

Minutes of the Mendon Town Meeting
Monday, March 4, 2013
Mendon Mountainview Lodge

Moderator Christopher Corsones called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. After leading the pledge of allegiance, he mentioned the dedication of the Town Report to Rob Eaton and thanked Manager Patrick Boendl, Ski Mendon Management, LLC and The Mendon Mountainview Lodge for hosting our meeting.

Rich Carlson gave a brief description of the Energy Audits, available to townsfolk through the Heat Squad, and invited everyone to enter a raffle to win the free energy audit.

Jennifer Bagley invited everyone to a one act play, which she wrote and is directing at MSJ on April third. A few of our townsfolk are featured in this play about tropical storm Irene.

Chris Corsones turned the meeting over to Ann Gallivan, State Representative, for a legislative update:

She has been placed on the Transportation Committee, and stated that due to Tropical Storm Irene 24% of the roads, and 9% of the bridges in the state are in poor condition. Gas tax makes up about 25% of the Transportation budget, and it is going to be raised 2% in 2013 and another 2% in 2014.

There was much discussion over the education bill, which will add a 5-1/2% increase to the state property tax rate, and over a 5% increase on the homestead tax rate. Many spoke up about the need for fiscal conservatism.

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?

There was a very brief explanation that this is a standard article. Tom Soriano moved the question, and Matt Conway seconded. It was passed unanimously.

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?

Larry Courcelle explained the reasoning behind this article. Summer help on the road crew and the Treasurer being replaced mid-stream this spring were used as examples. Judy Barone brought up "insider hiring". Judy Barone questioned how the select board

would make these decisions, and how they would know what wages would be appropriate. The discussion satisfied her questions. Ted Pratt made a suggestion that he could improve the understanding of this article moving forward.

Gary Sihler moved the question, and Steve Singiser seconded. It was passed unanimously.

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

Gregory Smith made comments about the overall spending increases in all three spending categories – administration, infrastructure, and public safety. Total spending has been budgeted to increase by \$22K and the primary reasons are the equipment fund and the bridge fund. It was a very challenging budget to prepare.

Smith commended Nancy Merrill on the excellent job she is doing as Delinquent Tax Collector, referring to the small list of tax payers which remain delinquent. He explained that as our expenses grow, more people will be paying late. Smith pointed out that over the last two years delinquent tax payments increased from \$100K to \$130K. This shows us that more taxpayers are struggling to pay on time, yet they are paying, and having to pay the 1% and 8% late fees. We should recognize this as we review our budgets and approve spending in the near future.

The future of “Audi’s”, the Old Town Hall, originally built in 1885, was discussed. Ann Singiser spoke about the committee formed to look into its’ repair and future use. Gary Sihler mentioned the possible use of the building as a community center, and that it would be frequently used by the very active “Mendon Seniors” group. The project has been put on the back burner, as grant funding cannot be received without the town having made a decision on a use for the property.

Another reason for the increase in the Administrative portion of the budget is the increase in the cost of auditing. The Town will require an additional “single audit” this year because the monies received from federal sources exceeds \$500K in any one year resulting from the FEMA projects. We will likely have this requirement for the next two years.

The Select Board is requesting a one time, \$500 increase per person, to help compensate them for the increase in time necessary to handle the regular Town business, along with the large increase in time for the FEMA projects. A question was raised as to why such a large increase was proposed by the SB for the SB – over 30%. Smith responded that it was based on the increased volume of administrative time spent on the storm recovery efforts on all the projects. Support for the one-time increase was raised by other attendees.

Matt Conway moved the Article, and Judy Barone seconded. The motion was carried unanimously.

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

Bridge 11, closed immediately after Irene, is eligible for a \$175,000 grant, and core samples will be taken on March 5, 2013. The engineer is working on the design, and the project will go out to bid this spring. The old Medway bridge deck will be used, if possible, to cut down on the cost.

Eight years ago today, was the date when we moved into the new Town Office. We refinanced the bond used to pay for the new office, saving \$2,740 over the remainder of the payment schedule.

Tracy Adams received credit on the excellent job that he has done in the development of the Mendon Recreation Field. He applied for, and received a \$14,000 grant. Work on the field continued through most of the summer. There was some discussion about the new "Barstow Youth Club", and the group was assured by Matt Conway that there was an equal shift of funds between Chittenden and Mendon.

There will be a \$10,000 increase in the equipment fund. Fred Bagley brought up the issue of "equipment-sharing", in which we already participate, with the wood chipper, shared between Mendon and Rutland Town. The select board has discussed the idea of reducing equipment purchasing by sharing with other towns, or buying used equipment. We believe that we have planned adequately for buying new equipment so lesser costs will truly be a benefit.

The Irene Recovery Project status was discussed. We still have six incomplete Projects. All six have completed engineering plans, but there is a significant difference between Mendon's cost estimates and FEMA funding – over \$300K. Extensions on most of these projects are granted through 2015. The Town of Mendon opened a two million dollar line of credit at 1% interest in October 2011. It has now been reduced to 1.5 million, and all borrowing must be repaid by October 2013. Long term borrowing will have to be done, and will cost each taxpayer between two to nineteen cents on the dollar, depending on whether we borrow for one, five or ten years. The select board is reviewing bonding and bank loans to fund the town portion of these projects. We continue to challenge FEMA and the state for cost reductions and funding increases to reduce an anticipated \$450,000 overall cost to the town.

Steve Singiser moved the article; Gary Sihler seconded it, and it passed unanimously.

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

Ted Pratt asked why the Constable's pay was decreased. It was explained that the stipend is to cover the statutory duties of the job, and that someone could be elected who did not have the certification to perform the job. Mary Marriott asked about contracting with the sheriff's department, and was told that we will look into this again in the future, when the time comes for a new vehicle. There are various factors to consider when hiring another agency. We hired the Sheriff when an employee was out on leave. We got approximately two third's the coverage due to the wage difference. We look at our options and make decisions about that the best overall decision is for the town.

Rheba Haley moved the article; Matt Conway seconded, and it passed unanimously.

Article 6 - Shall the Town appropriate \$1,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County?

Ted Pratt moved the article; Judy Barone seconded. There was some discussion, and it was carried.

Article 7 - Shall the Town Appropriate \$750 for BROCC – Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?

Ted Pratt moved the article; Gary Sihler seconded; and it was carried.

Article 8 - Shall the Town Appropriate \$230 for RSVP and The Volunteer Center?

Ted Pratt moved the article; Wanda Courcelle seconded; and it was carried.

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

Ted Pratt moved the article; Rheba Haley seconded; and it was carried.

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

Ted Pratt moved the article; Judy Barone seconded; and it was carried.

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

Gary Sihler moved the article; Ted Pratt seconded; and it was carried.

Article 12 - To elect all necessary Town Officers.

Chris Corsones confirmed with the Town Clerk that the polls are open from 8:00a.m. until 7:00p.m. March 5, 2013 to elect the Officers by Australian ballot.

Chris Corsones introduced the candidate for Town Treasurer, Caroline Schneider. Greg Smith commented that he was on the ballot for another three year term on the select board; and the candidate for School Board, Jonathan Reynolds, was also recognized.

Article 13 - To transact any other legal business.

A “thank you” was heard for the paving of Sherwood Drive.

Moderator, Chris Corsones, adjourned the Town Portion of the meeting at 7:56p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

_____ Selectboard Chair

_____ Moderator

_____ Town Clerk