

No. M-4. An act relating to approval of amendments to the charter of the Town of Stowe and to the merger of the Town and the Stowe Fire District No. 3.

(H.539)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. CHARTER AMENDMENT APPROVAL

The General Assembly approves the amendment to the charter of the Town of Stowe and the merger of the Town and Stowe Fire District No. 3 as set forth in this act. Proposals of amendments and the merger were approved by the voters on March 5, 2019.

Sec. 2. 24 App. V.S.A. chapter 153, subchapter 15 is amended to read:

Subchapter 15. Merger Transition Provisions

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§ 1508. MERGER OF STOWE FIRE DISTRICT NO. 3 AND THE TOWN OF STOWE

Effective as of July 1, 2019, Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall merge with and into the Town of Stowe. Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall, except as provided otherwise for transition purposes, cease to exist as a municipal corporation.

Sec. 3. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER; ASSETS TRANSFERRED AND LIABILITIES ASSUMED

(a)(1) Upon the effective date of the merger, all of the right, title, and interest of Stowe Fire District No. 3 in and to the assets and property of Stowe Fire District No. 3, both real and personal, of whatever kind, nature, and

description, shall transfer to and become assets and property of the Town of Stowe without any further act, deed, or instrument being necessary.

(2) To the extent that Stowe Fire District No. 3 is, as of a date one month prior to the effective date of merger, unable to document, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Town of Stowe, that Stowe Fire District No. 3 has record marketable title to all of its real estate, title to and exclusive possession of all of its physical property and assets, and, to the extent that water lines, pumps, reservoirs, valves, shut-offs, curb stops, and any other assets comprising or appurtenant to the water system of Stowe Fire District No. 3 are located on, under, or within property owned by any entity or person other than Stowe Fire District No. 3, valid easements, rights of way, or access rights over, upon, across, and through said private properties, Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall be obligated to pursue in good faith and to cure, to the reasonable satisfaction of the Town of Stowe, all such title or access “defects” on or before the effective date of merger.

(3) In the event Stowe Fire District No. 3 is unable, by the stated deadline, to cure any identified title or access defects, the Town of Stowe may nonetheless close on the merger and accept from Stowe Fire District No. 3 such title and access rights as it then holds and possesses.

(b) Upon the effective date of the merger, all the liabilities, obligations, and indebtedness of Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall be assumed by and become the liabilities, obligations, and indebtedness of the Town of Stowe without any

further act, deed, or instrument being necessary, except such consents, approvals, or actions of the lienholders or mortgagees of Stowe Fire District No. 3 as may be required.

Sec. 4. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER;

SETTLEMENT OF FIRE DISTRICT AFFAIRS; FINANCES

(a)(1) Prior to the effective date of the merger, Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall not incur any additional indebtedness or financial obligations and shall settle so far as possible its financial affairs.

(2) On the effective date of the merger, Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall turn over to the Clerk of the Town of Stowe all records, books, documents, and personal property of Stowe Fire District No. 3 for the attention of the proper offices and departments of the Town of Stowe. Any funds (cash, investments, deposits, accounts, and receivables) in the possession or under the control of Stowe Fire District No. 3 on the effective date of the merger, and any monies or other revenues thereafter received by or addressed or made payable to Stowe Fire District No. 3, shall be transferred, endorsed to, and deposited in the Town of Stowe Water Fund.

(b)(1) If, at the effective date of merger, Stowe Fire District No. 3 has bonds or other long-term debt obligations or instruments outstanding, and its accumulated funds transferred to the Town of Stowe Water Fund pursuant to subsection (a) of this section are insufficient to fully retire (pay principal and interest payments thereof as the same come due from time to time until

maturity) those long-term debt obligations, the current and any future water ratepayers, water customers, water users whose properties are located within the present boundaries of Stowe Fire District No. 3, and the owners of any lots within said boundaries classified as “R0” (collectively, “FD Customers”) shall be obligated to pay a surcharge, in addition to regular water rates, until sufficient funds are accumulated by the Town to retire the aforementioned long-term debt obligations.

(2) The surcharge shall be determined and apportioned among FD Customers consistent with the formula detailed in Article 5.2 of the Stowe Fire District No. 3 Amended and Restated Rules, Regulations, and Schedule of Rates and Charges, adopted November 12, 2001.

Sec. 5. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER;

INSURANCE COVERAGE

At all times prior to the effective date of the merger, Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall maintain in full force and effect all insurance policies in its name now in effect, shall fully cooperate with the Town of Stowe to ensure that insurance coverage continues on and after the merger date without gaps in said coverage, and shall take no actions or fail to take any action that, either alone or through the passage of time, shall cause any insurance coverage of Stowe Fire District No. 3 now in effect to lapse, expire, or terminate until after the date of merger.

Sec. 6. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER;
CONTINUATION OF ORDINANCES, RULES, AND
REGULATIONS

On the effective date of the merger, all ordinances, rules, and regulations of the Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall be repealed and cease to be in effect, as will the two agreements between Stowe Fire District No. 3 and the Town of Stowe, and thereafter, the ratepayers, customers, and users of the former Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall be ratepayers, customers, and users of the Stowe Water Department, and the terms, conditions, rates, and other provisions for the delivery and sale of water to said ratepayers, customers, and users shall be governed by the ordinances, rules, rates, and regulations pertaining to the delivery and sale of water to ratepayers, customers, and water users of the Stowe Water Department, subject to Sec. 4, subsection (b) of these transitional provisions.

Sec. 7. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER; CESSATION
OF THE PRUDENTIAL COMMITTEE

(a) On the effective date of the merger, the Prudential Committee of Stowe Fire District No. 3 shall cease to exist.

(b) The Prudential Committee shall, until the General Assembly acts on the Plan of Merger, operate and manage Stowe Fire District No. 3 as it has been operated, but shall not:

(1) make any contracts, agreements, or other commitments to pursue, install, or construct capital improvements to its infrastructure;

(2) expend, commit, or dissipate in any way any accumulated capital reserve fund or funds of Stowe Fire District No. 3; or

(3) take any action or failure to act under circumstances reasonably foreseeable to be contrary to the intent or spirit of this Plan of Merger.

Sec. 8. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER; COSTS OF
MERGER

(a) Each party shall bear its own costs and expenses related to developing, negotiating, and consummating this Plan of Merger, including but not limited to their respective attorneys' fees and the costs and expenses of warning and conducting meetings of the respective voters of Stowe Fire District No. 3 and Town of Stowe at which meetings this Plan of Merger shall be presented for approval by the voters, and any challenges or appeals thereto.

(b) If this Plan of Merger is approved by the respective voters of the parties, the Town of Stowe shall be responsible for the costs to submit the same to the General Assembly for its approval.

Sec. 9. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS; PLAN OF MERGER;
SEVERABILITY

If any provision of this enactment shall for any reason be held invalid, such invalidity shall not affect the remaining provisions, which shall be given effect

without the invalid provision. To this end, the provisions of this charter are severable.

Sec. 10. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Date Governor signed bill: May 23, 2019