

Mason Town Meeting, March 18, 2017

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

This Town Report is dedicated to the leadership and 85 members of the Mason Pipeline Committee who worked tirelessly to prevent the construction of the Northeast Energy Direct Pipeline, proposed to cross Mason and 16 other southern New Hampshire towns.

Moderator Catherine Schwenk came to the microphone and called the 2017 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, Assistant Moderator Mary McDonald and Town Clerk Debra (Deb) Morrison. She also recognized State Representative John Lewicke who invited everyone to get in touch with him but "not to overestimate his power."

There were 70 voters and 2 nonvoters present.

The Moderator acknowledged that preparation for this meeting is a coordinated effort of many individuals, including Assistant Moderator Mary McDonald, the School Facilities Manager Rick Griffith (along with Wally Brown), Select Board Assistant Kathy Wile, Town Clerk Debra 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 made note of the following error in the 2016 Annual Town Report: The budget printed in the annual report is incorrect and the correct budget is printed on yellow paper as an addendum.

The Moderator then announced the results of the Town and School District elections. Total votes cast were 134 out of a total of 1,043, representing a 13 percent turnout. She declared the winning candidates elected to their respective offices.

Selectman: Louise Lavoie 109

Library Trustee (2 yr): Robin Smith 125

Library Trustee (3 yr): Elena Kolbenson 121

Trustee of Cemeteries: Jeannine Phalon [write-in] 13

Trustee of Trust Funds): Dee Mitchell 122

The following articles were voted on at the polls on Thursday, March 16, 2017.

Mason School District Results

School Board Member (3 yr term): Timothy Leak 112

School Board Member (3 yr term): Anne (Nancy) Richards [write-in] 22

School District Moderator: Catherine Schwenk 117

School District Clerk: Rebecca Partridge 118

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 117 / No 8 / 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 Sixty Six Thousand Two Hundred Thirty Seven Dollars (\$3,166,237)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Three Million One Hundred Sixty Nine Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Eight Dollars (\$3,169,888) 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. (Majority vote required.)

Yes 113 No 19 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, 2017, 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 103 No 29 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, 2017 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 99 No 32 Article 5 carries

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The colors were presented by Mason Boy Scout Troop 264 including Drew Hodges, Sampson Hodges, Max Phalon, Mikey McGuire, Mason McDonald, Jon Arsenault, James Arsenault, Alex Addonizio and Scoutmaster Donald Hodges. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Retired Fire Chief David Baker.

There was no objection to waiving the reading of the Warrant.

The Moderator offered a tribute and thanks to Retired Fire Chief David Baker. “David Baker joined the Mason Fire Department in 1974. He became an officer in 1983 where he served as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, Captain, Assistant Chief and became Chief in 2010. He retired in 2016. There have been many changes in the department over the years. Dave occasionally brought to Town Meeting the actual equipment used by our dedicated fire and EMT staff so the voters could see where their tax dollars were being spent. Town Meeting even saw the effect of the Pileated Woodpeckers on the wooden antenna on Townsend Rd. We now have a

metal antenna which is a challenge to the woodpeckers. Dave and his family have dedicated their service to the Town of Mason for 42 years. Who knows how many pancakes he has flipped?"

Select Chair Louise Lavoie also recognized Chief Baker for his service to the town. She then acknowledged Fire Chief Fred Greenwood who spoke about Dave and said in the past 42 years, Dave had logged in 5,042 hours of duty. "You've lost a few meals and a lot of sleep. You have an appreciation of a diverse group of people in the fire department and you've given back to the town. You've made a difference to the people of Mason." He presented Dave with a clock that "will run two weeks behind."

The Moderator was advised by legal counsel that Article 2 – a bond issue – must be the first item of business and further that it requires a two-thirds vote by ballot with the polls open for one hour. Nancy Richards lent her timer.

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:** Bernie moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Three Hundred Sixty Three Thousand Dollars (\$363,000) to build, equip and furnish a new highway garage and office for the Town of Mason and to authorize the issuance of not more than Three Hundred Sixty Three Thousand Dollars (\$363,000) of bonds or notes in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Budget Finance Act (RSA 33); to authorize the Selectmen to apply for, obtain and accept Federal, State or other aid, if any, which may be available for said project and to comply with all laws applicable to said project; and to authorize the Selectmen to issue, sell, negotiate and deliver such bonds or notes and to determine the rate of interest thereon and the maturity and other terms thereof; and to authorize the Selectmen to take any other action or to pass any other vote relative thereto. (2/3 ballot vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie spoke on the need for infrastructure change and the need for improvements at the highway barn. The highway building committee has met with several companies regarding new designs and pointed out that pictures of the old building in its stages of disrepair are on the wall outside this room. He feels this is a solid investment and they're putting this before the voters. The current building was purchased nearly 40 years ago and some said it was meant to be temporary. As a side note, it was noted that the town had paid off the police bond last year.

Dave Baker asked about the well and if it was going to be done first. Bernie wasn't sure but didn't think so. Dave suggested we should do the well first to make sure we can get good water to both the highway and fire departments. He wants to make it contingent to check the well possibility first but not hold up the vote. An amendment was suggested, but discussion followed on whether we need an amendment or trust the selectmen. There was verbal agreement to trust the selectmen to do the well first.

Bob Larochelle wants to remind the selectmen that Dave Baker's advice was very sound and also recommended that we test first.

Mike Bromberg wanted to know the interest rate on the bond. Brenda said it was 2.5 percent.

Garth Fletcher said he would like a review of the financing of the bond. Is part of the Capital Reserve Fund to be used for this? Bernie responded yes. Garth asked what the total amount of the bill would be. Bookkeeper Brenda Wiley answered that the total bill would be about \$412,019 and will add approximately 30 cents per thousand to the tax bill. The amount drops each year and the first bill would be due in 2018.

Bryan Herrin asked if the old building would be dropped. Bernie said it could be used to store equipment.

Connie Lacasse thinks this is a valid use for the Capital Reserve Fund [CRF] and wants to know what we can do about the Town Hall. "It's ready to fall on our heads. Can part of the CRF be used on the Town Hall?" It was said that the highway CRF was to be used for the highway department only. "Nothing for town buildings in our system?" No. That led to discussion of voting day on March 16 and how cold it was in the Town Hall. Louise said they've been looking into getting a grant writer to help understand how to write a grant and apply for one. She added, "We need a group of people to understand what the costs might be to fix it up because something needs to be done."

Ballot voting began and was open for one hour at 9:29 am and closed at 10:29 am.

Yes – 59 No – 10

Article 2 carries.

**Article 3:** 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 3 carries unanimously.

**Article 4:** 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 Twelve Thousand Seven Hundred Ninety Dollars (\$1,612,790) for general municipal operations. This article does not include appropriations contained in special or individual articles addressed separately. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise spoke on the motion regarding the amount of work done by the department heads and that this budget is 3% lower than last years' budget knowing that taxes would be increasing due to the town-wide assessment in 2016. Mary McDonald announced that we now have amendment forms and to come up and get one if someone wants to make an amendment.

Leland Craig said the selectmen's report talks about high speed internet access and referred to line items 6001-14 / 6002-21 with regard to the internet budget. He said the report was shy on specifics about sharing internet with the school and is questioning the dollar amount. "How do we meter access? Is it a duplication of line item numbers? Can you provide more information?" Brenda spoke to his questions and said the bottom line is "it's \$700 a month and we split it in half between the town and school, and then split it between the departments." Leland questioned the sharing arrangement. Charlie explained we have a bandwidth sharing agreement with the school as part of our infrastructure update. Leland said he's talking about the actual connection and usage and the cost was way up percentage-wise. Charlie said we spread the cost to the actual departments that use it. Leland said he doesn't like the increase and doesn't understand it. Brenda said that the school had to upgrade their internet because they need it – almost all testing at the school is now done online.

Pete McGinnity said, "You guys did a great job with the budget," but questioned why line item 6002-04 [Part-time Admin.] was so high. Charlie said the new Administrative Assistant [Kathy Wile] was hired at a lower rate and has proven herself in doing a superior job.

Connie Lacasse questioned line item 6006-05 [BOA Salaries]. "Where do those numbers come from? Is it training money?" Louise said that figure included manuals and binders and that there are different types of training opportunities for people. It included funds so the entire board can attend the training sessions. "We've brought a lot of new people into the Planning Board and Board of Adjustment and are trying to

encourage training. It's very important to the town if the boards do the training instead of relying on town counsel."

Pete McGinnity questioned why line items 6018-05 [Part-time Wages] and 6018-16 [Calcium Chloride] had such a large increase. Bernie said the increase in part-time wages was mostly for summer help and they're trying to address the dryness of the roads with the calcium. Last year was terrible because of the drought.

Pete McGinnity then asked about line item 6012-13 [PD Uniforms]. Charlie said the town's hired new part-time officers and needs to provide them uniforms.

Article 4 carries unanimously.

**Article 5:** 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 said that "we do this every year and every six years we buy a new cruiser."

Article 5 carries unanimously.

**Article 6:** 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 said these funds are being added to the existing fund that has about \$4,000 in it. We have two more opportunities to add to the fund prior to the celebration. The committee is working hard on the event. Jeannine Phalon said they've also been making money with bake sales, etc. and have \$5,000 in the recreation committee account. They want to make the 250<sup>th</sup> a really big event and started planning last year for it.

Article 6 carries unanimously.

**Article 7:** 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 this is a continuance of the five-year plan and this is the third year. Since its inception, the town has made significant improvements on several roads. The plan is available on the town web site for review.

Andrew Hembrow of Pullman Rd. is curious why Starch Mill between Abbott Hill and Wilton Rd. isn't paved. Bernie said we stretch our dollars as far as we can. Andrew pointed out that the maintenance crews are out there all the time and why not pave it? Is there any plan ever to pave that small section? Bernie replied, "No, it's a struggle to maintain it as it is."

Garth Fletcher wanted to know the cost per mile to pave. It's about \$135,000 to reclaim a mile and you'd have to separate the costs. Gath wanted to know the cost per mile of paved vs. dirt. There's been no town study done.

Connie Lacasse stated that, "Briggs Rd. is absolutely horrendous and it was a paved road. The holes are winning. It is going to be let go? There's no need for the police because they can't get through."

Carol Anne Bennett heard there is a well by Wolf [Millbrandt's] on Starch Mill Rd. and "you might have to expand if that section was paved. Maybe there's more than we think in regards to possibly paving it." Bernie said that it's very narrow there.

Dotsie Millbrandt said that when the Planning Board last did their Master Plan, the busiest stretch was at the top of Abbott Hill Rd. It might be time to consider paving now that we've joined the Milford School District.

Article 7 carries unanimously.

**Article 8:** Bernie O'Grady moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seventeen Thousand Nine Hundred and Seventy Six Dollars (\$17,976) for the purpose of Purchasing 4 Scott X3 Airpacks for the Fire Department. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Bernie explained these airpacks have a shelf life and need to be replaced.

Article 8 carries unanimously.

**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 first phase of upgrading the communication system for the Fire Department. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise explained that our communication system will be going from low band to high band frequency. She deferred to Chief Fred Greenwood for discussion. Fred said that we're trying to upgrade to high band as low band only has one more year where it can be ordered for delivery and there's only one company that currently sells it. They want to stay even with the curve by buying now. They have new pagers for everyone in the department, with portables and mobiles for trucks and personnel. They'll be changing the infrastructure at the antenna site. Brookline Ambulance is on high band and "we don't know if they're coming. It will all be programmed into the pagers, increasing safety for our people." They want to be up and running next year as everyone will be making the change.

Mike Bromberg asked if there would be any chance of reimbursement since we have a pile of old, used equipment. Fred said that Lee Lemoine has found some people in Connecticut "who are dying for this stuff. We should get something for it."

Article 9 carries unanimously.

**Article 10:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to discontinue the K-9 Program Expendable Trust Fund created in 2008, Warrant Article 15. Said funds, with accumulated interest to date of withdrawal, are to be transferred to the municipality's general fund. This article shall be null, void and without effect unless and until the voters approve all three of the following Warrant Articles: Article 11 establishing and funding the Mason Police Equitable Sharing Expendable Trust; Article 12 establishing and funding the Mason Police Supplemental Expendable Trust, and; Article 13 returning certain funds to the National Association of Chiefs of Police. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie read all four Articles (10-13) regarding the K9 Trust Fund as they're all related. He said that Police Chief Barry Hutchins established the K9 program and the trust fund with strings attached. It could not be used to support the regular police department budget. The town added further strings to support the dog and his equipment. Generous gifts were added to this fund from State Line Gun Shop and private citizens. We no longer have the K9 program and still have federal money left in the fund. We had to untangle these funds and

while doing so found that they had been mixed inappropriately. Federal funds and the donations should have been kept separate. Article 10 dissolves the fund and puts it in the general fund. It has to stay in there for one second before it can be moved again.

*[The fire department received a call and a bunch of people had to leave.]*

Connie Lacasse said, “Didn’t we put money into the dog fund each year?” No. There was a line item but we didn’t put money into it. It was originally funded with a \$500 appropriation in 2008 and kept as a placeholder afterwards. The rest were donations. She wanted to know who had the expensive tracking collar we had purchased. It went with the dog, now deceased.

Article 10 carries unanimously.

**Article 11:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to establish a Mason Police Equitable Sharing Expendable Trust Fund pursuant to RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of supporting discretionary expenditures of the Mason Police Department consistent with the regulations of the U.S. Department of Justice Equitable Sharing Program and to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Twenty Five Dollars and Forty Seven Cents (\$10,025.47) to put in the fund, with this amount to come from the unassigned fund balance; further to name the Board of Selectmen and the Police Chief as co-agents to expend from said fund. This article shall be null, void and without effect unless and until the voters approve Warrant Article 10 discontinuing the K-9 Program Expendable Trust. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie made it clear that the \$10,000 appropriation was going into the general fund and the convoluted wording was determined by the DRA.

Article 11 carries unanimously.

**Article 12:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the town will vote to establish a Mason Police Supplemental Expendable Trust Fund pursuant to RSA 31:19-a, for the purpose of supporting discretionary expenditures to benefit the Mason Police Department outside of the Department’s regular operating budget and to raise and appropriate Eleven Thousand Seven Hundred Thirty Nine Dollars (\$11,739) to put in the fund, with this amount to come from the unassigned fund balance; further to name the Board of Selectmen and the Police Chief as co-agents to expend from said fund. This article shall be null, void and without effect unless and until the voters approve Warrant Article 10 discontinuing the K-9 Program Expendable Trust. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Article 12 carries unanimously.

**Article 13:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the town will to raise and appropriate the sum of One Thousand Five Hundred Eighty Dollars and Eighty One Cents (\$1,580.81) to be paid to the National Association of Chiefs of Police, with this amount to come from the unassigned fund balance, said payment being a return of unused funds donated to the former Mason K-9 program. This article shall be null, void and without effect unless and until the voters approve Warrant Article 10 discontinuing the K-9 Program Expendable Trust. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie made a motion to amend the wording of the article to include the word “*vote* to raise...” The amendment carries unanimously.

Article 13 carries.

On motion of Michael Bromberg and duly seconded, Town Meeting was adjourned Sine Dai at 10:39 am.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra Morrison". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Debra A. Morrison  
Mason Town Clerk