

**Minutes of the Mendon Town Meeting
Monday, March 3, 2014
Mendon Mountview Lodge**

Moderator Christopher Corsones called the Mendon Town Meeting to order at 7:22 p.m. Chris welcomed Geoffrey Wells, the newest Selectboard member and immediately launched into the proposed Articles.

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?

Patti Lancaster made a motion to approve Article I. It was seconded by Matt Conway and there being no further discussion, it 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?

Mr. Seihler motioned to approve Article II. It was seconded by Patti Lancaster and there being no further discussion, it 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.

Greg Smith took the floor and noted that in the September-October, 2013 timeframe, two positions, a Selectboard member and the Town Clerk position became vacant. The Selectboard interviewed candidates for both positions, and ultimately in January, appointed Geoffrey Wells as a Selectboard member. Marie Conway was appointed as Town Clerk.

Greg referred everyone to page 12, to review the budget summary. Greg noted that it is slightly higher this year, both in the school and municipal budget. Last year our delinquency was about \$131,000; this year it's about \$115,000. Anyone paying a delinquent bill is paying a 1% late fee as well as another 8% after the March deadline. Greg noted that in 2006-2009, we had an 8% delinquency rate on average. In the last four years, it has gone to 18% delinquency. (Approximately one out of five dollars coming in late.)

Greg explained that on page 26, the number of delinquent accounts turned over to our tax collector show a 14% increase over last year. There are 11 properties listed as delinquent; last year there were six. Greg noted that Nancy Merrill does a good job of managing this for us..

Greg said a town resident asked a question as to why we are spending so much money on Wheelerville Road. Greg said this is something we need to consider. Should we leave this as a Class 3 Road or move it to a Class 4, which might cost us less.

Another example is the town report, which is mailed out to every voter in town. It costs over \$2,000 to print and distribute these books. Possibly we need to make a different decision. We're considering having copies available at this meeting, and having books available at the Town Office, or putting the whole thing on our website, which would reduce our costs by at least half. These are the things we have to consider. Greg said perhaps delivering our information and services on the website would help reduce our costs. Greg encouraged everyone to use the website.

Neil Langer asked (on page 26) about the \$16,400 in delinquent taxes. Greg explained \$16,000 collected was not specifically related to just this year. They could have been for any year. That is the money that came in on a cash basis, it doesn't mean it was all related to just that one year. The delinquent taxes get turned over to Nancy after the tax deadline, March 10. What she hasn't collected by the time the book is printed is what shows up in there as \$16,400.

Geoff Wells addressed the administration budget on pages 12-13.

- Election expenses are up due to the fact that we will have 3 elections. In 2013 we only had 1 election.
- The town shop (next door to the Town Hall) was surveyed for \$1,000 to see whether to fix it up or how to deal with it.
- Office equipment reserves were increased \$1,500 to prepare to replace one or two computers along with a copying machine in the near future.
- The overall costs are up 1.1%, which includes a 2% increase for salaries and the town is now participating in the Vermont Health Connect Healthcare.
- There could be an increase in legal expense this year because of a possible new roadway in the town. Geoff turned the floor over to Fred Bagley to discuss this possible new roadway.

Fred commented on the recognition of Mendon by the State of Vermont, and further discussed the main route through Mendon, Route 4. Fred offered a proposal to create a Town Green just off Route 4, between the current Route 4 and old Route 4. With overviews, Fred reviewed the properties along the route which are currently for sale. Fred felt this might be an opportunity to create a recognizable Town Green which will identify Mendon. Additionally, he reviewed the history and ownership of the main route through Mendon. Fred has provided some handouts if anyone is interested in taking a look at the area proposed.

Neil Langer referred to page 13 regarding elimination of Listers. Where is the expense for Lister or for Spencer? He couldn't find that expense amount. Greg noted that listers

are not paid positions. The services of Spencer Potter, the appraiser, are ongoing and so it is not a new cost. Appraisals services are \$9,000. On page 30 there is a 2013 report which explains the process, background, and the listers approval of this elimination.

Charlene Godair, Chair for the Listers, reviewed the listers function in conjunction with the services of the professional appraiser. She advised there will be no change in the review of taxes on properties. Sara Tully noted that the appraiser is under contract, and the Selectboard oversees all contracts. If there is a problem with the contracted services, then the Selectboard would address that contract. However, if a person is not happy with their appraisal, there is a grievance process that goes all the way to the State level.

Chris called for a vote on Article III. Patti Lancaster moved to approve the administrative portion of the budget. John Haley seconded the motion and there being no further discussion, it was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 4: Shall the town replace the Bridge fund with a Bridge and Culvert Fund?

Larry Courcelle advised that the Selectboard proposed renaming the bridge fund to include installation and repair of both bridges and culverts. In the past to replace an 18" culvert might cost about \$5,000. Today things have changed. When it comes to replacing culverts, a hydraulic study is done. Engineers then sizes the type of culvert needed. The \$5,000 culvert may now become a concrete box culvert with concrete wing wall 5' x 8'. That \$5,000 could now become \$50,000. Instead of keeping the culvert monies in the infrastructure budget, we need permission to put it into the bridge fund so that it can be better monitored. There are currently about 200 culverts.

Phil Douglas stated that he and Justin had done an inventory of the missing culverts after Irene. One of the issues was that the GPS coordinates were put on them by the regional planning commission, which used a different basis for location than the town used. None of the culverts had any kind of identifiers in the field. If it was damaged or not in the location they had listed, it was a problem. Phil thinks the town should allocate some money towards identifying the culverts with a number or something to help us find them if another Irene occurs. Larry stated that the Rutland Regional Planning Commission GPS is available to us at any time. Box culverts were still in place after the storm on Wheelerville Road.

Steve Singiser moved to approve Article 4. It was seconded by John Haley, and there being no further discussion, it was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 5: Shall the Town combine the Backhoe Fund, Equipment Fund, Grader Fund and Truck Fund into one Highway Equipment Fund?

There are currently individual accounts for each of the funds, which were established in the 1990's. Greg referred to page 18, the grid used to track purchases. Using reserve funds has served the town well by leveling out expenses for large purchases. We are asking permission to combine these accounts into one account to better manage these accounts. Greg said there are more details available if anyone would like a copy..

Carol Renfrow moved to approve Article 5. It was seconded by Mike Tully and there being no further questions, it was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 6: To see if the Town will vote the Community Infrastructure portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Larry noted that the recreation budget is the same this year.

- Tracy Adams will be a program director for the town of Chittenden and town of Mendon. The gym for adult programs has always been paid for by Chittenden. They have asked us to chip in this year. We need to know how many Mendon residents use this recreation program.
- For Field day, the ball field on South Mendon Road has a \$2,000 allocation.
- There is \$2,500 allocated for the Barstow youth club;
- \$2,000 for a shared program with Chittenden.
- There is a \$500 miscellaneous allocation, as well as a
- \$1,000 recreation reserve fund,
- totaling \$7,000. However it is \$8,000 with the reserve fund.
- The Fishing Derby has always been opened up the Chittenden, and in turn Chittenden contributes up to \$750.
- Equipment higher is down this year; roadside mowing is down--done once during the summer months.
- For road sweeping at the end of winter, these costs are down.
- The Falls Road – The plowing is hired out and performed at the direction of the road commissioner. When it reaches a certain level, we have a contractor who comes in to plow.
- Robinwood—for years, the section belonging to Mendon had been taken care of by Killington at a cost to us of \$2,500 for the winter. Recently, a new Killington road commissioner looked things over and did a cost analysis and came up with a new figure. Bill and Sara decided to review this work and they came up with a figure of \$4,000. But we still have to get rid of the snow. Mendon contacted the Killington manager and said we'd do it ourselves. However, Killington decided they would do the work for \$4,000, and so Killington is now taking care of it for \$4,000, a higher cost, but still a good deal with the snow removal.

Greg addressed some changes in the reserve/infrastructure fund on page 14,

- Highways and roads was reduced by \$10,000 this year and in years going forward.
- Bridges and culverts will be combined. \$10,000 was moved from Highway over into the Bridge and Culvert fund to build up some reserve to fund work not funded by grants.
- Irene Fund—we maintained the \$50,000 contribution to reserve fund that we had done for two previous years.
- We purchased a new truck in October, 2013. We sold the old one to New Hampshire and got a pretty good price.
- There were 6 projects to be done last year at this time. Nothing had yet been started. Because we were disputing the funding with FEMA. The changes shown on the overhead indicated by Greg, show what prices were and what they are available now.
- Greg described details on the various bridges and their conditions. He discussed how the \$260,000 from FEMA will be used on our roadways.
- On Upper Notch Road, we had to challenge the State on the funding. We know we will not replace that bridge, and repairing the slide area will be cost prohibitive. We wanted to apply this money to an alternative project. We would have \$260,000 to work with, to possibly improve Falls Road to a class 4 road. FEMA does not fund road repairs less than class 3 standards, so we may use this funding to pave Some of our normal town paving projects. Because we have already set aside funds toward these paving projects, we can utilize these moneys to improve Falls Road, and set a plan over a few years instead of the deadline set by FEMA.

Neil Langer asked about the plans we considered to fix the road on Upper Notch Road down to the River? Greg said they looked at carving back into the hillside as well. However it would not improve the situation, and is not cost effective. Sara stated that this is Federal Forest land and the road is deteriorating down and up stream as well.

Steve Singiser suggested that Neil and the Selectboard discuss this at some future meeting so that we can move on with the meeting.

Neil asked if the \$50,000 contribution to the Irene reserve fund was in the budget. Yes, this seems adequate since the State will hold Mendon responsible for 3% of their grand list about, \$55,000, and we expect some additional expenses from some projects. We will have a better understanding of total expenses later this calendar year..

Fred Bagley asked if year-round residents live on Falls Road? There are 2 year round residents.

Neil asked about the increase in the bridge repair. Greg said when bridges 14 and 20 were done in the 1990's, the cost was about \$350,000 to \$375,000 each. Bridge 24 completed in 2012 cost \$775,000. It just keeps getting more expensive. Engineering costs and building costs keep escalating.

Matt Conway moved to approve Article 6, subject to revision once we consider the other articles on appropriations. It was seconded by Charlene Godair, and there being no further discussion, it was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 7: To see if the Town will vote the Public Safety portion of the budget to meet expenses and liabilities of the Town.

Larry Courcelle advised that Scott Bradley has decided to not seek re-election as Town Constable, Director of Emergency Management for our town, nor as Forest Fire Warden. Scott will be spending more time with his family. The town thanks Scott for all he has done for Mendon, and we will miss his efforts.

Nelson Tift has also resigned as a Special Officer in Mendon. He did a great job and thanks him for all his work.

We contacted the Rutland County Sheriff's Department to fill the gap for us in the meantime. They will be spending 20 hours per week in Mendon, and will do an analysis of the 5 year that tells us what the State Police and the Rutland County Sheriff's Department has done for us. That comes out of our tax dollars which we send to Montpelier each year. We will know when they're in town, what they did, how many citations issued, and if they have to go to Court. The interim contract is for \$35 an hour for the cruiser, the deputy sheriff, all expenses rolled into one. We decided to high them for 20 hours a week. They will be in Mendon 4 days a week, 5 hours a day; we've asked for a 3 day stint -- one hour driving through all of Mendon and the other 4 hours on Rte 4. On the 4th day, 5 hours on Rte 4 traffic control and some time on TownLine Road. If we go into a long term contract the price goes down to \$33 an hour. The Selectboard is analyzing the product from the Rutland County Sheriffs department versus hiring another Special Officer. We are currently interviewing now and hope to make a decision shortly.

Phil Douglas is running unopposed for town Constable. He has experience with a sheriff's department in California.

Mike Barone noted that a lot of visitors and tourists had died in accidents on Route 4 before Officer Tift's control of speed on the highway. If we control our speed, those travelling behind us would have to travel at the same correct speed. Route 4 is 45 mph and needs to be observed. Patti Lancaster said that she has motioned to more than one tailgater to slow down. Sue Blish objected to ticketing at 37-38 miles per hour. It brings a lot of ill-will.

Neil asked if the \$6,000 line item was to replace the officer. Larry stated we would have to pay more than we had previously paid, and possibly additional academy training will be needed.

The Rutland County Sheriff's Department representative gave a summary of the duties for which they are responsible. He acknowledged that the traffic on Route 4 is very heavy. Larry expressed a welcome to the Sheriff's representative.

Laura Coppola Zmurko asked if she should call the Rutland County Sheriff if there was an emergency. Sara advised Laura to call 911 in case of an emergency.

Sue Blish stated that the Town could eliminate duplicate efforts. Perhaps we could consolidate some of our services. Patrolling at 8 or 9 in the morning is not effective. She suggested patrolling at 2 or 3 in the morning when she feels things happen. The sheriff's representative said they patrol at varying hours so that an observer could not predict when the sheriff would be there.

Carol Renfrow moved to approve Article 7. It was seconded by Charlene Godair and there being no further discussion, it was unanimously approved.

ARTICLE 8: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,000 for the Boys and Girls Club of Rutland County?

Rheba Haley moved to approve Article 8. It was seconded by John Haley. There was one Nay. There being no further discussion, the vote was carried.

ARTICLE 9: Shall the Town appropriate \$750 for BROCC - Community Action in Southwestern Vermont?

Patti Lancaster moved to approve Article 9. It was seconded by Mike Barone. There was one Nay. There being no further discussion, the vote was carried.

ARTICLE 10: Shall the Town appropriate \$1,200 for the Marble Valley Regional Transit District (The Bus)?

Mr. Seihler moved to approve Article 10. It was seconded by Ann Singiser.

Fred Bagley wondered if The Bus really helped Mendon residents. Mr. Seihler noted that the Mendon Seniors use The Bus frequently for day trips. The representative for the

Transportation was present. Since she was not a town resident, Chris asked for unanimous consent to hear from her. Everyone agreed. Jennifer Vincente advised that Mendon residents represent 6500 rides. There being no further discussion, a vote was called. There was one Nay. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 11: Shall the Town appropriate \$500 for the Mentor Connector?

Wanda Courcelle moved to Approve Article 11. It was seconded by Laura Coppola Zmurka. There being no further discussion, a vote was requested. There was one Nay. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 12: Shall the Town appropriate \$230 for RSVP and The Volunteer Center?

Ann Singiser moved to approve Article 12. It was seconded by Mike Barone. Phil asked where is the Volunteer Center? Wanda Courcelle advised there is more than one center that carries out many services. There being no further discussion, a vote was requested. There was one Nay. The motion carried.

ARTICLE 13: Shall the Town appropriate \$2,600 for the Rutland Area Visiting Nurse Association and Hospice?

Charlene Godair moved to approve Article 13. It was seconded by Ann Singiser. There being no further discussion, a vote was requested. There was one Nay. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 14: Shall the town appropriate \$1,242 for Rutland Mental Health Services formerly Rutland Area Community Services?

John Haley moved to approve Article 14. It was seconded by Charlene Godair. There being no further discussion, a vote was requested. There was one Nay. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 15: Shall the Town appropriate \$400 for the Southwestern Council on Aging?

Charlene Godair moved to approve Article 15. It was seconded by Mr.Seihler. There being no further discussion, a vote was requested. There was one Nay. The motion was carried.

ARTICLE 16: Shall the Town authorize the elimination of the office of Lister and replace it with a professional certified assessor appointed by the Selectboard who shall have the same powers, discharge the same duties, proceed in the discharge thereof in the same manner, and be subject to the same liabilities as are prescribed for listers or the board of listers under the provisions of Title 32?

This will be voted upon by Australian Ballot at the Town Hall on Tuesday, March 4, 2014. Questions have already been answered.

ARTICLE 17: To elect all necessary Town Officers.

This will be voted upon by Australian Ballot at the Town Hall on Tuesday, March 4, 2014.

ARTICLE 18: To transact any other legal business.

Mike Barone wanted to be sure that we are not giving something up by eliminating the Listers. Down the road, Mike was concerned that we might not have the same respect for Spencer. Charlene Godair said we are not giving anything up, because Spencer has always done a good job. Carol Renfrow reminded Mike that the Selectboard has control of Spencer’s contract, and can change the contract if we are dissatisfied. This action is proposed by the State Legislature; it is not a Selectboard initiative.

When asked, no one offered themselves as a grand juror. Neil noted there was no one on the ballot for Justice of the Peace. Sara Tully advised that when a vacancy occurs, a replacement must be certified by the Governor. The previous Justice of the Peace, Ira, was affiliated with the Republican party. The Republican Party will name the nominee. Charlene Godair has volunteered to fill that vacancy until November, when it will be filled at the General Election.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted;

Gregory Smith, Selectboard Chair

Christopher Corsones, Moderator

Marie E. Conway, Town Clerk
