

Mason Town Meeting, March 17, 2018

Mason Elementary School, 13 Darling Hill Road, Mason, NH

This Town Report is dedicated to Bob Bergeron who served on the Fire Department for many years, several building committees including the elementary school, police station and the highway department. He has also worked with the Conservation Commission, served on the planning and zoning boards and is the assistant building inspector. Thank you, Bob.

Moderator Catherine Schwenk came to the microphone and called the 2018 Town Meeting to order at 9:06 am. She requested that non-voters wear non-voter credentials and sit in the first row to the Moderator's left. There was no request for interpretive services. She indicated the fire and emergency exits and then introduced those sitting at the head table: Selectmen Bernard (Bernie) O'Grady, Charles (Charlie) Moser, Louise Lavoie and Town Clerk Debra (Deb) Morrison. She also recognized State Representative and resident John Lewicke.

There were 64 voters and 4 nonvoters present with 1,016 names on the checklist, representing a 7 percent turnout.

The Moderator acknowledged that preparation for this meeting is a coordinated effort of many individuals, including School Facilities Manager Chris Rush (along with Wally Brown), Select Board Assistant Kathy Wile, Town Clerk Deb Morrison and Supervisors of the Checklist Kathy Wile, Wally Brown and Dotsie Millbrandt.

The Moderator reviewed the procedure for voters. Voters wishing to speak should use the microphones and address any questions to the Moderator. Residents need to give their name at the microphone when recognized. All amendments and substantive motions must be in writing (please also print your name) and signed by the maker and seconder.

Five voters may make a written request for a secret ballot vote prior to a voice vote or division vote per RSA 40:4A. Voters and seconders must be present at the meeting to request a secret ballot vote.

Every voter is entitled to speak on a debatable motion unless the meeting, by a two-thirds vote, has ordered discussion stopped. A voter is entitled to speak a second time on the same question provided all voters who wish to speak have spoken.

The Moderator then announced the results of the Town and School District elections. Total votes cast were 105 out of a total of 1,016, representing an 11 percent turnout. She declared the winning candidates elected to their respective offices.

Moderator: Catherine Schwenk 97

Town Clerk / Tax Collector: Debra Morrison 102

Treasurer: Dee Mitchell 98

Selectman: Charles Moser 90

Supervisor of the Checklist: Darrell Scott [write-in] 22

Library Trustee: Lynn McCann [write-in] 13

Trustee of Cemeteries: Robert Larochelle 91

Trustee of Trust Funds (1 yr): Patricia Young [write-in] 7

Trustee of Trust Funds (3 yr): Constance Lacasse [write-in] 8

The following articles were voted on at the polls on Tuesday, March 13, 2018.

Mason School District Results

School Board Member: Jason Iannuzzo 97

School District Treasurer: Susan Schulman 98

Results of **Article 2** — Shall the Mason School District accept the reports of agents, auditors, committees, or officers chosen as printed in the Annual Mason School District Report?

Yes 98 / No 3 / Article 2 carries

Results of **Article 3** — Shall the Mason School District raise and appropriate as an operating budget, not including appropriations by special warrant articles and other appropriations voted separately, the amounts set forth on the budget posted with the warrant, or as amended by vote of the first session, for the purpose set forth therein, totaling Three Million One Hundred Seventy Nine Thousand Seven Hundred Seventeen Dollars (\$3,179,717)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Three Million Eighty Four Thousand Five Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$3,084,550) which is the same as last year, with certain adjustments required by previous action of the Mason School District, or by law, or the governing body may hold one special meeting, in accordance with RSA 40:13 X and XVI, to take up the issue of a revised operating budget only. NOTE: This operating budget warrant article does not include appropriations contained in ANY other warrant articles. The School Board recommends this article 3-0.

Yes 66 No 36 Article 3 carries

Results of **Article 4** — Shall the Mason School District raise and appropriate the sum not to exceed Twenty Thousand Dollars (\$20,000) to be added to the previously established Educating Educationally Disabled Children Capital Reserve Fund (established in 2010), with such amount to be funded from the June 30, 2018, unreserved fund balance available for transfer on June 30? No amount to be raised from taxation. The School Board recommends this warrant article. (Majority vote required.)

Yes 81 No 22 Article 4 carries

Results of **Article 5** — Shall the Mason School District raise and appropriate the sum not to exceed Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the previously established School Building and Grounds Maintenance Capital Reserve Fund (established 2010), with such

amount to be funded from the June 30, 2018 unreserved fund balance available for transfer on June 30? No amount to be raised from taxation. The School Board recommends this warrant article. (Majority vote required.)

Yes 87 No 16 Article 5 carries

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The colors were presented by Mason Boy Scout Troop 264 including Drew Hodges, Sampson Hodges, Mikey McGuire, Mason McDonald, Jon Arsenault, Alex Addonizio, Jaden Davies, Caleb Kearney and Scoutmaster Donald Hodges. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mason McDonald.

There was no objection to waiving the reading of the Warrant and there were no errors or omissions to the 2017 Town Report.

It was allowed that Denise Ginzler, librarian and non-resident, be permitted to speak on matters of the Mason Library.

In regards to voting by ballot, it was clarified “to please come out of your seats to the center aisle and receive a yes/no ballot. Come down the center aisle to the ballot box. It is your responsibility to place your vote in the box. You may pocket the other half of the ballot or put it in the wastebasket. Please return to your seat by the side aisle.”

**Article 2:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to accept the reports of its agents, auditors, committees or officers chosen as printed in the Mason Annual Report.

Article 2 carries unanimously.

**Article 3:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Million, Six Hundred Eighty Four Thousand, Six Hundred Thirty One Dollars (\$1,684,631) for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Majority vote required.)

There was surprisingly no discussion regarding the proposed budget.

Article 3 carries.

**Article 4:** Bernie O’Grady moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fourteen Thousand Dollars (\$14,000) to be added to the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie spoke on this article and said, “We’ve been doing this every year for the purchase of a police cruiser and we should continue.”

Article 4 carries unanimously.

**Article 5:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000) to be added to the 250th Anniversary Expendable Trust Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie followed with, "This is the year this will be expended."

Tom Mitchell asked how much money was currently in the fund. Bookkeeper Brenda Wiley responded there was \$6,000 in there now.

Article 5 carries unanimously.

**Article 6:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Thousand Dollars (\$50,000) for the purpose of repair and maintenance of the Town's paved roads, or take any other action relative thereto. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise said, "We have been utilizing this money the last four years to supplement our paving budget. Our five-year plan was updated this past July and is available on the website."

Connie Lacasse said the plan addresses paved roads but doesn't mention dirt roads. Louise said that the dirt roads are always being maintained.

Bryan Herrin asked if the five-year plan will end eventually. Louise answered, "With bad weather, we got behind." Bryan asked, "Why don't we roll this into the budget instead of having a separate warrant article?" Bernie responded, "We're hoping not to have to ask for this every year."

Gary Elsworth asked what the bottom line effect is after five years. "If all the warrants pass, what's the bottom line?" Charlie said no one's calculated it out. Mike Bromberg said, "It adds up to \$240,000. How does that affect the tax rate?" Brenda said, "It's not just the amount on there. It's also based on the reserve amounts and what the school gives back to reduce this. We can work out those kinds of figures for next year."

Anna Faiello said she would like to see the amount of impact of each warrant article indicated next year.

Article 6 carries.

**Article 7:** Bernie O'Grady moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Fifty Four Thousand Dollars (\$54,000) for the purpose of purchasing and equipping a police cruiser with the funding as follows: Twenty Eight Thousand Dollars (\$28,000) plus any interest from the Police Cruiser Capital Reserve Fund, and the balance of Twenty Six Thousand Dollars (\$26,000) to come from general taxation, or take any other action relative thereto. (Majority vote required.)

John Lewicke asked if the money we just appropriated [in Article 4] is going to be added to this article. No.

Article 7 carries unanimously.

**Article 8:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to establish a Police Detail Revolving Fund pursuant to RSA 31:95-h, for the purpose of providing for the payment of payroll and overhead for police special details, and purchase of police vehicles. All revenues received for police special details will be deposited into the fund, and the money in the fund shall be allowed to accumulate from year to year and shall not be considered part of the town's general fund balance. Further to name the Board of Selectmen as agents to expend from the fund. Town Treasurer shall have custody of all monies in the fund and shall pay out the same only upon order of the named agents. (Majority ballot vote.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie explained that when the police department works a detail like with Asplundh [tree service] or a special event, they charge for that service. "Sometimes our officers work out of town. This is designed to pool the money so the officers get paid, but the amount charged is in excess of the salary so the money stays in the department to maintain cruisers, etc. and can make a bit of money for the town."

Chief Kevin Maxwell asked if there were any questions.

Garther Fletcher asked if there was a special vehicle for special details? No, and all expenditures come out of the special detail fee (insurance, workers comp, etc.). It's \$75 per detail hour.

Connie Lacasse asked that when the K9 fund was dispersed, why couldn't some of that be used to put aside for this? "When people like the Driving Range have these events, they have to put money aside to pay for them."

Charlie said that some of that money was dispersed and some is for extraordinary expenditures.

Garth noted that the wording is "purchase" for the police vehicles. Charlie: "I guess I misspoke when I said it was for maintenance purposes."

Ballot voting began at 9:38 and closed at 9:42. There were 61 ballots cast.

Yes – 56 No – 5 Article 8 carries.

**Article 9:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirty Nine Thousand Dollars (\$39,000) for the purpose of the second phase of upgrading the communication system for the Fire Department. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Fire Chief Fred Greenwood addressed this article. "This is the second year we've upgraded. We've added portable radios to the fire trucks and for each position in the trucks. Everyone on the frequency knows who's talking. Our radio coverage has increased tremendously. We're going to upgrade the equipment on Townsend Rd. It's not all new right now. We're going to test that what we have is what we're looking for. Low band is no longer being made."

Article 9 carries unanimously.

**Article 10:** Bernie O’Grady moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to change the intent and wording of the pre-existing Fire Station Building Addition Fund from addition to a remodel of the current fire station and its out buildings. This is a change in wording only and will not cost the taxpayers any money. (2/3 vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie explained, “We’re just looking to change the wording to use the funds in the capital reserve fund. This is relevant to a second building previously used by the highway department and will be used to house the forestry trucks.”

Article 10 carries unanimously.

**Article 11:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to establish a Fire Department Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund under the provisions of RSA 35:1 for the purpose of purchasing a fire engine, and to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in this fund, with this amount to come from taxation; further to name the Selectmen as agents to expend from this fund. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Fred said, “Two of our engines are getting old. I told the selectmen that a new engine is roughly \$400,000 for a basic engine. Maybe we should start putting money aside every year. We can no longer use a conventional cab truck – the firefighters can’t even use the seatbelts for safety. You have to go to a custom cab, which apparently means they can adjust the price accordingly. The selectmen determined \$25,000 was a good starting point. We’re going to have to address this issue shortly and this will help.”

Article 11 carries unanimously.

The Moderator read the results of Article 8 at this time. Yes – 56 No – 5 Article 8 carries.

**Article 12:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Thirteen Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$13,500) for the purpose of replacing the roof on the Town Hall. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise asked Wally Brown to speak to this article. Wally said, “This past October there was a small puddle in the building after a heavy wind and rain storm. We couldn’t find where it was coming in from. Then the Wolf Rockers noticed another puddle a few weeks later. We’ve been putting it off, but it’s probably time now.”

Mike McGuire asked when the last time the roof was replaced. It was suggested that maybe in the 1970s.

Don Hodges asked if that was the only problem with the building. Wally responded no, but the [new] roof would keep it dry.

Connie Lacasse said, “The roof has a definite sag, not to mention the mold (moss) growing on it. There are so many things wrong with that building I don’t know where to start. We have our 250th coming up with a

dilapidated building. I had this discussion last year and talked to Charlie ad nauseum. Why are we waiting so long?”

Wally replied, “It takes money to do it. I don’t know how much it would cost. I could have an engineer come in and do an evaluation.”

Connie: “A shingled roof?” Wally: “Yes, an architectural shingled roof.”

Joh Lewicke asked if we want to continue to put money into this building. Doug Whitbeck said, “Once you rip the shingles off, you’ll probably find more damage underneath. How will you cover the extra expense?” Wally said, “The roof has plywood on it. If there’s more damage, we could use money from the buildings and grounds budget.”

Trish Cross suggested we find out what it needs first. Cheryl Greenwood asked if anyone has looked into a possible grant for historical preservation. Louise responded, “We have looked into that. It’s a very time-consuming process and we spoke with a grant writer. We could use some help with it. Temple had a similar issue and got a grant to help fix it. We don’t have enough people with time available to help look into the grant. First you have to prove that it’s an historical building and build on that. Any volunteers?”

Garth Fletcher said, “Maybe what’s needed on an emergency basis is an engineering study. We need to do the roof to protect the building, but maybe have a structural review first.” Moderator Schwenk told him to put it into an amendment and she helped Garth with the wording.

Garth Fletcher moved to amend article 12 “by adding \$5,000 for the purpose of funding an engineering study to be done prior to roofing work.” Seconded by Robert Larochelle. Amendment carries unanimously.

Mike Bromberg asked if we could change the wording to “stabilize” instead of “replacing.”

Bradley Gilbert moved to amend Article 12 to “alter the wording of the main article to repairing the Town Hall building instead of specifically repairing the roof.”

Mark Arsenault said, “We should come up with a long-term plan. A bulldozer is pretty cheap. [lots of boos] I love that building, too, but I don’t want to waste money.” Charlie: “To respond to Mark, the town hall is sort of the centerpiece of the town. The roof is deemed necessary by Wally to prevent further degradation of the building. This fits into what Mark is saying. I say we save the building.”

Moderator: “To come to Brad’s amendment.” Amendment carries unanimously.

Article 12 as amended carries unanimously.

**Article 13:** Bernie O’Grady moves and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty Two Thousand Six Hundred Forty Dollars (\$22,640) for the purpose of upgrading the existing Highway Department radio system. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie spoke on this issue and said that is basically the same situation as with the fire department. "The trucks can't communicate with each other because of the low band." Garth Fletcher asked if this includes the ability to communicate with the fire department. Yes.

Article 13 carries unanimously.

**Article 14:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand (\$5,000) to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie explained, "Our highway department situation is not good. The trucks are old and breaking down. I'll let the Road Agent [Dave Morrison] speak to that."

Dave said, "It's basically like Fred was saying about the trucks being 2000 vintage. We have trucks going out in all weather. In the middle of one storm, we needed to have a tow truck come drag a truck up the hill. The problem could be an injector or a blown motor. We have about 10 pieces of equipment. Our grader is a 1987 and we put \$20K into it last year to keep it running. We need to put at least \$5K in there. The fund's been in existence for a long time but we haven't put any money in there for a while."

Mark Arsenault asked why only \$5K. Mike Bromberg asked how much for a replacement truck.

Dee Mitchell said, "We have a highway department capital equipment fund with only \$2,000 in it. We should be putting money into it. Especially for the grader." Brenda added, "We had a budget of \$45K [last year] and we spent \$95K for truck repair." Charlie said, "Money for truck repair comes from somewhere. We always overspend that line item."

Mark Arsenault moved to amend Article 14 from \$5,000 to \$50,00. Seconded by Charlie Moser. Amendment passes.

Article 14 carries as amended.

**Article 15:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) for the purpose of purchasing a small sander unit. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Road Agent Dave Morrison held up a brochure and said, "This is an example of what we're talking about. We'll probably use it in the center of town to use sand more judiciously and we can keep it loaded in the barn for emergency use instead of pulling out one of the larger trucks."

Article 15 carries unanimously.

**Article 16:** Bernie O'Grady moved and it was seconded Shall the Town vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:28-b, All Veterans Tax Credit? If adopted, the credit will be available to any resident, or the spouse or surviving spouse of any resident, who (1) served not less than 90 days on active service in the armed forces of the United States and was honorably discharged, or an officer honorably separated from services and is not eligible for or receiving a credit under

RSA 72:28 or RSA 72:35. If adopted, the credit granted will be \$500, the same amount as the standard or optional veterans tax credit voted by the Town under RSA 72:28. Recommended by Selectmen.

Bernie spoke on this article and said that “basically, veterans who served in time of conflict get a tax credit. This would allow all veterans to receive that credit.”

Article 16 carries unanimously.

**Article 17:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) for the following purposes: Survey of Town owned Lot G-61 to establish bounds for selective cut, for the creation and maintenance of recreation trails on Town lands, and to

authorize withdrawal of said sum from the Forestry Committee Trust Fund previously established, or to take any other action relative thereto. This special article is a special warrant article per RSA 32:3 VI (d) and RSA 32:7 V. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie explained that this lot is on Walker Brook Rd. John Lewicke asked if we would be making any money on logging? Yes.

Article 17 carries unanimously.

**Article 18:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded Shall the Town of Mason vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:65 through RSA 72:68 inclusive, which provide for a property tax exemption from the property’s assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with small wind energy systems (wind energy systems limited to under 100kW in total system size), intended for use at the immediate site, or by approved group net metering. Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying equipment under this statute. (Majority vote required.) Brought by petition.

Mike McGuire spoke to this article.

Bryan Herrin said, “I’m not against this, but it’s disingenuous. We are artificially changing the assessed value of a property.” There was further discussion with comments such as, “The tax burden needs to spread in the town,” “The bottom line is that when you sell your house it would be worth more” and “There is general benefit to reducing peak demand. It saves everyone money. You don’t have to build a pipeline, etc.”

Article 18 fails.

Article 19: Bernie O’Grady moved and it was seconded Shall the Town of Mason vote to adopt the provisions of RSA 72:69 through RSA 72:72 inclusive, which provide for an optional property tax exemption from the property’s assessed value, for property tax purposes, for persons owning real property, which is equipped with central wood-fired heating systems (wood stoves and fireplaces are not included). Such property tax exemption shall be in the amount

equal to 100% of the assessed value of qualifying equipment under these statutes. (Majority vote required.) Brought by petition.

Mike McGuire again spoke to this article.

John Lewicke stated that, once again, this benefits some but not others.

Kathy Chapman moved to amend Article 19 by inserting at the conclusion of the first sentence, "To qualify for the exemption, the heating equipment must be certified at least by the Environmental Protection Agency and any other federal and state certifying agency, and must be manufactured according to the most stringent federal and state government standards at the time of the purchase of the heating equipment, and the heating equipment must have been manufactured after January 1, 2016." Seconded by Fred Greenwood.

Discussion followed regarding the technologies available. "We should spur local wood instead of having pipelines or gas from PA."

Bryan Herrin asked if it would need to be certified by the EPA and/or the NH equivalent. Kathy said it may need a little word tweaking but the idea was to comply with state standards. The amendment fails.

Article 19 fails.

The Moderator recognized Dotsie Millbrandt to speak on the status of the 250th celebration.

Dotsie: "Thank you for appropriating another \$2,000. The date is August 25, 2018. We have a grant from the NH Council on the Arts. There are a few things to do right now. We have a beard contest. It's free and you don't need to sign up ahead of time and the rewards are modest. We'll have, by popular demand, a costume contest from the 1700s through 1800s. We have a time capsule we'll be putting in. Things should represent our current time. No electronics because of batteries."

Connie Lacasse asked, "Where are you putting the time capsule? In the town hall?" [laughter]

Dotsie added, "We need volunteers to help out on that day. We have an active planning committee and lots of things planned." [There was further discussion on the activities.] "We need someone to volunteer for the dunk tank. Fireworks will be launched from the sand pit the night before and viewed from Bronson's hill. There will be food galore! If you have a great idea you'd like to champion, please come to the meetings. The next one is March 21, 7 pm, at the Mann House. Andy's Summer Playhouse will be performing some time beforehand celebrating their 50th year here, where they started."

Louise Lavoie announced, "I want to put out a call for volunteers if anyone is interested. The selectmen recently appointed an energy commission to look at the energy usage in the town. Talk to Kathy Chapman or Liz Fletcher if you're interested. There's a description here of the committee. We'll put it on the web site as well. We've had some good participation from people in town and were able to fill a lot of the positions on the zoning and planning boards. If you have an interest in any of the boards, please contact the town office."

Connie Lacasse: "If possible, why couldn't that energy group look into putting solar panels on the roof of the town hall?"

Charlie Moser said, "We'll put you on that committee, Connie!"

The Moderator gave recognition to Sue Wolpert who retired after 25 years of service to the library. "Let's give her a round of applause for her service to the town."

On motion of Michael Bromberg and duly seconded, Town Meeting was adjourned Sine Dai at 11:00 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra A. Morrison

Mason Town Clerk