

## Mendon Town Informational Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 01, 2021

**Call to order** -The informational meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Selectboard Chair Richard Wilcox.

The Chair of the Town of Mendon Selectboard has found that, due to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Scott as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and pursuant to Addendum 6 to Executive Order 01-20 and Act 92, this public body is authorized to meet electronically. In accordance with Act 92, there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. However, in accordance with the temporary amendments to the Open Meeting Law, I confirm that we are: Providing public access to the meeting by video with additional access offered through telephone. We are using Gotomeeting.com for this remote meeting. All members of the Selectboard have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if desired, participate in the meeting by joining the meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone.

- a) Providing public notice of instructions for accessing the meeting. We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing this meeting, including how to access the meeting using telephone and video in our posted meeting agenda. Instructions have also been provided on the town website at: [www.mendonvt.org](http://www.mendonvt.org).
- b) Providing a mechanism for the public to alert the public body during the meeting if there are problems with access. If anybody has a problem, please e-mail [mendonclerk@comcast.net](mailto:mendonclerk@comcast.net)
- c) Continuing the meeting if necessary. In the event the public is unable to access this meeting, it will be continued to a time and place certain.

**Add/Delete items to the Agenda – Dick Wilcox made a motion to add Representative Jim Harrison and Mendon on the Move to the Agenda. Geoff Wells seconded the motion.** The motion passed unanimously.

**Jim Harrison** – Representative Harrison thanked the Selectboard for allowing him to join the meeting. He mentioned that describing the past year as challenge would be an understatement. He is very optimistic that with the rollout of the vaccine we are approaching the tail end of the crisis. Jim has been assigned to the House Appropriations Committee which reviews all bills which have money issues attached. Jim stated that the Governor’s budget does not rely on new taxes or fees. He spoke of some issues that are being addressed in Montpelier and stated that Dr. Levine & Governor Scott deserve a lot of praise and Town’s a lot of credit for the way they have handled the virus.

Jennifer Bagley thanked Jim for his thorough, consistent, and sometimes humorous newsletters. Teri Corsones thanked Jim for excellent advocacy and wonderful reports.

Chris Corsones thanked office for their efforts in pulling this unusual Town meeting together. He is sure it will work well because of those efforts.

**Mendon on the Move** – Jenna Koloski from the Vermont Council for Rural Development (VCRD) spoke about a Community Visit Program offered by the VCRD. This program is being offered for the first time

this year as a Virtual Program. The goal of the program is to bring people from the community together to discuss issues important to the community. The program then brings professionals from across the State to help create goals, set action plans, and find funding to bring those ideas to fruition.

A steering committee has already met to determine some issues in Town that warrant further discussion. These include, the future of recreation, community connection, identity & sense of place, vitality of the economy, and quality of life & supporting families. Jenna invited everyone to attend a meeting on March 24<sup>th</sup> from 6:00p.m. – 9:00 p.m. and a follow up meeting on April 21<sup>st</sup>. More information will be forthcoming soon.

**Thank you** – Larry thanked Geoff Wells for his seven years of service as a Selectboard member and his 5 years as Fire Warden. The Town is grateful for efforts in a thankless job. The board presented Geoff with local gift certificates as a token of their thanks. Geoff thanked Larry and said that he truly enjoyed being on the board.

**Candidates** – Candidates Chris Corsones, Rich Carlson, Larry Courcelle, Bryan Sell & Valorie Taylor introduced themselves and the positions they were running for.

**Article 1 - Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to set the rate of compensation for non-salaried employees and Town Officers appointed mid-term?** There were no comments or questions regarding this article.

**Article 2 – Shall the Town vote to approve the 2021-2022 Municipal Budget at \$1,211.999?**

Selectboard Chair, Richard Wilcox, presented information regarding the upcoming budget which has a 2% increase over the current budget. He discussed several revenue increases – payment in lieu of taxes, recording fees, and investment interest, as well as expense decreases – equipment hire, and law enforcement. He also discussed some of the expense increases that drove the budget – Administrator Salary, appraisal costs, insurance costs, garage bond principal, and other salary related costs.

Dick stated that the Town ended last fiscal year with a \$155,000 surplus. With that surplus, the town applied \$55,000 into the current 2020-21 budget to reduce taxes. In addition, the Selectboard is recommending that \$25,000 of the surplus be added to revenue for the 2021-22 budget making the budget neutral with a \$0 increase and the remaining \$75,000 be put into the town's contingency. These are articles 3 and 4 on the ballot, respectively.

**Article 3 – Shall the Town retain \$25,000 in surplus funds from the 2019-2020 budget to offset taxes to be collected in the 2021-2022 fiscal year?**

**Article 4 – Shall the Town transfer \$75,000 in surplus funds from the 2019-2020 budget to the Contingency Fund?**

Chris Corsones stated that since all three of the above articles were related and a part of the budget presentation it would be appropriate to discuss them all together. Chris asked the attendees for comments and questions. Al Wakefield stated that a \$9,000 increase for appraisal seems like a lot. Dick Wilcox explained that the increase was due to contract negotiations. Nancy Gondella further explained that the Town had discussed the increase with other appraisers and found it to be fair.

**Article 5 – Shall the Town appropriate \$1,500 for the support of ARC Rutland Area Serving Citizens with Developmental Disabilities to advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities?** There were no comments or questions.

**Article 6 – Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 for the support of the Marble Valley Regional Transit District (The Bus) for public transportation for Mendon residents, visitors, and surrounding communities?** There were no questions or comments.

**Article 7 – Shall the Town appropriate \$700 for the support of the RSVP Retired Senior Volunteer Program which allows older Americans the opportunity to apply their life experience to help meet community needs?** Wanda Courcelle, speaking on behalf of RSVP, thanked the Selectboard for allowing organizations that had been approved last year to be automatically added to this year's ballot without the need for petitions. Wanda discussed some of the activities RSVP supports. These include Bone Builders, community care, assisting seniors with income tax preparation, Operation Dolls and More. Wanda is very involved with Operation Dolls and More. In a normal year, over 20,000 dolls, toys and books are distributed to over 1,500 kids in the county. Wanda asked the taxpayers to support this worthy organization.

Al Wakefield said that it's very nice when organizations ask for money that someone shows up to advocate for their cause.

Rich Carlson said that it's important that representatives are available to state why they need the money. He also congratulated Wanda on the work the organization does.

Tom Soriano thought we said if you want money, you need to show and tell us why. Al Wakefield said people may think differently about showing up if we don't allow the funds.

**Article 8 – Shall the Town appropriate \$1,242 for the support of Rutland Mental Health Services formerly Rutland Area Community Services to ensure early intervention and mental health treatment and support as needed?** There were no questions or comments.

**Article 9 – Shall the Town appropriate \$2,600 for the support of VNA and Hospice of the Southwest Region to provide services when in-home care is needed?** There were no questions or comments.

**Article 10 – Shall the Town appropriate \$600 for the support of the Southwest Council on Aging to be a community force in creating and sustaining opportunities for elders and caregivers?** There were no questions or comments.

**Article 11 – Shall the Town appropriate \$2,500 for the support of Wonderfeet Kids' Museum to foster curiosity and exploration, inspiring creativity and igniting the imagination of children through the power of play?** Danielle Monroe, speaking on behalf of Wonderfeet describe the activities the museum was able to conduct during the past year. Some of these include activity boxes that were created to distribute to children over the summer. Over 10,000 kits were handed out to children. In class programs at area schools, home school programs, and a playgroup for new moms and babies were also among the offerings. Wonderfeet is also working with Mendon on the Move to help make youth feel engaged and want to stay in Vermont as adults.

Jennifer Bagley mentioned a lip sync fundraiser which was held virtually this year but still managed to raise almost as much money as it does when held at the Paramount.

Val Taylor said that Danielle is very involved, her name is everywhere, she does a great job and really cares.

**Other Business –**

Susannah Loffredo introduced herself as a write-in candidate for the school board and asked for voter support.

Tom Soriano asked if Mendon was considering regulating short term rentals. He questioned if the house is rented on a short term basis every day of the year, if it should be regulated and zoned as a hotel. Dick Wilcox stated that we are in the very early stages of looking into it.

Rich Carlson asked for the status of the town wide reappraisal. Sara Tully gave an update saying the reappraisal is coming to an end and booklets should be mailed out in May. She also mentioned that visits are not being conducted in person, but by answering questions via telephone.

Rich Carlson asked about the status of the ordinance banning the discharge of firearms in Mendon. Sara Tully gave a history of how the ordinance came to be considered and let people know that a copy of the draft ordinance was available on the Town website. The ordinance has not yet been adopted and will continue to be considered at future Selectboard meetings.

Tom Soriano asked if people there is a problem in Mendon with people moving here full time but not being considered full time from a tax perspective. Sara Tully explained that if people wished to be considered full time, they would need to declare full time residency and file their income taxes here. Mendon's residential property tax rate is lower than its non-residential property tax rate, which is not the case in all towns.

Chris Corsones announced that polls would be open on Tuesday March 2, 2021 at the Mendon Town Garage from 8:00 am – 7:00 pm.

The meeting adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

(Approximately 35 people attended the meeting.)

Respectfully submitted,

\_\_\_\_\_ Richard Wilcox, Selectboard Chair

\_\_\_\_\_ Geoff Wells, Selectboard

\_\_\_\_\_ Larry Courcelle, Selectboard

\_\_\_\_\_ Nancy Gondella, Acting Clerk