

Minutes of the Mendon Town Meeting

Monday, March 6, 2017

Mendon Mountainview Lodge

Christopher Corsones, Town Moderator called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and invited everyone to Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Chris explained that there is a change at this year's meeting in that the Town Meeting and School District Meetings are separate. Mendon and Chittenden have formed a new school district. Chris reminded everyone that they would be voting on March 7 for one Member-at-Large for the new School District, as well as that school budget.

Geoff Wells one of Mendon's Selectboard Members rose to thank Larry Courcelle for his six years of service on the selectboard, noting his tenure endured during the Irene flooding and the subsequent rebuilding. Geoff said it has been a pleasure working with Larry and on behalf of the Town of Mendon, thanked him for his service.

Larry Courcelle stated that the pleasure had been his serving on the selectboard and reminded Ann Singiser and Sara Tully that it had been their efforts that had brought him to the selectboard. Larry noted that he has served on several boards and is still involved in some.

Chris thanked the Mendon Mountainview Lodge and Ski Mendon Management, LLC for providing their location for this evening's Mendon Town Meeting. He explained that the rules for the evening allow everyone to speak and then permit discussion. Additionally, when anyone arises to speak, they should state their name clearly for the purpose of minute taking. Chris explained that if anyone were to disagree with his ruling, they might appeal his ruling, and if 50 percent of those in attendance agreed with the appeal, the ruling could be set aside.

Chris introduced Job Tate, our elected State Representative and invited him to address the gathering.

Job thanked everyone for allowing him to share his thoughts. Job reminded everyone that he will not be running again for the Legislature in Montpelier, because he said he believes in term limits. Job shared some of his thoughts as to what is, and is not happening in Montpelier. He noted the declining population in Rutland County, explaining that our opportunities for having a voice is diminishing. Job noted that it is hard to raise a family here, since livable wages are difficult to find. Economic development is badly needed. Vivienne Gulick extended Mendon's thanks for a job well done.

Fred Bagley inquired about Act 250 permitting—what is the biggest problem? According to Job he felt the regulations and rules are impossible to live by. Phil Douglas and Tom Soriano also expressed concerns about Act 250 permitting, and how Washington will affect us. Job noted that Vermont has one of the highest amounts of federal money in the budget. About one-half of the Vermont budget is federal money. Job did note that 95 percent of all permits have finally been approved. Larry Courcelle noted that when an issue comes before the Environmental Court, that's where it gets tied up.

Job noted in closing that he feels we have three great Senators. He feels also that we need to amend the Constitution to give us back a voice. In Washington there are a hundred senators. He feels we need to change the Constitution based on counties. In a county like Rutland, Job feels we get left out of any conversation. He felt we also need to change the term for governor from two years to four years, so that a governor can get more done during the term in office.

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As Job departed, Chris directed everyone's attention to the Town Report:

Chris also announced that no materials are to be handed out during this meeting.

ARTICLE 1: Shall the Town authorize the selectmen to acquire by gift or purchase, land for municipal forest, to produce wood products, maintain wildlife habitat, protect water supplies.

Ann Singiser moved to approve Article 1. It was seconded by Tom Soriano, and there being no further discussion, the Article was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 2: Shall the town authorize the Selectboard to set the hourly compensation rate for non-salaried employees, and in the event of an appointment of a town officer at mid-term:

Gerhard Sihler moved to approve Article 2. It was seconded by Steve Singiser, and there being no further discussion, the Article was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 3: To see if the Town will vote the Administrative portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Dick Wilcox, a Selectboard member advised that a big portion of our budget is level funded. The town employees and the selectboard have gone over the budget repeatedly, and have eliminated any problems. The budget is up 1.9 percent; however, if you include the appropriation for \$5,000 for the Boys and Girls Club (Article 8) and the appropriation cited in Article 13 for just over \$1,000, the budget increases to a 2.5 percent increase. Additionally, Dick advised that all twenty-eight (28) projects have now been submitted to FEMA and the State. Our \$645,000 line-of-credit has been reduced down to \$165,000, which should be off-set by FEMA and State monies when they come in.

Vivienne Gulick moved to approve Article 3. It was seconded by Amy Merrill, and there being no further discussion, the Article was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote the Community infrastructure portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Geoff Wells reminded everyone that last year the town approved building a Salt Shed for \$285,000. To date, we have spent \$250,000. It is completed and the old shed will be used for cold storage. The remaining money will be put into repairing the main shop and hopefully we will come in under budget. Geoff advised that this winter we have been running one-half an employee short. Bill and Newt have done a good job.

Amy Merrill moved to approve Article 4. It was seconded by Steve Singiser, and there being no further discussion, the Article was approved.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town replace the Law Enforcement Fund with the Public Safety Fund.

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Larry Courcelle explained that this article is actually only a name change. The selectboard needs permission to do this name change. Previously this was called the Law Enforcement Fund, so Public Safety Fund is just a business name change.

Tom Soriano moved to approve Article 5. It was seconded by Vivienne Gulick, and there being no further discussion, the Article was approved.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote the Public Safety portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the town.

Larry Courcelle explained this is a level funded article with the exception of law enforcement. Personnel issues exist. The last officer, Damien Angelo was offered a job with Castleton for more money. This issue has occurred for years, consequently, a discussion was pursued with the Rutland Sheriff Department to provide our staffing for dispatch, vehicle, and a contract for a 40-hour week sheriff. The cost at the Sheriff Department has gone up. Forty hours at the new rate is more than Mendon can afford. The contract has been cut to 32 hours a week. The cost of maintaining our own Special Officer compared to the Sheriff's Department proved that the Sheriff's Department was less costly. Larry noted that Phil Douglas, our Constable, has written a good report. Our assigned Deputy is Chris Stevenson. Additionally, the police cruiser has been sold.

The Fire Department of Rutland charges us \$60,000 to have a fire truck available for Mendon at all times. Each time a 911 call is placed for a fire truck to go to Mendon, there is an additional charge of \$750 per event. There is another \$35,000 allocated for Fire Department Variables. Phil Douglas pulled this budget together.

Larry advised that the selectboard uses reason and common sense whenever they must decide upon issues in the best interest of Mendon. If there is a special issue, they will seek as much information as possible, and call for a special meeting if necessary.

Justin Lindholm asked what would happen if a fire occurred in Rutland that required use of our designated fire truck. In that event, Rutland would call upon another town to provide an available truck for Mendon. Fred Bagley noted there appears to still be issues with 911 calls and where they direct the call.

Wanda Courcelle moved to approve Article 6. It was seconded by Jennifer Bagley, and there being no further discussion, the Article was approved unanimously.

ARTICLE 7: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,000 for the ARC Rutland Area Serving Citizens with Developmental Disabilities?

Jennifer Bagley would like someone from this organization to present information in the future.

Larry Gold moved to approve Article 7. It was seconded by Steve Singiser.

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Ann Singiser asked if ARC had submitted a report? Sara Tully explained that it is not required to submit a report. Larry Gold said he did know this organization and they have helped people who needed help because of disabilities.

Tom Soriano, Al Wakefield and Shannon Kennelly all felt a representative should be present to talk about their appropriation request. Sara advised that 45 registered Mendon voter signatures have to be secured in order for an appropriation request to be presented at Town Meeting. This is a State statute.

Sara said that she personally does not usually vote for these appropriation requests since she prefers to give to some charities of her own preference not covered by our tax dollars.

Chris Corsones called for a vote on this appropriation. Sixteen voted in favor; twelve voted against. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town appropriate \$5,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County?

Larry Gold stated he felt this was too much. In 2014 the Boys and Girls Club received \$1,000.

Amy Merrill indicated that the Boys and Girls Club was active at Barstow for children from 3:00 until 6:00 p.m. The Club does seek donations from families of the children they serve. When asked if their request was on the Chittenden budget Amy said she did not know.

A lengthy discussion ensued about the Boys and Girls Club involving Geoff Wells, Steve Singiser, Connor Quigley and Vivienne Gulick who asked if we could allocate a specific amount to be used for Barstow Boys and Girls Club only.

Larry Gold made a motion to amend the previous motion. His motion is to approve the amount of the requested appropriation from \$5,000, to \$1,000. Fred Bagley seconded the motion. Gerhard Sihler felt any organization that helps to keep kids off the street is a good idea and he would like to support them with the full amount.

Chris Corsones called for a vote on the amended motion for \$1,000. Fourteen voted in favor; thirteen voted against. The amended motion for \$1,000 was carried.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 for the Marble Valley Regional Transit District (The Bus)?

Jennifer Bagley moved to approve Article 9. It was seconded by Amy Merrill.

A representative from 'The Bus' talked about the number of rides supplied during 2016 of which 4,900 were from Mendon alone. Rod MacCuaig asked how much they were requesting from Killington. The representative indicated a request from Killington was for \$1,000. Rod felt most, if not all of the riders were employees or guests at Killington. A discussion ensued including Jennifer Bagley (who is aware of a lot of people who work at Killington and live in Mendon) and Al Wakefield (who commented on 'The

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Bus' service during Irene) and Shannon Kennelly (who uses 'The Bus') and a new resident (who admired the service which 'The Bus' provides) and she is in favor of supporting 'The Bus'.

Chris Corsones called for a vote on this appropriation. A voice vote indicated the Article was carried.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town appropriate \$550 for RSVP and the Volunteer Center?

Wanda Courcelle moved to approve Article 10. It was seconded by Larry Courcelle.

Wanda explained the services provided by RSVP and the Volunteer Center and related her experience with Dolls and More.

There being no further discussion, a vote on the motion was carried.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town appropriate \$2,600 for the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice?

Amy Merrill moved to approve Article 11. It was seconded by Vivienne Gulick and there being no further discussion, the motion was carried.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,242 for Rutland Mental Health Services formerly Rutland Area Community Services?

Vivienne Gulick moved to approve Article 12. It was seconded by Ann Singiser and there being no further discussion, the motion was carried.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,060 to the Regional Marketing Initiative, a collaboration of the Rutland Regional Chamber of Commerce (RRCC) and the Rutland Economic Development Corporation (REDC) along with area businesses and municipalities with the ultimate goal of growing the economy in our region?

Shannon Kennelly moved to approve Article 13. It was seconded by Fred Bagley.

Tyler Richardson a representative for this organization spoke with regard to the decline in population both in the County as well as the State.

A discussion about the possibilities this organization can achieve followed with Justin Lindholm, Amy Merrill and Larry Gold. Sara Tully said this initiative did present before the Mendon selectboard. They are looking at a 5-year commitment from us, as well as a representative from Mendon to help. Al Wakefield wanted to know, if we give this requested appropriation, will they come back next year and report how it was used. The representative said they will come back next year to report. Fred Bagley felt this might be the best money we've spent in a long time.

There being no further discussion, a vote on the article was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the Town appropriate \$400 for the Southwestern Council on Aging?

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Gerhard Sihler moved to approve Article 14. It was seconded by Ann Singiser and there being no further discussion, the motion was carried.

ARTICLE 15: To elect all necessary Town officers.

The Town Office will be open for voting on Tuesday, March 7, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

ARTICLE 16: To transact any other legal business.

- Fred Bagley noted that in Article 1, the word “and” should be replaced with “or.” Sara will review the wording.
- Tom Soriano said he would like to have someone from each of the requesting organizations present how and who will benefit from the appropriations.
- Larry Courcelle noted that there is always a need for more people from Mendon to volunteer their services. He noted that Betsy Reddy is leaving the Rutland Free Library board in October and we will need someone from Mendon to take her place on the Board of Trustees. Larry will be retiring from the Rutland Planning Commission in 2018. There will be a need there.
- 6196 US Rte 4, a ranch house opposite from the Edelweiss will soon be demolished. Irene damaged the bank and the erosion is within 4 feet of the building. It will be fully funded-Mendon has purchased it from the McDevitts. The demolition is out for bid. Some asbestos is involved. Mendon did not want this property and after discussion, VTrans will take ownership.
- Route 4 from Rutland to Bridgewater will be repaved this year. VTrans diverted the water at the new culvert at Midway Bridge.
- Phil Douglas has been lobbying the selectboard for a new cruiser for sometime, and has gotten some quotes. So, Larry secured and presented Phil with a slightly smaller version of a possible cruiser. Phil was speechless (with the size of the (toy) car..
- Justin Lindholm’s term with the Fish and Wildlife is coming to an end. Sportsmen in Mendon owe Justin a huge debt of gratitude for all his work.

Everyone was asked to help reassemble the room back into its former condition.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Larry Courcelle, Selectboard Chair

Christopher Corsones, Town Moderator

Marie E. Conway, Town Clerk
