



## **Board of Selectmen's Meeting**

**Rindge Town Office**

**Date: September 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

### **MEETING MINUTES**

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

The meeting opened at 6:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance led by Bob.

**Selectmen's Announcements:** Bob introduced Max Vandervliet, the new Town Administrator, to the citizens. The Ingalls Memorial Library will be closed all day on Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, because the power will be shut off to the Library to install the electricity connection for the generator. Bob motioned to close the Ingalls Memorial Library on Tuesday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Seconded by Tom, passed 3-0. Bob also announced that the Women's Harvest Fair is on Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, at the Rindge Rec Center from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm, and the POOR Meat Raffle will be held on Saturday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, at 1:30 pm at the Jaffrey American Legion; the co-sponsor is the Rindge Veterans Association.

**Payroll:** Bob motioned to accept the payroll for 09.18.2025 & 09.25.2025. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

**Accounts Payable:** Bob motioned to accept the accounts payable for 09.18.2025 & 09.25.2025. Seconded by Larry, it passed 2-0-0.

Larry addressed the charge of \$600 that was brought up at the previous meeting. The exact cost was \$329.99 for a Dewalt 60-volt string trimmer and \$239 for a spare battery. This system goes along with the Dewalt chainsaw system that is on Rindge's Fire Trucks, and the batteries are interchangeable. This purchase replaces a 10-year-old gas weedwhacker that could no longer be repaired, and going electric will save the Town money as it eliminates the need for small engine repair. This purchase came out of a line item that was budgeted at \$8,500, and the current balance of that line is \$7,300. He stated that, in contrast, there was a charge on September 18<sup>th</sup> for \$1,016 and a charge of \$500 for the Police Department. Larry expressed that he is confused as to why they are questioning a \$600 charge and not a \$1,500 charge. His opinion is that if they are going to start questioning charges, they should be questioning every department and not just targeting one or two. He then showed the receipt he had for the purchase. Bob added that the weedwhacker is used to clean around the dry hydrants in Town because they need to make them accessible. They also use the weed whacker to create a fire break for wildfires. Larry added that one of the reasons they switched to a battery-operated weedwhacker and chainsaw is that they start immediately. The average cost of a steel line trimmer is \$350, and the purchase of the Dewalt line trimmer was \$340. Larry thanked Rick and Mike for thinking of the taxpayers when they make purchases and for making wise decisions about spending their budgets. Tom thanked Larry for his research and stated that he brought it up because there are no purchasing controls, and he chose the charge at random.

**Minutes:** Larry motioned to approve the minutes from 09.10.2025. Second by Tom, with an amendment to the motion by attaching the original draft to the minutes and the document submitted to the board, it passed 3-0.

**Citizen's Forum:** Bob opened the forum at 6:10 p.m. by reading the rules of the forum and closed the forum at 6:42 p.m. Debbie Qualey, Meadow View Road, said she missed the last meeting and does not know if she received approval from

the Board for the Women's Harvest Fair, and asked if it is a go. Bob responded that yes, it was approved.

Jim Provencher, Fourth Street, stated he is concerned that they only have 20 minutes to speak with an Avitar Assessor over the phone to state their case. His property is assessed at over \$1 million with no changes besides a new well. He stated that with Avitar, waterfront property has a starting valuation of \$650,000. He asked if there was a law regarding this. Roberta responded that it is not based on the waterfront, view, etc., but based on the sales data for all of Lake Monomonac. Jim stated that no one will purchase his home if it is assessed at \$1 million. Bob recommended that they speak with Avitar to request adjustments and correct errors. Jenn Helsel, Assessing Clerk, stated that the abatements cannot be filed until after the December bills are out because the abatement is based on the 2025 tax year, and only the first half of the tax year is out.

Lisa Wiley, Chair of the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District Board, brought the budget calendar to the Board of Selectmen. Finance meetings will be full-board, regular meetings this budget season. In general, the meetings are scheduled during the typical time of a school board meeting, which are on Zoom and recorded. These meetings are open to the public. She invited the board to appoint two budget advisory members for the meetings and to let her know so they can prepare the packets. Bob asked if there was a volunteer from the board. Tom stated he has been involved for the past two years and has expressed his concerns to the school board and finance committee. He suggested that Bob and/or Larry attend to voice their opinions. Lisa extended an invitation to everyone to a presentation by the NH Fair Funding Project at the Rindge Memorial School on Thursday, October 16<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 pm. The NH Fair Funding Project is a non-partisan group in NH that explains how schools are funded and how taxes go towards schools. They also assist in finding ways to recoup some of the money through state aid and other avenues. This event is not sponsored by the district, but the board voted unanimously to support this program.

Greg Harris, Fourth Street, asked what the evaluation process is because it seems that the way properties have been evaluated is not based on fair market value. They cannot sell the properties at the value they are assessed at now. Bob stated he understands that the values went up so much, even Jaffrey's valuation went up 85%. He added that what the properties are assessed at is what Avitar believes the fair market value is. He explained that the value of homes has gone up a little bit, the value of properties has gone up excessively, and the value of lakefront property has gone up astronomically.

Christine Tennison, Fourth Street, stated she does not find that Avitar is very responsive. She called and left a message requesting a phone call back. She commented that Class 6 Roads do not hold the same market value because there is no school bus route, no plowing, and no mail delivery. Avitar has not responded that there is no multiple aggregate difference for Class 6 Roads. She requested that the Board make public the lakefront calculations of all waterfront increases by body of water. For each property on Lake Monomonac, there was an increase of about \$650,000. The other major lake in Rindge had a \$350,000 increase, and other bodies of water had varying amounts. She also requested the right-of-way calculations of land or homes that have right-of-way access by a body of water. Her final request was that the Board make sure Avitar is responsive to residents' requests. Bob answered that all lakes have different ratings; the lakes with higher ratings are valued higher. The lakes have previously been rated by other companies. Christine stated that if they analyze the actual sales and these assessments, the assessments are sometimes two times off what properties are being sold at. Avitar is also making clear errors that do not match town building permits. Bob responded that what the board should do, as they did after the assessment five years ago, is review the properties that are outliers and find out why they increased so much. Roberta requested a sheet of outliers, but Avitar does not do it that way, so they sent her a PDF that lists the old and new values.

Tina Hansen, Cutting Road, expressed that she would like to hear the board support their residents and not Avitar. She added that she is glad they requested a sheet of outliers. Bob responded that Avitar is the firm that the Town hired to do this. A different firm conducted the revaluation in 2020, and residents had the same problems as they do now. They

wanted to get the same firm as Jaffrey, but they could not, as they do not have the time or the employees. Rindge is limited in the firms we can hire because they have to be approved by the State of NH in order to hire.

Kerryann Murphy, Pine Eden Road, a real estate agent, stated that she looked at every property on her street and a few other properties. What these houses are assessed at would not sell in today's market. She receives a monthly market update for Rindge, and the average price last month was \$1 million, partly because of the new build on Mark Street. It is not a reflection of the whole town. Larry asked if everyone received a letter from the Town to go to Avitar to check their tax card because he wants to make sure that their tax cards are correct.

Jim Provencher, Fourth Street, asked who sets the rates for the lakes. Bob responded that he believes the assessing firm sets the ratings for the lakes. Roberta said she did not see the rating on the tax cards, so she believes it is entirely based on the market value of Lake Monomonac. She added that Avitar is required to provide a manual that shows their methodology and matrixing before the numbers are finalized. These are preliminary values, and they may adjust them. Bob stated that the assessing firms are supposed to use the same rules set by the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) to be hired by NH municipalities. Bob again recommended they schedule an appointment with Avitar and explain the situation. He added that residents can only apply for an abatement after the December bills have gone out and before March 1<sup>st</sup>. The Selectmen have until July 1<sup>st</sup> to decide on all abatements. After that point, it can be appealed to the NH Board of Tax and Land Appeals (BTLA), which needs to be submitted by September 1<sup>st</sup>. Tom suggested that residents follow the process because if they miss a step, they are stuck, and the option to appeal goes away.

#### **Old Business:**

Recommendations on Sign Placement for the Working Together for Jaffrey-Rindge Group Request: This was a request brought to the board two weeks ago to put signs on town property. Bob stated it was okay to put lawn signs on private properties with permission from the owner and on school property with the approval of the school. They need to comply with the sign ordinance, which dictates the size of the signs and the time limit. Larry said that he read Bob's notes and agrees that they need to comply with the sign ordinance. Tom agreed with Bob and added that the Town should not be supporting one organization or another; they need to remain neutral.

Debbie Qualey, Meadow View Road, asked what the group was. Lisa Wiley responded that the group is a large gathering of Jaffrey and Rindge residents, mostly parents of students who attend the schools. This group was formed after the March election to work together as a community to make sure that the correct information is being communicated to the public. There was a portion of this group that wanted the Towns to celebrate the accolade of Conant-Middle High School becoming an NH School of Excellence this year. She added that the Ingalls Memorial Library has a large generator that the sign could fit on, and the Library Director, Donna Straitiff, agreed that it would be okay. She added that the group is not a political group. Bob answered that the public properties in Rindge have never been used to put up signs except for Town business. If one private group is allowed, then all private groups would need to be allowed to do the same thing. The board was in agreement that the signs cannot be on town properties. Bob asked Roberta to write a letter to be sent back to this group.

Budget Bottom Line Amount: Bob asked Larry and Tom if they would be okay with averaging each of their requests to get the proposed number. He recommended a budget total of \$5,625,000, which was just slightly lower than what was proposed for the 2025 budget. Larry recommended \$5,723,372, which is slightly over a 3% increase due to health care costs. Bob asked Roberta if she had received projections for the increasing health care costs. Roberta said hopefully Max will find out next week, but pension rates will be going down starting July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026, for 2 years. Bob added that they do not know what will happen with dental, but they do know that Social Security will most likely go up 2.7% as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) is up. Tom said he would go along with Larry's recommendation. The average of the three numbers is \$5,690,581. Dan Whitney, from the Budget Advisory Committee, expressed his appreciation for deciding on a number and

having a starting point this early in the process. Craig Clark, from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Committee, asked the Board for guidance on what they expect for numbers for their committee. Bob stated that the CIP needs to look at the projects that the Town needs, as it always has. There has never been a set figure, but the guideline is about \$300,000 because they have never been able to raise more than that.

Rick Donovan, Fire Chief, said that the Fire Department has a brush truck that needs to be replaced. The NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) has put out a clean equipment grant, which is a 50% reimbursement. The cost of a new brush truck is about \$170,000 - \$180,000. Hopefully, half of that amount will come from the grant, which he will apply for next week. Applications are reviewed monthly, and applications are submitted until the money runs out. The criteria for the grant are that the truck needs to be older than 2001, a diesel truck, and removed from service entirely. The current brush truck is from before 1999, is diesel, and will be scrapped. Tom stated that the grant is a points system, and Rindge won't qualify because we do not meet the demographics qualifications. He added that does not mean Rindge will not receive the grant.

#### **New Business:**

Presentation on Lake Monomonac Watershed Management Plan (WMP) - Grant: Bob stated that this is not a Town grant, and is only the Lake Association's Grant. Jeff Eisenberg, Lapham Lane, is from the Monomonac Lake Property Owners Association. He thanked the Board for their endorsement and support when they began looking into the grant helped them receive the grant. Don Wilson, the coordinator of the project, is the point of contact. The purpose of the WMP is to identify pollutants from the lake watershed and find solutions to mitigate those pollutants over time. The grant was awarded in March, and then the project was put out to bid. They selected FB Environmental, and they put together a site-specific project plan, which outlines how they will be executing the study. The results will be delivered in late 2026 to early 2027. There are three required public forums that they will have. The first one is on October 20<sup>th</sup>, and the location is not set yet, but it will be publicized.

The lake watershed is most of Rindge and up into New Ipswich. Jeff stated that when they do present the findings of the study, the next step is to solve the problems. Most problems will likely be septic systems and fertilizer use. The biggest way to address those pollutants will be by educating the public. Steve Gray, Conifer Road, said they have been sampling the water since 1987. They sample the water 3 times a year in all the tributaries that come into the lake. The samples are brought to Concord to be tested, and they receive a report on the condition of the lake that gives 9 to 10 different aspects, including clarity, chlorine level, phosphorus, etc. Every year, DES sends a report, and every year, they recommend a Watershed Management Plan for the lake. Jeff stated that the shoreline survey was two weeks ago, where five boats were on the lake photographing various properties looking for signs that could be an issue, vegetative buffers, bare soil, shoreline erosion, slope, distance of structures from the shoreline, etc. They will be doing a septic survey by investigating septic systems that may or may not be properly installed and operating. A build-on analysis will be conducted to understand the growth in the area. The ultimate goal is to lower the phosphorus levels and keep the beautiful lake. The timeline is to have an action plan by October 2026. The final report and presentation to the public is scheduled for February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2027. Bob opened it up to the public for questions.

Roberta advised them to conduct the studies in the summer of 2026 when the properties on the lake are in high use, because doing them in the winter is not as helpful. Pat Martin, Farrar Road, asked if the lake that mitigated for the cyanobacteria used lime. Jeff responded that they used a method that trapped the cyanobacteria underneath the lakebed, which makes sure that it does not get stirred up again. Debbie Qualey, Meadow View Road, asked if they are working with the Winchendon side of the lake. Jeff answered yes, they have been working closely with the Winchendon Spring Lakes Association (WSLA). It is a complete lake survey. Jim Qualey, Meadow View Road, asked what proportion of the shoreline of the lake is in Rindge. Jeff answered that approximately 2/3 of the shoreline is in New Hampshire, but about 45% of the homes. Jim then asked if the study was only dealing with the properties in NH. Jeff said no, it is the entire lake. Brian Day

asked if they should go to the WSLA group or to them with questions. Jeff recommended they send the question to Don Wilson or anyone on the Board. There is a website with the information, monomonac.org. Dan Whitney, Butterfield Road, asked what type of project, the size of the project, and the funding. Jeff responded that they expect to receive another round of funding. Susan Kochinskas, Conifer Road, also answered that FB Environmental will give them ideas for grant money. Jeff added that they are expecting to have matching grants for septic system upgrades, but they do not have the details. Claudia Stewart, Sharon Place, asked how they are going to force people to comply. Jeff answered no, they cannot unless they violate state law or town ordinances. They are going to be as persuasive as possible to residents who use pollutants. Larry asked what authority they have to gain access to residents' septic systems. Jeff responded that they do not have the authority, and they will not be violating personal property in any way, shape, or form. If they can get people interested, it will be helpful. Bob added that they have not been helped by the state of NH by allowing accessory dwelling units (ADU) and not requiring an increase to septic systems. Bob thanked them for the presentation.

Electric Rate Recommendation: Proposal from Standard Power for the Town of Rindge's Public Buildings electricity at 10.8 cents/kWh for 24 months. Bob stated he is unsure about agreeing to a contract for over 2 years. Roberta asked if they discussed this at the Energy Commission meeting. Pat Martin, Farrar Road, stated that Mike said the longer term gives you the lower rate overall, but if the rate goes lower than the contracted rate, it looks bad even if they save money overall. Bob said he would not go over 24 months for a contract. Tom asked Pat if she knew how much they are paying now off the top of her head. Pat stated she does not know, and added that they expect electricity prices to go up is because they expect natural gas prices to go up and an increased demand for data centers and electricity. Tom asked when the contract expires. Roberta answered that it expires on October 31<sup>st</sup>. Tom motioned to go with the 24-month recommendation of 10.8 cents per kilowatt with Standard Power and authorize Max to sign the contract. Seconded by Larry, 3-0.

Credit Card Authorization for Max: Bob motioned to authorize Max Vandervleit as the primary user with M&T Bank for the Town of Rindge. Seconded by Larry, passed 3-0.

Capital Reserve Fund Withdrawals: \$21,670 for Roof for Swap Shop/Garage from CRF for Building Maintenance & \$56,821 for Revaluation from the CRF for Revaluation: Bob stated there was a recommendation to approve these in public, but that does not necessarily mean it needs to be done in public. They typically initial the documentation in the office. Tom stated the roof repair was paid for, and he believes it went to an Equipment Maintenance Account. He asked if this was sorted out. Roberta answered that Helene will do a journal entry to swap it out after tonight, and it was expended out of the Revolving Fund. She added that for Capital Reserve Funds, the Town receives checks from the Trustees of Trust Funds to reimburse the General Fund to balance it. Bob motioned to withdraw \$21,670 for the repair of the Swap Shop/Garage roof from the Capital Reserve Fund for Building Maintenance and withdraw \$56,821 for the revaluation from the Capital Reserve Fund for Revaluation. Seconded by Larry, passed 3-0. Tom stated that Mike did the right thing by charging it to the Revolving Fund.

Approve Current Use for Map 4 Lot 25: Bob stated that only 2.5 acres of land is being put in current use. That land is swamp land that abuts other land in current use that they own. Roberta added that this is because they did a technical subdivision, so they were swapping out property with another person. Bob motioned to allow Current Use for Map 4 Lot 25. Seconded by Tom, passed 3-0.

Intent to Cut for Map 11 Lot 33 (Annett State Forest): Bob stated that Annett State Forrest is doing another tree cutting due to diseased trees. Larry motioned to allow the Intent to Cut for Map 11 Lot 33, Annett State Forest. Seconded by Tom, passed 3-0.

Furnace at Highway Garage: Bob stated that the furnace for the highway garage has a flame that is going out the side. Mike Cloutier, DPW Director, received a proposal from Pinney Plumbing and Heating for \$13,450 for materials and labor. Bob asked if Mike was going to get two other bids. Roberta stated that Mike only got one bid from Pinney because he is

concerned that they will refuse to service it, as they are the company we use to service our plumbing and heating. Town Policy has a provision that for contractors we do business with regularly, they can bypass the three-bid requirement. Mike did say he would get two more bids if the board requested. The board agreed that Mike should get two other bids. Tom recommended that they also look at other service companies.

Daniel Whitney, Butterfield Road, asked about the lead time for the unit. He added that if it is a 9–10-week lead time, the concern is that it will be cold enough that the fuel will turn to jelly and be unusable for plowing. Bob stated that Max can talk to Mike to ask him to get 2 other bids and put them in the blue folder to initial. Roberta added that the lead time should be less than 9-10 weeks. Larry said he does not see why Pinney could not service the machine.

Water Issues at Town Office/Meetinghouse: Bob stated the water at Town Offices and the Meetinghouse comes from the parsonage. They are not sure why, but the well seems to be pumping as much mud as it pumps water. They are looking to put a well in at the back corner of the parking area at Town Offices. Roberta stated there is a requirement for 75 feet of clearance from any building or septic system, but not for the cemetery. Bob stated that if they can get potable water out of the well, they can trench out to the corner of the driveway to meet the pipe connection and feed the water to the Meetinghouse. Roberta asked about grants for potable water. Richard Mellor, Abel Road, answered that there are state funds of \$30 million that they could get money from. The award came from the settlement for the substitute for lead and gasoline in the water. Richard added that they should get in touch with DES to see if they can get the grant because it should count as municipal water. Roberta said the water system at the parsonage is inadequate. Bob added that with the new well location, they need to keep access to it. Roberta stated that the Town still has access to the one at the parsonage because it is permanent. Bob said they will have Mike start looking at getting a bid out to drill a well and a better water system.

**Any Other Official Business:** There was no other official business.

**Informational Items, Communications, & Updates:**

Bob stated there was a Town & Gown Meeting. The 1<sup>st</sup> FPU Game was last weekend. They observed that there were lots of dogs and bags with alcohol bottles, which are not allowed. They will increase guidelines online for the games to inform students that alcohol is only in the beer garden tent, and no minors are allowed in the tent. There will be no bags allowed except for diaper bags. They will ask to look at the bag to confirm it is a diaper bag. The student move-in at Franklin Pierce went smoothly, with the changes they had to stagger the schedule. The Family Weekend and Homecoming is this weekend, with a football game at 1:00 pm. He and Kristine Nolan are trying to get a Town & Gown meeting together for October and have an early December meeting.

Judy Unger-Clark, Fitzgerald Road, added that for the Franklin Pierce Family Weekend, the Rindge Farmers Market will be on the baseball field for the celebration from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm and not at the West Rindge Common.

**Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Victoria Stenersen*

Victoria Stenersen  
Executive Secretary