

Minutes of the Mendon Special Town Meeting

Monday, October 01, 2018

Mendon Town Office

Selectboard Chair Richard Wilcox called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m. and explained that Chris Corsones was not available to moderate the meeting. He called for nominations from the floor as a moderator would need to be elected by the voters. Sara Tully nominated Jack Kennelly as moderator. Cort Jones seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. The voters unanimously elected Jack Kennelly as moderator.

Jack invited everyone to stand and Pledge Allegiance to the Flag.

Article 1 – Shall the Town give the Selectboard general authority to enter into tax stabilization contracts with owners of commercial property pursuant to 24 VSA §2741 (b)(1)?

R. Wilcox gave a brief history of how and why a Mendon Economic Development Committee (MEDC). He explained that the Selectboard felt this committee was necessary due in part to the decline of the commercial district. He went on to explain that the first resolution of the committee was to recommend the Selectboard adopt a tax stabilization policy. If the policy is approved, the Selectboard will be able to enter into agreements with property owners to encourage investment, reinvestment, development, and revitalization of properties in the Village and Commercial Zoning Districts. This would be in exchange for the resulting increase of municipal taxes to be phased in over time. The Selectboard does not have the authority to stabilize education tax rates. Using an example, Dick illustrated how the program might benefit the Town in long run. Dick also explained that this could help to stabilize or increase the Grand List, which would in turn reduce the tax burden on all Mendon properties.

Discussion followed the presentation. Steve Singiser inquired as to how much this would save taxpayers in the long run. Dick stated that would depend on the contract. Betsy Reddy asked if this would apply to already developed, but currently vacant properties as well. Dick replied that was the case.

Some voters questioned how this worked out for other towns. Dick replied that there are currently 8 other towns in the county who have tax stabilization policies and they have found it to be a successful tool. Dick also noted that the amount of stabilization would be dependent upon the size of the investment. He noted that this would be decided on a case by case basis. If the contractual period is not met, the original amount of taxes would be due with penalty and interest.

In response to Jennifer Bagley's question regarding how the policy would be communicated, Dick replied that it was a secondary goal of MEDC to approach property owners and give them this information. In addition, office staff, the Zoning Administrator, and the Planning Commission would have an application available for interested parties.

Sara Tully moved the question. Cort Jones seconded the motion.

Nancy Gondella pointed out that we still needed a motion to approve the article. Ann Singiser made a motion to approve the article. The motion was seconded by John Rizk and passed unanimously.

Article 2 – Shall the Town create a Mendon Economic Development Reserve Fund and allocate the funds from the Contingency Reserve Fund to the Mendon Economic Development Reserve Fund?

R. Wilcox explained that the Selectboard would like to transfer the \$17k balance from the Contingency Fund to the newly created Mendon Economic Development Reserve Fund. The funds would be used productively for such things as joining organizations that would help promote development within the Town. It could also be used for feasibility and scoping studies for future projects or seed money for matching grant funds. This article will allow the town to remove mostly dormant funds to a more active use.

In response to voter’s questions, Dick explained further that the Contingency Fund would not be eliminated and both funds would probably be allocated additional funds going forward at budget time. The transfer of funds at this time would allow the Town to have seed money for the upcoming building season if needed. Without the transfer, the Town would have to wait until next July when a new budget goes into effect in order to have funds available.

Neil Langer wondered if it might be a good idea to amend the amount to be moved from the contingency fund in order to leave some money in that fund. Further discussion followed.

Sara Tully moved the question. Betsy Reddy seconded the motion.

Cort Jones made a motion to approve Article 2. Betsy Reddy seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Teri Corsones made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:35 p.m. Mary Rizk seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Gondella, Town Clerk

Richard Wilcox, Selectboard Chair

Jack Kennelly, Moderator