

Mason Town Meeting, March 16, 2019

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

This Town Report is dedicated to all the volunteers who make Mason the vibrant community that it is. In 2018 a new advisory energy committee was formed, Mason celebrated its 250th anniversary with a fabulous party on the common and the new highway garage was completed. We're fortunate so many are willing to give so much.

Moderator Catherine Schwenk came to the microphone and called the 2019 Town Meeting to order at 9:00 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: Acting Select Chair Louise Lavoie, Selectman Charles (Charlie) Moser and Town Clerk Debra (Deb) Morrison.

There were 93 voters and 2 nonvoters present with 1,022 names on the checklist, representing a 9 percent turnout.

The Moderator acknowledged that preparation for this meeting is a coordinated effort of many individuals and requested a round of applause for their efforts.

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 233 out of a total of 1,022, representing a 23 percent turnout. She declared the winning candidates elected to their respective offices.

Selectman: R. Peter McGinnity 95

Library Trustee: Robin Smith 203

Trustee of Cemeteries: Kenneth Spacht [write-in] 20

Trustee of Trust Funds (1 yr): Pamela McGinnity [appointed]

Trustee of Trust Funds (3 yr): Patricia Young 178

The following articles were voted on at the polls on Tuesday, March 12, 2019.

Mason School District Results

School Board Member: Bradley Gilbert 179

School Board Member: Dr. Christopher Guiry 154

School District Clerk: Rebecca Partridge 185

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 201 / No 14 / 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 Fifty Four Thousand Three Hundred Seventeen Dollars (\$3,154,317)? Should this article be defeated, the default budget shall be Three Million Eighty Eight Thousand Five Hundred Sixty Eight Dollars (\$3,088,568) 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 5-0.

Yes 151 / No 69 / 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, 2019, unreserved fund balance available for transfer on June 30? No amount to be raised from taxation. The School Board recommends this warrant article 5-0. (Majority vote required.)

Yes 170 / No 50 / 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, 2019 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 182 / No 39 / Article 5 carries

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The colors were presented by Samson Hodges and Mikey McGuire of Troop 4 in Milford (formerly of Troop 264 in Mason). Pledge of Allegiance was led by Samson Hodges.

There was no objection to waiving the reading of the Warrant. One correction to the 2018 Town Report is on page 4 under the Board of Adjustment where Robert Young's term ends in 2020 and not 2019 as printed.

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."

Acting Select Chair Louise Lavoie was recognized and spoke to outgoing selectman Bernie O'Grady, thanking him for two terms of service to the Board of Selectmen and as a member of the paved road restoration committee, the highway building committee and the forestry committee

**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, Eight Hundred Fifty-Four Thousand, Eight Hundred Eighty-Three Dollars (\$1,854,883) 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 said there was a lot of time with department heads regarding the budget. Brookline came and discussed changes to the ambulance service which has increased significantly by 219% this year. Our percentage has increased greatly year over year. She spoke with Fire Chief Fred Greenwood to put together a study to see if we want to stay with Brookline or explore other options as we can expect increases every year. Charlie added that Brookline is also looking at options regarding possible pay-to-transport to mixed reviews.

Bill Fritz said he has spent time looking at past town reports and there seems to have a 10% increase over the last 10 years. We may want to look at why we get a 10% increase in one year.

Jeannine Phalon made a motion and it was seconded to change line item #6024-04 [Activities/Rec. Com.] from \$1,000 to \$1, a reduction of \$999. She explained that the Rec Committee has a revolving account with money raised from various activities and there is still some money in the account. Motion to amend carries unanimously.

Charlie Moser made a motion and was seconded to change line item #6001-1 [Moderator] to increase the moderator stipend from \$180 to \$360 as there are two elections this year. Motion to amend carries.

Mike Bromberg questioned why there's a total of a 1200% increase on line item 6011 [Other Gen. Gov.]. Charlie explained that IT (technology support and equipment) is now being combined into one line rather than broken into the various departments.

Philip (Flip) Phalon questioned under the highway department expenses in regards to water to the fire station that was approved last year, what happened and when will the FD get water? Louise said there are plans to do that when the ground thaws and that money is still in the fund. Fire Chief Fred Greenwood said the contractor is lined up to run the line across the parking lot with certain steps to be taken. They're getting it for a pretty good price. Flip wanted to make sure the money was still available.

The budget is amended to \$1,854,063.54.

Article 3 carries as amended.

**Article 4:** Charlie Moser 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.

Charlie explained this has been part of our effort for prudent planning in anticipation of purchasing a new cruiser.

Article 4 carries unanimously.

**Article 5:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Sixty Five Thousand Dollars (\$65,000) 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.

John Lewicke said he would like to see crushed rock instead of gravel on the muddy dirt roads. Road Agent Dave Morrison said we still have some and it will be put out asap.

Bill Fritz addressed the \$50K paved road maintenance and wants to know why it was bumped up to \$65K. Why don't we have a dirt road committee? Louise: "We do have a plan and had an engineering study on Greenville Rd. The plan this year is to completely reclaim Greenville Rd. and rebuild the road including culvert work. Let it sit for one year, and pave the following year. Abbott Hill Rd. is included this year and we have some other roads on the radar this year. We want to make sure we have enough money to cover Greenville and Abbott Hill Rds.

Stanley Brown: How about Wilton Rd.? Louise: "This was part of the discussion and it depends on the cost of Abbott Hill and Greenville." Stan: "The school bus goes down Wilton and Starch Mill every day. There's concern about fire trucks getting out when necessary. Why do we take care of good roads and let the bad ones go? Why don't the dirt roads get the attention? I would like basic maintenance done. I think we have a serious problem."

Dave replied, “Stan, you have a good ear for equipment. We have three full time guys and myself. This is the mother of all mud seasons. Three thaws which made the dirt roads worse than usual. We don’t have the manpower, we don’t have the equipment. We need more aggregate and more stone. The budget has increased for those. On the paved roads, we take care of them to keep them good. If we just take care of the bad roads, we get behind on everything. We chip-sealed about one-third of them this year.” Linda Cotter-Cranston asked if there was some amount of money to improve the situation. Dave said he doesn’t have the numbers and then went over the crushed stone budget.

Tim Kelly asked what would help the highway department – manpower or equip? Dave replied both.

Betty Goen said they watch taxes rise every year. “This is a thankless job and it would take more money than we could ever imagine to fix the roads.” She talks to the selectmen and Dave and discusses her concerns. She would like to move article.

John Lewicke made a point of order that after speaking, you are not allowed to make that motion.

Garth Fletcher asked if you can move to override the motion. “It’s a poor decision and sets a bad precedent.”

The Moderator asked, “Shall the moderator’s comment to move the previous question be accepted?” The nays have it and discussion continued.

Mark Hager spoke and said that Dave and his crew are doing an excellent job and would like to head a committee to search for grants of some kind to update our roads to the 21st century. “Is it worth lives when fire, ambulance, police, etc. can’t get through?”

Fred Greenwood offered that after town meeting, he will drive every road in town to check to see if fire trucks can get through. He will make sure that trucks, etc. will get through and let Dave know. He knows that Dave will do whatever he can to fix them. Dave said he was headed out after town meeting to work on the roads.

Dotsie Millbrandt did an analysis of the last five years of town reports. “We spent an average of 15% on highway and notice that we’re now at 11%. This budget looks like it will be about 30% and seems as if we’re heading in the right direction.”

Stanley Brown has a complaint about the stone we use. He thinks it’s drainage stone and doesn’t pack in. “It’s the wrong material.” He also believes the chip-sealing is going to fail thanks to a study from the DOT. Why won’t we use the right product? He wants the right stone on the dirt roads. Dave replied, “The stone we do buy is crushed stone and is the right stone. In regards to the grader, we just got it back, and it’s a 1987. There was no metal in the transmission and it was just worn out. They were surprised it was the original transmission.”

Charlie made a motion to move the question – carries unanimously.

Article 5 carries.

**Article 6:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to be placed in the Fire Department Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie said that, like with the cruiser, we're looking ahead to our needs and this will be a reoccurring article. The selectmen plan to take a serious look at capital planning this year in regards to all the equipment to try to stay on top of 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 Fifteen Thousand Dollars (\$15,000) to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise explained, "This is the same sum we put away as last year. We haven't been putting enough aside for the highway department and we will be addressing all the departments."

Mark Arsenault said the highway department has 11 trucks in poor shape and this is a pittance, suggesting we double this amount. He made a motion and it was seconded to increase the amount from \$15K to \$30K.

Connie Lacasse wanted to know how much the base is that we're working from. Charlie said the highway capital reserve fund currently has \$197 in it. "We bought a new [to us] truck last year." He then went over the capital reserve funds for the different departments. Motion to amend carries.

Article 7 carries as amended.

**Article 8:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see shall the Town adopt the provisions of RSA 79-F, Taxation of Farm Structures and Land Under Farm Structures, for the preservation of productive farms and associated structures as described in RSA 79-F:1-12. Recommended by the Selectmen.

Charlie said that the board of selectmen felt that adopting this would help preserve Mason's rural character and jobs on family farms. This is basically a current use credit for active working farms.

John Lewicke asked how much this will impact the taxes. Charlie said it was hard to assess, there aren't too many working farms in town. Dave Morrison asked if he could define farms.

Charlie said that was a good question. It applies to income producing farms but doesn't know the details. Did anybody else know?

After some further discussion, Steve Tamulonis asked if we do vote and it doesn't work for us, can it be rescinded? Charlie said yes, by similar vote.

Sandy Leclair said she was the one who proposed this warrant article and described her situation where they purchased property with a carriage shed. Because the building is there, it is valued at \$69K which increases the tax liability. This article would change the use of the land to exclude the building.

Stanley Brown asked if it was in current use now? Sandy said yes, but it would not be considered a house lot if approved.

Dave Morrison wanted to know if this is on a case by case basis? Charlie said yes, the paperwork would go to the assessor for review, then come to the board for approval.

Article 8 carries.

**Article 9:** Louise Lavoie moved and it was seconded to see if the Town shall vote to accept a gift of tax lot E-18 and to establish it as a town forest pursuant to RSA 31:110. Recommended by the Selectmen.

Louise invited Harry Spear to talk as chair of the forestry committee. Harry said this is the first piece of property we have the opportunity to make a town forest from. "We're working with the conservation commission to make sure we have enough open land so we don't get overrun with a lot of extra expenses. This is a section on Wilton and Greenville Rds. across from Wally Brown offered by Walter Valentine – 70.89 acres – as a gift to the town. There are no trails currently on the property. This land is available to be forested at the discretion of the forestry committee and can be used by the public. Any money from cut trees will go into the forestry committee fund. It will need to be surveyed."

Stanley Brown asked if there was wetland on that property. Harry said there was a little but it was mostly drainage.

A question was asked if we could put trails on it. Harry said if the town so approves.

Article 9 carries unanimously.

On motion of Michael Bromberg and duly seconded, Town Meeting was adjourned Sine Dai at 10:29 am.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra A. Morrison  
Mason Town Clerk