



**Board of Selectmen's Meeting**

**Conference Room at Rindge Town Offices**

**Date: Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup>, 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 6:01 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Selectmen's Announcements:** Bob announced that the NH DRA review of the 2025 assessment by Avitar approves of the methods and procedures pursuant to the uniform standards of professional appraising practice. Roni Hamilton wished Larry a happy birthday.

**Payroll:** Bob motioned to approve the payroll for 12.31.2025 and 01.07.2026. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

**Accounts Payable:** Larry motioned to approve the accounts payable for 12.31.2025 and 01.07.2026. Seconded by Bob, it passed 2-0-0.

**Minutes:** No minutes to approve.

**Citizens' Forum:** Bob opened the forum at 6:04 pm by reading the rules of order and closed the forum at 6:08 pm

Craig Clark, Fitzgerald Road, announced that on Saturday, January 10<sup>th</sup>, at 9:00 am, the Rindge Veterans and the Boy Scouts will be picking up the wreaths and flags in the cemeteries in Rindge, starting at Goddard Road and ending at the Meetinghouse. He added that help would be appreciated.

Roberta Oeser, Main Street, commented that she thought the Board would be adding a solar exemption warrant article to adopt [RSA 72:62](#) because of the change in 2020. The warrant article, in effect now, specifically states it was only for solar systems that produce hot water and heat. She questioned the number of residents who were denied the exemption because they had the new system. Bob responded that only one was denied to his knowledge. There was a discussion on what is allowed under the exemption, and Bob asked Max to look into solar exemptions.

**Old Business:**

Discussion regarding potential legal considerations related to a recent ZBA decision (RSA 41:8): Tom explained that a variance was granted that created a non-conforming lot that would not meet the requirements of frontage by about 40 feet. He personally had a similar case in December of 2000, and it was denied by the ZBA. The new case was approved due to hardship, which he does not agree with. Larry agreed that he did not see hardship if they denied the case as well. Tom thinks they should appeal it because this decision sets a precedent. Tom motioned to appeal ZBA case 2025-16. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0. Bob asked Max to file an appeal for the ZBA case. Tom mentioned that there is a deadline for filing.

**New Business:**

Discussion of temporary wages for new Fire Chief (RSA 41:9): Max explained that the incoming fire chief, Bob Faas, is looking to be compensated for his remote work since being sworn in, before he starts work in person. The board agreed to it and requested that he report and limit the number of hours to a maximum of 20 hours. The rate of pay will be

calculated based on his annual salary. Bob asked Max to speak to the Chief, as there was a question whether he was fully retired from his previous department and whether his pension could be rolled over. He also requested that he make the Board aware of the final decision.

Review of 2026 Warrant Articles (RSA 39:2): See Attachment A. Bob announced that the first session, or deliberative session, will be on Saturday, January 31<sup>st</sup>, at 9:00 am at the Rindge Memorial School to discuss the warrant articles. The second session, or the voting session, will be on Tuesday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm at the Rindge Memorial School.

1. Article 1 is to elect town officers for the ensuing year. The term lengths for all the officers were confirmed.
2. Article 2, the only Zoning Article, will be as stated on the ballot and cannot be modified.
3. For Article 3, the Operating Budget, there is a placeholder for both the proposed and default.
4. Article 4, Fire Department Capital Reserve Fund (CRF), is proposed at \$125,000. Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, requested that they follow the precedent of not directing funds in warrant articles towards a specific purchase. The board agreed to strike the language “to be used to replace the 26-year-old brush truck”. Max stated that the lowest estimate for a used brush truck was \$197,000; there is \$90,000 currently in the Fire Department CRF. David Drouin, Old New Ipswich Road, asked if they plan to purchase the truck in 2026. Bob responded that it is their intent, but the truck will likely not be available for over two years. Roberta Oeser recommended adding an explanation to the Voter’s Guide of the proposed use of funds. Bob agreed.
5. Article 5, Revaluation CRF, is proposed at \$25,000. Craig Clark, Fitzgerald Road, and Roberta Oeser commented on removing this article due to the revaluation this year. Roberta stated that she believes there is about \$25,000 still in it. Bob expressed concern about not having enough funds by 2030 and wants to let the voters decide.
6. Article 6, Highway Department CRF, is proposed at \$150,000. The warrant article does not specifically state what the funds are going to be used for. Bob explained that the intent is to use the funds to purchase a replacement plow truck. No changes were made to the article.
7. Article 7, Municipal Building CRF, to add \$35,000 to the Building Maintenance CRF. Tom suggested changing the language of the article so that it is similar to last year’s, to add to the purpose of the fund to allow the monies to be used for new construction, additions, significant renovations, and future capital improvements. This warrant article did not pass in 2025, and the current balance of the fund is about \$100,000. Roberta Oeser explained that if they add to the purpose of a fund, it requires a 60% vote to pass. She suggested creating a separate warrant article for changing the purpose, because adding funds just requires a simple majority. Dan Whitney agreed with her suggestion. There was a brief discussion about the Rindge Municipal Electric Trust Fund. Bob stated they will leave this article as is and suggested to Tom that if he wants an additional warrant article, he should bring it to Max.
8. Article 8, Recreation Facilities CRF, is proposed at \$25,000. Tom stated that the CIP committee recommended \$50,000 to allow the department to redo the tennis courts next year. Larry stated that this article was a recommended addition by the CIP and not one of the priorities. They are approaching a point where they are concerned with getting anything to pass. Bob stated he would prefer to leave it as written because the Board currently has no input on Recreation. Their committee meetings conflict with the Selectboard meetings. Roberta Oeser suggested using the consolidated bond funds for the tennis courts. There is about \$70,000 in that bond, and with the accruing interest, there may be enough by next year. Bob stated that if the warrant article passes this year, he agrees that there may be enough funds at that time.
9. Article 9, Meetinghouse Maintenance ETF, to raise \$25,000. Roberta Oeser explained that Mike Cloutier suggested waiting a year with the Meetinghouse Fund. Karla MacLeod, Old New Ipswich Road, asked for the balance of the fund. Bob answered that at the beginning of the year, it was about \$59,000. Roberta Oeser responded that about

\$38,000 has not been transferred out of the fund for the recent restoration. Karla recommended keeping the request on the warrant because they did not receive funds last year. Bob stated there is a roofing project coming up, but they are hoping to get grant money to offset it. The board agreed to keep the \$25,000.

10. Article 10, the Adoption of Farm Structure Exemption per [RSA 79F](#). Bob explained that this exemption gives relief to the farmers in town. If this article passes, the provisions of the chapter go into effect on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Larry stated that to receive this exemption the property owner must have qualifying farm structures, which are defined as structures contiguous to a minimum of 10 acres of open space land that are used by the owner of the land to exclusively; house livestock, store feed grown or used on the farm, store livestock bedding, store crops or fertilizer for crops grown on the farm, store farm equipment which is actively used to maintain the farm, or boil sap from maple trees and store fuel-wood used to boil sap from maple trees. The property owner must also apply on or before April 15<sup>th</sup>. If the application is approved for classification, the qualifying farm structure will be appraised for no more than its replacement cost, less depreciation, and the land under the qualifying farm structures at no more than 10 percent of its market value.
11. Article 11, the Veteran's Disability Tax Credit Increase. This warrant article brings the veteran's disability tax credit to \$4,500. Bob explained that the current credit for the service-connected total and permanent disability is \$4,000, but this year the state decided that those who receive the total and permanent credit cannot also have the \$500 all veterans' credit. So, the \$500 credit they had been receiving will be removed. If passed, this warrant article gives back the \$500 credit to those individuals who were receiving it. This will not add any additional cost to the Town.
12. Article 12, Land Use Change Tax Revenue, to adjust the land use change tax revenue deposited into the Conservation Fund to twenty percent, pursuant to [RSA 79-A:25, IV](#). If passed, this would be effective as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026. Roberta Oeser explained that the revenue would go into the General Fund, Unassigned Fund Balance. To use the money for specific line items, they can create a land use change tax fund to put all the proceeds into. The portion that goes to the commission gets transferred to their fund, and at the end of the year, the Board can decide how to use the fund. This would have to be a separate warrant article. There was a brief discussion about adjusting the percentage, but it was not adjusted.
13. For Article 13, 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration, raising \$5,000 for the celebration of the United States' 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The funds would go into the Patriotic Purposes budget.

Tom proposed adding another warrant article for the Ingalls Memorial Library ETF because the CIP recognized it in their report. Larry stated that it was recognized by the CIP but not recommended. Casey Burrage agreed. Larry explained that the three large requests the committee recommended total \$445,000. Tom noted that last year, the funds for the library were one of the only monetary warrant articles that passed, so he thinks they should let the voters decide.

Roberta Oeser explained that Mike Cloutier had been putting funds into replacing the boiler at the library, but it does not need to be replaced, so he does not need the money. Instead, they will replace the burner, which costs less, and there should still be funds for the windows. Bob stated he disagrees with Mike on the length of the life of the furnace. Last year's request was for \$20,000 for the library.

The board agreed to add a warrant article for the Ingalls Memorial Library ETF that states "to see if the Town will raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) to be added to the Ingalls Memorial Library Expendable Trust Fund previously established."

Finalization of Proposed 2026 Budget (RSA 32:5): Bob stated that he wants to arrive at a consensus on the total proposed budget. His proposed number is \$5,680,000. Tom noted that the number they agreed to on September 24th was \$5,690,581. This past year, the Town came in under budget by \$100,000. Tom believes the Town only came in under the default due to employee turnover in the Police, Fire, and Highway Department, and in the Town Offices. If the Town were

fully staffed, it would have likely gone over the default.

Tom asked for clarification on what was removed at the last Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) meeting. Dan Whitney explained that there was a \$36,000 reduction in the Fire Department, which they all had agreed to. The second was an issue between the Town Administrator and the Selectboard. The third was \$15,000 from the Planning Department, for which they were waiting for more information. Max shared that they can now cut the Fire Department by another \$2,200. He explained that the Planning Director feels that they should keep more of the wages because there are no applicants except from a remote company.

Tom stated that on December 17<sup>th</sup> the proposed budget was \$5,821,940. The total reduction of \$38,200 brings the proposed budget to \$5,783,740, which is \$93,159 over the target number from September. He asked about the Town Administrator's request to forego being in the NH Retirement System (NHRS), which would save the Town about \$16,000. Max responded that he agrees to it if the board is willing to vote. He explained that if they opt out now, they can bring it back for a future Town Administrator. Bob suggested coming up with some recompense next year for the Town Administrator for foregoing nearly \$16,000 in benefits. He added that the incoming Fire Chief is also foregoing the medical benefits, which saves the Town over \$25,000. Bob concluded that he would like to make sure the Fire Chief receives the stipend. Tom expressed his support for the Town Administrator opting out of NHRS. Larry confirmed with Max that this is what he would like to do. Tom motioned to allow the Town Administrator, Max Vandervliet, to be exempt from the NH Retirement System. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0. The minutes and a letter are sent to the NH Retirement System. The total amount is \$15,937.50.

Nancy Bennett, the president of the Board of Directors of the Jaffrey Rindge Memorial Ambulance Service (JRMA), Pete Davis from Jaffrey, Robert Schaumann from Jaffrey, and Adam Langlois, the Chief of JRMA, were present. Nancy expressed concern about the checks that have not been given properly or promptly to the ambulance service. An invoice was provided to the Town on November 1<sup>st</sup>, but they have not yet received payment. JRMA cannot survive or run a service without payment from Jaffrey and Rindge. They want to know why they have not received payment. Bob responded that they are bringing up a topic that the Board of Selectmen is unprepared to discuss, and he was unaware of this. He directed the question to Helene. Helene responded that former Fire Chief, Rick Donovan, wanted to pay the \$85,000 to JRMA, which was in the operating budget. There was \$40,000 that came from a warrant article into an expendable trust fund (ETF). Rick had advised Helene to only pay the invoices from Peterborough, which totaled \$13,000, from the ETF. There is now \$27,000 remaining in the ETF.

Nancy stated that the \$40,000 was voted on by the Townspeople. Bob responded that it was to pay for ambulance services above and beyond the \$85,000. He explained that the ambulance service had requested \$125,000 last year to provide 24/7 service. The Town did not receive this level of service. On the contrary, the response diminished in the past year. He explained that they should have requested to be added to the agenda so the board could be prepared with figures to discuss the topic.

Tom interrupted and stated that it is relevant because they do not have a line item in the budget for what JRMA is requesting for 2026. Nancy responded that Max has the budget. Bob confirmed that Jaffrey's bill is the same as Rindge's. He further explained that we do not have a contract with JRMA and have worked with them by contributing to the 501(c)(3) in the past.

Tom stated he does not think the Fire Chief has the authority to deny payment of bills. The board approves the payables every week. Bob interjected that Tom has not approved the payment of any bills for the entire year, for 30 meetings, and he has not voted once on accounts payable. Tom stated it is because they have no financial control, and they have department heads deciding what to pay. He added that they have an ambulance service that needs to be paid for so they can provide the service. He explained that they have a warrant article that passed last year, which is specific. It stated "To

see if the Town shall vote to establish an Ambulance Service Expendable Trust Fund under the provisions of RSA 31:19-a for the purpose of providing additional funds for ambulance service charges not included in the Operating Budget, and to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty-Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) to put in this fund, and further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from said fund.” He interprets this article to mean that the November bill from JRMA falls under this warrant article.

Bob thanked Nancy for attending tonight, but he will not be addressing this at this time because he was not aware of the problem until tonight. Bob asked the other board members if they were aware of this issue. Larry responded that he was not. Tom answered that he was aware of this problem months ago. Bob asked Max to meet with the representatives of JRMA at their convenience. Nancy stated that the invoice is 60 days past due, and they have until the end of January to get this payment. Bob asked Max to reach out to Rick and Dave Chamberlain. He invited the other members of the JRMA Board. Dan Whitney expressed that they need to communicate more, they cannot fix yesterday, and he does not want to have this discussion again on February 8<sup>th</sup>. He advised coming up with a plan that everyone has reasonable expectations with and can agree to.

Tom asked what JRMA is going to charge the Town for 2026. Nancy responded that it will be the same as last year at \$85,000. Bob asked if they did not get the \$85,000. Nancy answered that they did, but they did not receive the \$27,000 payment from the November invoice. Bob explained that he does not believe that was guaranteed, and he would like clarity on what the warrant article states and how it is to be paid out. There was further discussion on what was agreed to in 2025 for payment and what the warrant article stated. Bob explained that in 2025, \$85,000 was the figure that was quoted to JRMA. Rick Donovan, Jon Frederick, David Chamberlain, Deb Douglas, and the previous JRMA Chief were present to witness it. He was told to come back to the BOS to present the agreement. There was no promise of a \$40,000 warrant article. Back then, Jaffrey was receiving over 60% of the services, and Rindge was receiving about 30%, they were hoping that Jaffrey would step up to the plate to pay the remaining balance that JRMA was requesting for 2025.

Bob shifted the conversation back to the budget. Tom stated that after removing the \$16,000, they are still \$77,222 over the agreed target number. Larry stated that with the numbers from the BAC and the other information they came up with, he has a new set of numbers that he worked on for weeks, line by line. His number is \$5,661,475.06, which is approximately \$30,000 less than the number they agreed to a few months ago. His number is 3.3% over the 2025 default budget. Tina Sbrega, Sandback Circle, asked if his number was based on the work they did last week. Larry answered that some of it was. Tom asked where the changes were because it looks like he added percentages based on an adjusted or amended budget line. Larry stated that he did not work off of the amended budget, but the default and plugged in a lot of numbers from Max’s build sheet. He explained that the Police Department had a huge request, and that is where the biggest part of the savings was.

Tom asked what he adjusted in the Police Department. Larry stated they were asking for a \$7,100 raise per officer, while most of the Town was getting 2.5% to 3% raises. In his budget, he gave the entire Police Department 4% raises, and it saved money. They discussed how the spreadsheet was set up and the confusion with the amended budget. Tom stated that they need to keep in mind that in the 2025 default budget line for hourly wages for the Police Department, the number is lower than what was actually expended. Tom asked what was originally proposed by the Police Chief, Rachel Malynowski. Tina Sbrega responded that it was about a 3% increase, and her total request in hourly wages was \$558,516, which reflects a fully staffed department at nine officers, plus the \$7,100 each. Tom stated that about \$45,000 needs to be added to the \$490,000 for police wages in the default. There was further discussion of the police budget request. Dan Whitney requested a recess, which was granted by Bob at 7:55 pm. The meeting returned to the public at 8:13 pm.

The board agreed that the computer tech support line can be reduced because the funds were encumbered to pay the CADNET invoice for 2026 for about \$19,000. Max explained that the Central Square bill for 2026 from the Police Chief was prepaid at the end of 2025, and the bill was about \$11,000. Roberta Oeser questioned when it was paid because she

remembers an invoice in August that was paid for 2026. Helene went to confirm. There was a discussion about the invoice. Tom stated that they need to pay the employees and make sure they have the equipment and supplies required so they can provide departmental services to the Town and sufficiently fund them operationally. He looked for non-productive items in the budget that have nothing to do with operations. He suggested the following:

1. Reduce the Cemeteries budget to the 2025 default budget of \$2,081.
2. Have the Selectboard give up the stipend total of \$6000.
3. Remove the cell phone stipend, which totals \$4000.
4. Remove the health insurance stipend, which totals \$14,000. He considers it to be a bonus, and employees either take the benefit or they do not. If an employee wants to get health insurance next year for the entire family, it costs about \$25,000.
5. Reduce the Parks and Playgrounds budget by \$2,688.
6. Reduce the Town Administrator's retirement by about \$16,000, which was agreed to by the Board.
7. Reduce the emergency management budget by \$9,600 because he guessed that many of the costs are redundant and overlap with the fire department's resources.
8. Reduce the solid waste budget, in the hourly wages line, by moving 50 percent of the wages and benefits to the transfer station revolving funds, which totals \$35,750. He stated that in 2025, they collected \$65,000 in transfer station revenue, and there are about \$38,000 in expenses for the transfer station, which makes it about even. Taking 40% of the wages and benefits out of the fund is \$28,600. He also suggested adding the disposal fees back into the solid waste budget under contracted services. This would add about \$15,000 back into the budget and keep more money in the revolving fund.

Tom asked if the Mutual Aid request of \$125,000 was added to the proposed budget. Larry stated that he budgeted about \$122,000. Larry then asked about the Cemetery reduction. Tom responded that it was reduced because in 2024, they did not spend any labor, and all the services were completed with existing resources. Bob commented that they then suffered in other areas because they had to use existing resources. Tom added that the Parks and Recreation budget was the same as they spent no funds on labor in 2024. Roberta Oeser commented that for the Cemeteries, there was a part-time employee in 2025 for maintenance. And in 2024, they used Highway employees who receive retirement and benefits. There was a brief discussion about how to present the budget to the public.

David Drouin commented that the Selectmen's stipend should be kept in the budget for incidental expenses. He also warned them that removing cell phone stipends would lead to higher costs if the Town had to purchase cell phones for its employees. David continued that health insurance stipends traditionally save businesses money. And finally, for Parks & Playgrounds, he thinks it is contradictory that they did not have any money to do \$400 work at Tetrault Park, but now they have \$2,688 in unspent funds. He concluded that Tom's suggested cuts may not be productive, but those funds and lines are important.

Tina Sbrega stated that for the Police Department wages, she believes that with the \$7100 increase per officer, the 2% COLA (cost of living adjustment) was removed. If the \$7100 is taken out, then they need to add back in a COLA. Larry responded that he is not aware of that, and he gave a 4% wage increase to the Police Department because he wants it to be fair across the board and show good faith to the Police. Bob explained that with the \$7,100 increase for 10 employees, plus the retirement, the total comes to over \$90,000 for one department. There was a discussion about the increase in retirement rates for 2026 and about budgeting the amount needed properly.

Dan Whitney expounded on David Drouin's earlier comments and explained that at the last BAC meeting, he recommended moving the stipend to \$5,000 because if they have one employee switch from the family plan to the health insurance stipend, that is a \$20,000 net gain for the Town. If five employees went on to the stipend, even if they are singles

or plus ones, it would be a similar net gain. The only way a stipend plan works is if it is enticing to the employees who have access to it, and going to zero is not a positive. Dan then stated that he believes that having 50% of the wages in the transfer station revolving fund may work. The solid waste number will be increasing year over year, and they may need to have the revenue from the transfer station fully cover the position going forward, and to get them to reach the target they had agreed to in September. Larry stated he added a 37% increase in contracted services in solid waste, which comes to \$126,459. Max suggested keeping the status quo with the health insurance due to the research that is needed on the broader changes occurring in health care that will affect the Town. He would prefer not to implement a change that then needs to be altered within the next year. The cemeteries budget, the selectmen's stipend, and the cellphone stipend were briefly discussed.

Roberta Oeser explained that with the Cemeteries budget, they must gross budget to use the Trust Fund, and they should be getting reimbursed from the Trust Fund. She stated that with the 2024 police hourly wages, the budget was \$448,984, and the default for 2025 was \$490,085. The wages for the ninth officer for 12 months were included in that 2025 default number. She also expressed that using the transfer station revolving fund for wages and benefits is a problem. In 2024, the revenue was \$50,000, and they expended \$82,000. In 2024, on top of the tipping fees, they paid for the trash hauling truck at \$30,000, and the year before that, they paid for half of the loader. An upcoming expense is a new compactor and containers, which will also be paid for from that fund. The warrant article that established the fund is set up for the operations and equipment of the transfer station. She is not sure that it includes wages and benefits, and it would drain that account. Tom went through various expenses that have been paid from the transfer station revolving fund, and there was a discussion about Monadnock Disposal Services.

Larry proposed a new figure of \$5,641,475, which is about a \$135,000 increase over the 2025 default budget. Roberta Oeser further commented on the emergency management budget. She explained that the wages in that budget get covered from the fire department because it is separate when the emergency center is manned. She is concerned with taking out what has to be in there because if there is a natural disaster or other large problem, and the center is manned, it gets paid out of that wage line. There was more discussion about the transfer station stickers.

Al Lefebvre, Old New Ipswich Road, asked them what the question is and how they can get there right away because they are spinning wheels on minutiae. Tina Sbrega stated that this is her third year going through this process on the BAC, and each year they get to the deadline and then start discussing details that should be decided on during the year and not budget season. She suggested that the BAC meet throughout the year and work with the Board and the Town Administrator to discuss the details of the budget so that when they get into budget season, they have the majority of the questions answered. Bob responded that he thinks that meeting once a month is plenty to meet. Larry suggested reaching out to Max as ideas and issues come up because he keeps a running list. Dan Whitney stated that at this point, they should not be this deep in the weeds and advised them to pick a number within 2 to 3% of an increase on the overall budget. The people are not voting on the line items, but the overall budget number. There was a brief conversation among the board members about the potential lack of support from voters and how to communicate well about where they have saved money within the budget. Karla MacLeod stated that they elect the board to support the budget, and said they should not give up on the budget before it is given to the public.

Bob calculated a rough estimate of the average of Tom's and Larry's proposed budget total, which was \$5,680,000. They then took the average of all three. Bob motioned to propose a budget of \$5,670,000 for 2026. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0. Bob motioned to work from Larry's spreadsheet and figures to come to the budget number. Seconded by Larry, it passed 3-0.

**Any Other Official Business:** There were none.

**Informational Items, Communications, & Updates:** There were none.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Victoria Stenersen*

Victoria Stenersen  
Executive Secretary