calls that are toned to JRMA is not easily calculated or accessible. The numbers given can appear skewed but do not provide the whole picture. They need to account for second, third, or fourth calls to the same location and CPR calls. In Jaffrey, there are a few hundred lift assist calls per year. Another thing to consider is that supporting the service and giving the operational monies needed to staff the ambulance may also skew the numbers. Bob responded that for Jaffrey, those lift assists could be handled by the two EMTs that Rindge sends out automatically. There would be 100 fewer calls in Jaffrey just for lift assists alone. Zachary responded that there are factors in Jaffrey that skew the numbers in their direction.

Tom Coneys, Bancroft Road, spoke as a citizen and a voter. The voter's guide from 2025 clearly identifies the full cost of JRMA's service in both warrant articles. The September 2025 JRMA invoice stated, per Fire Chief Donovan, to pay a portion of the invoice to bring the total paid in 2025 to \$85,000. There was a November 2025 JRMA invoice for what remained of the \$40,000 approved in March 2025. He understood the \$40,000 fund was to pay for the ambulance service. There were questions about the ability of JRMA to respond, but the amount was specified in both warrant articles to fund the balance of the service. He expressed concern that a department head determines what the Selectmen can spend, when the Selectmen are the agents to expend from that fund. He stated that to the best of his knowledge, the Board has not questioned either bill. He asked when the Board would officially vote to pay or not to pay the bill. Tom stated that there is an outstanding balance from a September 1st bill, number 1105, and a November bill of number 1107. Bob responded that both warrant articles from 2025, Articles 12 and 13, do not specifically refer to JRMA. Tom stated that it is mentioned in the Voter's Guide. Bob added that the invoices are not individually presented to the Board; they go through the invoices they are asked to pay and either approve, deny, or work them out with the Finance Director and Bookkeeper. Bob continued that they do not approve individual invoices, and Tom has not voted to approve any invoices or payroll for the past year. Tom asked if the department heads determine spending from funds that the selectmen are agents to spend. Bob stated that department heads would certainly come forward, and if they had a contract for \$10,000 and someone sent them a bill for \$12,000, they would certainly say not to pay the \$2,000 that was not approved. Tom asked if the Fire Chief approached the Board with that question. Bob responded that the Fire Chief did not come to the Board to ask that question.

Joshua Hirsch, JRMA representative, stated that if someone in Rindge calls 911 for a medical emergency, they get toned and are dispatched. If Rindge responds to the call first and sends them home, it is great, but they still have mobilized and responded. The cost per call is two providers for four hours of pay, the wear and tear on the ambulance, and gas. They could have 100 lift-assists where they do not get paid anything because they don't bill the patient or the townspeople, as it is a service to the community. He assumes the money given to them from the two towns offsets that loss. The cost is minimal in terms of human lives, and \$125,000 or the \$40,000 increase is a minor portion of the Town's budget. He challenged them to research Cheshire County's fee for Swanzezy over the past few years and compare the cost. He added that for night calls, it is not uncommon for JRMA to arrive before Rindge. Joshua asked how many EMR's they have because they are very limited in what they can do for patient care. The last point he made is that EMS is not deemed an essential service, so there is no funding. Rindge has been getting a deal from JRMA for many years. Initially, people volunteered, but now everyone is on payroll. The cost of payroll for the year is more than the total of what both Towns contribute. He stated that insurance does not offset what the communities and towns need to start looking at and contributing to. These

conversations did not start until they asked for more funding. It will cost the Town no matter what ambulance service they go with; the question is just how much they will pay and are willing to pay. In the proposed contract for 2026, JRMA will be responsible for the fees from any other service that has to assist them. Bob responded that they are considering the costs that are involved.

Old Business:

Presentation Assignments for Warrant Articles: After a brief discussion, the Board agreed to the following assignments to present warrant articles at the Deliberative Session. Larry will present Articles 3, 6, 9, and 12. Tom will present Articles 4, 7, 10, & 14. Bob will present Articles 5, 8, 11 & 13.

Update on Default Budget: Bob stated that the DRA was consulted and questioned by one of the Selectmen about the default budget figure, and seems to have been dismissed. Max stated that there is a very modest update for the default budget. The DRA asked him to round the budget to the nearest dollar so there is a 12-cent increase to the default budget.

New Business: None

Any Other Official Business: Tom stated that, using the numbers from the MS-636, he was trying to calculate how it would affect the taxes. Typically, it is also calculated out for each monetary warrant article. He compared last year's MS 636 to this year's. Last year's MS 636 comes in quite a bit lower with the revised numbers in the 2026 default budget. The difference in taxes to be raised is about half a million dollars. According to his calculations, this will add almost 35 cents to the tax number. So, on a \$450,000 house, it will add about \$153 to the tax bill. In the budget process, they focus on the operating side of the budget. The overall budget increased by about 3.5%, but the estimated amount of taxes to be raised through taxation had a 17.8% gross increase. He was discussing this with Max earlier today. Bob told Tom that he can work with Max to put a dollar cost for the warrant articles.

Informational Items, Communications, & Updates:

Craig Clark, Moderator for the UCC church, announced that the funeral for Jon Flagg, a retired Firefighter, is on Saturday, January 31st, 2026, at 2:00 pm, in the Sanctuary at the Meetinghouse. Bob added that he was not just a firefighter for the Town but a deputy fire chief and also the acting fire chief for some time. Police Chief Rachel Malynowski stated the calling hours are on Friday, January 30th, from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm, at the Cournoyer Funeral Home in Jaffrey.

At 7:00 pm, Bob motioned to go into non-public RSA 91-A:3 II, (I) consideration of legal advice, (c) reputation, and (i) emergency preparation. Seconded by Larry. It passed by a roll call vote, 2-1.

The meeting returned to the public at 9:05 pm, the minutes from the session were not sealed.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Victoria Stenersen

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Executive Secretary