

Rindge voters defeat controversial zoning amendments at town meeting

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RINDGE — Voters soundly defeated three controversial zoning amendments at the polls Tuesday.

Article 2 was perhaps the most divisive on the warrant. It would have established an optional crossroads overlay district at the intersection of Routes 202 and 119, with the goal to create a new **commercial center** in town.

But voters shot it down 969-434, after months of strong opposition from residents.

Last year, the town accepted a \$24,820 planning grant from the N.H. Housing Authority, funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. One of the grant's requirements was that the town suggest zoning changes, including the crossroads overlay district.

The zoning amendment would also have **changed minimum lot sizes** in the proposed overlay district from their current size of 2 acres to a half-acre, which would have allowed landowners to subdivide their properties into smaller lots — a step meant to encourage economic growth in the proposed district.

The overlay district would have permitted uses including **moderate-to high-density housing, retail stores, restaurants and other businesses.**

Proponents of the article said it would give landowners more choice with what to do with their land, and do away with unnecessarily large lot sizes.

But many voters were concerned the zoning changes could alter the town's rural character and put unwanted development into the town.

This sentiment was reflected in other items voters struck down, including proposed amendments to the town's village and college zoning districts that would have changed the minimum lot size to 1 acre. It is currently 2 acres.

In addition, voters approved two petition warrant articles prompted by the zoning amendments. **Article 27 will require the town's legislative body to approve all future grants associated with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It passed 817-620.**

Another petition warrant article passed, 828-613, would make the town terminate and cease any memberships, affiliations or dealings with the Southwest Region Planning Commission or any other regional planning commission.

A third petition warrant article approved by voters, 1,086 to 321, will **delete and remove the entire contents of the PlanNH charrette from the town's master plan.**

The charrette, or planning session, was held last year, and was meant to be a chance for town officials and residents to brainstorm development they might like to see in the proposed commercial center at the crossroads of Routes 202 and 119.

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