

Minutes of Town Meeting
March 06, 2023
VTRANS Building

32 Voters Present

Moderator Chris Corsones called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. After reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, Chris went over the rules for the meeting.

With permission from the audience, State Representative Jim Harrison updated the voters on what is being discussed in Montpelier. Jim mentioned that after redistricting, he now represents the Towns of Chittenden, Mendon, Killington, and Pittsfield, all Rutland County Towns. He mentioned that some of topics being discussed in Montpelier now are paid family leave, free school meals for all students, school choice, clean heat, and housing. There is currently a bill which seeks to supersede some zoning regulations in some communities in order to build affordable housing.

Neil Langer commented that it's important to keep free meals for the children who can't otherwise afford it. He then asked if Vermont would be seeing any of the federal money earmarked for infrastructure. Jim replied that Vermont would be getting a significant amount and that the Governor is asking for \$150 million of ARPA funds to be set aside for matching funds.

Jennifer Van Sciver asked what was being done about broadband. She finds it challenging to do her job without adequate cell phone coverage. Jim stated that state grants were being used to help extend broadband coverage throughout the state.

Chris Van Sciver spoke about school choice and how important it is for students to be at a school that is right for them.

Chris thanked Jim.

Val Taylor thanks Jim for his accessibility to our town and for keeping us informed.

Val recognized the following people:

- Gary Sihler, a Planning Commission member since 2019 who was stepping down this year. During his tenure, the Planning Commission worked on the Town Plan, the Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Energy Plan. He was applauded and presented with a gift certificate.
- Larry Courcelle, Selectboard member who accepted the position when Mendon needed an experienced body. Larry has done a great job over the years. He was on the Selectboard during Tropical Storm Irene, and again during the Pandemic. Larry has done a great job for all of this. Larry was applauded and presented with a gift certificate.
- Bill Ellis, Road Commissioner, Road Foreman, and road crew member has announced his retirement. Bill has worked for the town for 44 years. Bill and his crew have done a great job taking care of Mendon's roads. Newt Jones, road crew member, has also announced his retirement, and has worked for the town for 18 years. They have been very dedicated to the Town and we will have a retirement party for them this fall. Thank you to Dan Hendee for stepping in over the past three years while the town was shorthanded.

- Dr. Andy Zak, who has been on the Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) since 1981. He has participated in many hearings over the years and retired in October of 2022. The Town is grateful for his many years of service. Dr. Zak was applauded and presented with a gift certificate.
- Board of Civil Authority members for their dedication for the countless hours spent on appeals for the 2021 Townwide Reappraisal. Fifty-six appeals were heard by the BCA.
- Everyone who has dedicated their time and energy to make sure the Town runs smoothly

Val mentioned that there are many volunteer opportunities in the Town for anyone who might be interested.

Article 1 – Shall the Town authorize the Selectboard to set the rate of compensation for non-salaried employees and Town Officers appointed mid-term? Neil Langer made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Patty Lancaster. With no discussion, the motion **passed unanimously**.

Article 2 – Shall the Town vote to approve the 2023-2024 Municipal Budget at \$1,295,460?

Nancy Gondella presented a recap of the 2021 Townwide Reappraisal. Nancy explained the process of appealing an assessment and went over the expenses involved. In total, each appeal to the BCA takes approximately five hours. The total cost to the Town was approximately \$114,000. Nancy thanked the BCA members for their hard work and dedication during this lengthy process. A full report can be found in this year's town report. Larry Courcelle added that the Assessor uses comparable sales to support property values. Jessica Posch stated that she appreciated the hard work of everyone involved, but mentioned how difficult it must be for the Assessor to value a property without going into the house. She questioned if she appealed, what year would be appealed. Nancy explained the process.

Larry Courcelle updated the work of the Otter Creek Communications Union District (OCCUD) and the work they are doing.

Larry Courcelle gave a presentation regarding the timeline of the budgeting process, as well as the highlights of the budget presented. If passed as presented, the budget will increase by \$31,932 (2.52%). Tom Soriano made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Gary Sihler. Tom Soriano questioned whether or not the Sheriff's department was providing the budget amount of service. Abby English asked that a speed cart be put on Town Line Road. Lema Carter, Constable, stated that one could be requested in the spring. Larry discussed the Route 4 scoping study that would be coming up soon. The motion **passed unanimously**.

Article 3 – Shall the Town vote to create a Community Center Reserve Fund and appropriate \$10,000?

Patty Lancaster presented information regarding Mendon on the Move and how the need for a community center was discussed. The committee is requesting the reserve fund so there are funds available as needs arise to pursue the options. Fred Bagley gave a short presentation on Route 4 safety. Jennifer Bagley made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Wanda Courcelle. The motion **passed unanimously**.

Justin Lindholm questioned how the Rutland Free Library is supported. Chris Corsones stated that it was supported through the budget that was just passed.

Steve Singiser made a motion to consider articles four through ten as one question. Chris Corsones explained that this would mean all of those articles would be voted at one time and either pass or fail as

one article. Gary Sihler seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the **motion passed unanimously.**

Article 4 through 10 – Shall the Town vote to appropriate \$1,500 for the support of ARC Rutland Area Serving Citizens with Developmental Disabilities, \$1,200 for the support of Marble Valley Regional Transit District (The Bus), \$700 for the support of RSVP Retired Senior Volunteer Program, \$1,242 for the support of Rutland Mental Health Services, \$2,600 for the support of VNA and Hospice of the Southwest Region, \$600 for the support of Southwest Council on Aging, and \$2,500 for the support of Wonderfeet Kids’ Museum? Chris Van Sciver made a motion to approve, which was seconded by Ann Singiser. Danielle Monroe stated she’s the Executive Director of the Wonderfeet Kids Museum and available to answer questions if anyone had any. There was no further discussion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Article 11 – To Elect the following town officers: Town Moderator – 1 year term, Selectboard Member – 2 years to complete a 3-year term, and Selectboard Member – 3-year term. This article will be voted on by Australian ballot on March 07, 2023 at the Town Office. Candidates running for these positions introduced themselves.

Larry Courcelle made a few comments about his retirement and told Val it had been a pleasure working with her. He asked the voters to be supportive of the new Selectboard as they will have a lot on their plate with the retirement of the road crew, and everything else going on in town.

Seth Bridge in his role as fire warden, discussed the reason and need for burn permits. If someone burns without a permit, they will be fined \$800. Burn permits can be submitted via e-mail to Seth. If there are no issues, Seth will send an approval e-mail back to the applicant.

Jennifer Bagley discussed the fact the Declaration of Inclusion which has been signed by almost 100 towns in Vermont started in Mendon with Al Wakefield, town resident and Bob Harnish, former owner of the Cortina Inn. We should be proud of our town for that.

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nancy Gondella, Town Clerk _____

Larry Courcelle, Selectboard Chair _____

Chris Corsones, Moderator _____