

Minutes of the Mendon Town Meeting

Monday, February 29, 2016

Mendon Mountainview Lodge

Larry Courcelle, Chairman of the Mendon Selectboard, opened the meeting at 6:08 p.m., since Chris Corsones, the elected Town and School Moderator was unable to be in attendance. Larry asked everyone to rise for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag. Thereafter, Larry asked for nominations for Town and School Moderator for this evening's meeting. Earlier Jack Kennelly, an attorney, had indicated that he was available for nomination. Sara Tully moved to nominate Jack Kennelly and it was seconded by Tom Soriano. No other nominations were offered.

Sara moved to appoint Jack Kennelly as Moderator of the School District Meeting. It was seconded by Tom Soriano and unanimously approve.

Jack thanked the Mendon Mountainview Lodge and Ski Mendon Management LLC for allowing Mendon to hold the Town Meeting at their location. Jack then introduced Job Tate, the Mendon representative in Montpelier. Job informed everyone that he and his wife had welcomed their second son this past year. Job handed out a flyer to give everyone an idea of what he considers his top 5 priorities:

1. **To put Vermont back on a sane, sound and sustainable fiscal path.** Job wants to stop spending more than we take in. We need to spend within our needs.
2. **To reduce the property tax burden on Vermonters by addressing runaway education costs.** Job feels we have a spending model that is antiquated. Job noted that our student population continues to drop. As an example in 2005-06 the student enrollment was 93,925. Last year that number had dropped to 84,446, a decrease of 10%. Our special education and staff to student ratio (although lowest in the nation) are the main reason for our higher costs.
3. **To provide access to quality healthcare which all Vermonters can afford.** Job feels that moving to the federal exchange makes sense and the State government should develop policies so that businesses offer affordable health plans to their employees. Job is convinced that Montpelier should not add a tax on independent doctors and dentists. Vermont needs more primary physicians.
4. **To promote economic development and job creation while retaining existing business.** The Fee Bill if passed would increase overall fees by \$28,000,000 which would impact many small businesses. Before Job will vote on this bill, it will have to "do no harm." According to Job, Montpelier needs to focus on places other than Chittenden.
5. **To reduce the burden on local government.** Job advised that the budget is so tight, and Montpelier just transferred costs to municipalities.

Matt Conway voiced his concerns about the student to teacher ratio. According to a recent study of worldwide schools, the U.S. does not rank very high. Matt asked how far the student/teacher ratio was aiming. Job stated 4 to 1. Job noted that the ratio and special education are intertwined. We don't want to give up quality education, but the funding model may be the problem.

Matt's second concern was around Medicare (federally run) and Medicaid (State run). One-third of the population is on Medicare, while 40% are Medicaid. The State is underfunded and cannot make ends meet.

Page 2

Mendon Town Meeting

February 29, 2016

Lynn Sandage expressed her frustration with events in Washington. Job said he understood the frustration people were feeling.

Erica McLaughlin identified herself as a principal and member of the school board. She felt that the Picas report is one shortsighted view and wants Job to take that expression back to share at Montpelier. Job stated that the Barstow reputation in Montpelier is 'sterling.'

Bert Winans from Cream Hill Road talked about the number of homes on his road on the market today as opposed to 13 years ago. Gerhard Sihler thanked Job for sharing the Montpelier news. He too was concerned with the high cost of living in Vermont and likened it to his experience when he lived in Connecticut in the 80's and 90's. Gerhard would like to see more internships supported by schools and businesses which in turn would reap trained, skilled future workers who would bring more industry to Vermont.

Fred Bagley noted a VTrans report with a lot of road projects in Chittendon County. Jennifer Bagley asked Job if anyone else has voluntarily taken a pay in salary. Job responded not to his knowledge.

Larry Courcelle talked with Job about ACT 64, clean water and discharge. Mendon road will be impacted and we will have to budget for this in 2017-18. Job responded that this will be a municipal cost, however, Mendon, Chittendon and Killington should be fine. These areas are not causing any problem,

Vivienne Gulick stated that as a mother of a high school student about to go to college next year, she is very conscious of household expenses as compared to wages. Is it any wonder why our educated children are not returning to Vermont after graduation? Job noted that we need to focus on economic development.

Gerhard Sihler asked Job what his feelings were about marijuana. Job stated he is opposed to the legalization of marijuana, however, he thinks it is very likely to become law. He believes the use of marijuana for medical purposes is good.

Job thanked everyone for their support and departed. At 6:48 p.m. Jack turned the meeting over to the Mendon School District for their portion of the evening.

As the approved Town Moderator, Jack Kennelly re-opened the Town Meeting portion of the evening at 7:15 p.m.

Jack introduced the Selectboard members: Larry Courcelle, Chair, Geoff Wells, and recently appointed Dick Wilcox.

Larry Courcelle reviewed both Article 1 and Article 2 presented in the Warning.

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, provide forest recreation and for conservation education purposes?

Sara Tully moved to approve Article 1. Vivienne Gulick seconded the motion and there being no discussion the vote unanimously approved the motion.

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 office at mid-term?

Patti Lancaster moved to approve Article 2. It was seconded by Sara Tully and there being no discussion, the vote unanimously approved the motion.

Larry noted that Caroline Schneider, who is the Town Treasurer, has offered her resignation due to many other commitments. Mendon is very grateful for her contributions. Additionally, Phil Douglas is also thanked for his time and efforts in mowing the recreation with his own tractor. We will be looking for someone at least 18 years of age to do our mowing in the future.

Larry noted that on the Rutland Regional Planning Commission, the next meeting will be March 23, at 6:30 p.m., in the Town Office—not March 9th as previously scheduled.

Larry thanked all the volunteers, election officials, members of various committees, boards, etc., and reminded everyone that we are always looking for volunteers. This year's town report is dedicated to two generous people: Matt Conway for his 10 years of service on the School Board, and Greg Smith, the previous Selectboard Chair, for his many years of service as well.

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

Larry reviewed the three sections of the budget: Administration Budget, Infrastructure Budget and the Public Safe Budget.

Gerhart Sihler moved to approve Article 3. Patti Lancaster seconded the motion and there being no further discussion, the vote unanimously approved the motion.

Article 4. To see if the Town will vote the Community Infrastructure portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Sara Tully moved to approve Article 4. Matt Conway seconded the motion. A chart was displayed by Geoff Wells depicting proposed culvert repairs. Geoff noted that Route 4 will not have to be closed, and this will be a 2-year project. In 2017 we will be repairing Bridge 2 on Meadowlake Drive. The other bridge is at the Junction of Route 4 and Wheelerville Road. The largest portion of the infrastructure budget is for replacements of culverts and bridges. Thanks are offered to Bill Ellis and his crew for doing a great job for the Town. Dick Wilcox commented on the Irene/FEMA projects. It is a top priority to get this wrapped up. It is important to get everything filed and get the money in. Dick stated that while he is coming in at the end of this project, he observed how well documented everything is, given the tsunami of paperwork caused by Irene.

Page 4

Mendon Town Meeting

February 29, 2016

Arnold Kirbach asked about the ravine and what was going to be done with the land above it. The State is buying the ravine and the land up top.

Bill Ellis brought the town's attention to the deterioration of the Salt and Sand Shed. The tinsel strength of the shed walls is faltering due to faulty initial installation. The estimate to repair the shed is approximately \$250,000 plus an addition \$250,000 to seal the walls. An alternative plan was developed by Phil Douglas, a professional engineer, and Bill Ellis. The town uses about 600 tons of salt per year, which must be stored inside. The proposed alternative new shed will be made of fabric and steel, for one half the cost of cited repairs. The installation can be done with our current town crew, as opposed to an outside contractor. Additionally, we will be able to take our salt delivery before winter. A \$285,000 bond is proposed to fund the shed structure over a 15-year repayment with a 2.44% interest rate. For homeowners this will amount to approximately \$14.20 a year. The logical approach is the new structure. Larry described repairs need at the garage as well.

Vivienne Gulick asked if this proposal took demolishing and removing the old shed into account?

Jennifer Bagley asked if the structure would be big enough so that no stacking against the walls would be necessary. Larry advised that is what is intended. Justin Lindholm asked if the shed would have doors and a gate.

Phil Douglas described the fabric as being available in several colors, however, white allows the most light to pass through, which will provide more interior lighting.

Millie Steingress noted that it is a good idea to do this project now, while the interest rates are so low.

Fred Bagley was concerned about the old salt shed's lifespan. Larry indicated that it would probably be safe as long as nothing is pressing up against the walls, for many more years.

Phil explained the advantage to doing the work ourselves. The design calls for concrete block which is a cost savings. These can be bought locally.

Bill Tager wondered if hail could damage the building. Jody Wilcox asked if this building was going into the same place as the garage? Phil responded that it is. One more advantage is that, if necessary, the building can be taken down.

A vote was called for the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Article 5. To see if the Town will vote the Public Safety portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Matt Conway moved to approve Article 5. It was seconded by Tom Soriano and there being no further discussion the vote unanimously approved the motion.

Page 5

Town Meeting

February 29, 2015

Article 6. Shall the Town appropriate \$1,000 for the ARC Rutland Area Serving Citizens with Development Disabilities?

Mary Marriott moved to approve Article 6. It was seconded by Patti Lancaster and the vote produced one nay but was carried.

Article 7. Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 for the Marble Valley Regional Transit District (The Bus)?

Minga Dana review the various services provided to the citizens of Mendon.

Patti Lancaster moved to approve Article 7. It was seconded by Jennifer Bagley and the vote produced one nay, but was carried.

Article 8. Shall the Town appropriate \$500 for RASVP and The Volunteer Center?

Wanda Courcelle advised that she has worked with RSVP for many years and confirms the good work done by the group.

Larry Courcelle moved to approve Article 8. It was seconded by Phil Douglas and the vote unanimously approved the motion.

Article 9. Shall the Town appropriate \$2,600 for the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice?

Phil Douglas moved to approve Article 9. It was seconded by Gerhard Sihler and the vote produced two nays but was carried.

Article 10. Shall the Town appropriate \$1,242 for Rutland Mental Health Services formerly Rutland Area Community Services?

Teri Corsones moved to approve Article 10. It was seconded by Larry Courcelle and the vote produced 1 nay but was carried.

Article 11. Shall the Town appropriate \$400 for the Southwestern Council on Aging?

Patti Lancaster moved to approve Article 10. It was seconded by Gerhard Sihler and the vote unanimously approved the motion.

Article 12. To elect all necessary Town Officers.

Election will take place at the Mendon Town Hall on Tuesday, March 1, 2016. Polls will be open from 8:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m.

Page 6

Town Meeting

February 29, 2016

Article 13. To transact any other legal business.

Bert Winans noted in the future he would like to suggest that all hand-outs be placed on the table outside the meeting room, rather than being passed around during the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Larry Courcelle, Selectboard Chair

Jack Kennelly, Town Moderator

Marie E. Conway, Town Clerk
