

# Mason Town Meeting

**March 18, 2023**

Held at the Mason Elementary School  
13 Darling Hill Rd., Mason, New Hampshire

Moderator Dotsie Millbrandt came to the microphone and called the 2023 Town Meeting to order at 9:03 am. She requested that nonvoters wear nonvoter 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: Select Chair Kate Batcheller, Selectman Charles (Charlie) Moser, Selectman John Suiter and Town Clerk Debra (Deb) Morrison.

The Moderator noted that the Town Election, scheduled for Tuesday, March 14, 2023, had to be postponed to Tuesday, March 28, 2023 due to a snowstorm that dropped two feet or more in parts of Mason. Many other towns postponed their elections as well.

There were 50 voters and two nonvoters present with 1,046 names on the checklist, representing a four (4) percent turnout.

The Moderator acknowledged that preparation for this meeting is a coordinated effort of many individuals and then reviewed the procedure for voters. Voters wishing to speak should use the microphone 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.

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."

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

**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:** Kate Batcheller moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the Selectmen's recommended amount of Two Million, Four Hundred Seventy-Eight Thousand, Nine Hundred Nine Dollars (\$2,478,909) 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.)

Charlie Moser made a motion to amend line item 4290-01 (Emergency Management) by replacing \$1,500 with \$31,500. Seconded by Kate Batcheller who explained that due to a recent increase in storms, this will address cleanup expenses. Barbara DeVore: The federal government is likely to eventually approve additional funds to offset these expenses. Kate said this is a necessary expense. Fire Chief Tony Burns explained how federally approved funds work and said this last storm would likely not qualify.

Motion to amend line 4290-01 carries unanimously.

Kate Batcheller made a motion and it was seconded to amend line item 4311-13 (Road Restoration) by replacing \$160,000 with \$150,000 and moving the \$10,000 to line item 4311-19 (Salt).

Motion to amend line items 4311-13 and 4311-19 carries.

Charlie moved and it was seconded to amend the total operating expenditures from \$2,478,909.24 to \$2,508,909.24. Motion to amend carries.

*Article 3 carries unanimously as amended.*

Bob Larochelle requested to go back to a conservation question regarding line item 4611-02 (Conservation Land Management) and the reason it was reduced from \$1,400 to \$1,000. Bookkeeper Brenda Wiley said that last year the forestry committee used conservation funds to maintain trails but now have their own line item.

**Article 4:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Forty Thousand Dollars (\$40,000) for the purpose of repair and maintenance of the Town's roads, or take any other action relative thereto. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (18.8 cents added to tax rate.)

Andrew Hembrow asked why this article was not part of the regular budget. Kate explained this article requests additional funding to add projects outside the scope of regular work. "We're trying to be conscious of expenses,

but would like to keep on top of the roads.” A list of upcoming projects for the year will be posted on the website.

*Article 4 carries unanimously.*

**Article 5:** John Suiter moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000) to be added to the Highway Department Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (11.7 cents added to the tax rate.)

Kate said this is another example of putting aside money for upgrading equipment. The town will be needing a new grader soon.

*Article 5 carries unanimously.*

**Article 6:** Kate Batcheller 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 purpose of purchasing a commercial grade zero-turn riding lawnmower. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (4.6 cents added to the tax rate.)

Kate said that during this past summer the zero-turn mower broke down and Wally and Jon had to use their own personal mowers.

*Article 6 carries unanimously.*

**Article 7:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Eight Thousand Dollars (\$8,000) for the purpose of replacing the library flooring. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (3.8 cents added to the tax rate.)

Charlie said that the library currently has carpeting of uncertain age (old) and this is the carpeting your children sit on. It will be replaced with a laminate of some kind that will be easier to clean.

*Article 7 carries unanimously.*

**Article 8:** John Suiter moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand Dollars (\$10,000) to be added to the Fire Department Vehicle Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by Selectmen.) (4.6 cents added to the tax rate.)

Chief Tony Burns explained that the equipment is aging. They had to replace Engine 3 last year and they will be looking for a replacement for Engine 4 in the near future.

*Article 9 carries unanimously.*

**Article 9:** Kate Batcheller moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seven Thousand, Seven Hundred, Seventy-Four dollars (\$7,774) for the purpose of purchasing two wireless headsets for the Fire Department to comply with hearing protection per OSHA. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (3.6 cents added to the tax rate.)

Chief Burns explained that the engines are very loud and exceed OSHA levels. He wants to protect folks from additional hearing loss moving forward. Colton Skorupan asked why they were so expensive. It's because they come as a package deal for each vehicle and integrate into the current system.

*Article 9 carries.*

**Article 10:** John Suiter moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Fire Equipment Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (2.3 cents added to tax the rate.)

Chief Burns gave an example saying that the extraction tools are from 1996. They will be using battery-powered tools from now on and will be exploring grants as well.

*Article 10 carries.*

**Article 11:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to amend the stated payout agents for the Recreation Revolving Fund as previously established by Warrant Article 12 in the 2012 Annual Report. The original warrant article states: "The Treasurer shall have custody of all monies in the fund, and shall pay out the same only upon order of the recreation commission (no further legislative body approval required)." The Amendment would state: "The Treasurer shall have custody of all monies in the fund, and shall pay out the same upon order of the Board of Selectmen in the absence of a Recreation Committee. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.)

Charlie said this will give the selectmen the authority to expend funds in the absence of a recreation committee.

Garth Fletcher expressed concern about the wording of this warrant article. He would like to make sure funds would be expended for recreation purposes only.

*Article 11 carries unanimously.*

**Article 12:** Kate Batcheller moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Seven Thousand, Five Hundred Dol-

lars (\$7,500) to be added to the Recreation Revolving Fund. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (3.5 cents added to tax rate.)

Kate said they would like to recreate the recreation committee as people have requested activities. This will give it funds to start with. There is approximately \$5,000 currently in the fund.

*Article 12 carries.*

**Article 13:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000) to be added to the Fire Station Capital Reserve Fund previously established. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (2.3 cents added to tax the rate.)

Charlie said this fund is for maintaining the fire station building.

*Article 13 carries.*

**Article 14:** John Suiter moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of Ten Thousand, Seven Hundred, Forty-Three Dollars (\$10,743) to be added to the Town Hall Renovation Capital Reserve Fund previously established. This sum to come from unassigned fund balance. These monies were originally deposited directly to the Town Hall Renovation Capital Reserve Fund without the required Warrant Article pursuant to RSA 35:5. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (No effect on tax rate.)

Dane Rota questioned about the plan to reopen the Town Hall which is currently closed. Kate said the goal is to have the building opening and functioning. Chief Burns recommended closing it due to the alarm situation. He contacted the State Fire Marshall and requested that he come look at the building.

Dane asked where the money will come from to proceed. Kate suggested to look at the website and look at the committee meeting minutes and possibly attend a meeting.

Barbara DeVore explained the drainage problems were fixed last year by redirecting the water. Wally Brown and the LeClairs (Earthworks) will fix the pillars underneath the building. The committee received \$10,000 in grant money which will be used for that repair.

Town Hall Committee Chair Jim Dore said there is a \$50,000 grant he can apply for, but the engineering study will need to be reexamined.

*Article 14 carries.*

**Article 15:** Kate Batcheller moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Thousand, Six Hundred Dollars

(\$1,600) to be added to the Cemetery Maintenance Fund previously established to come from unassigned fund balance. This represents cemetery plot sale revenue received in 2022. No amount to be raised from taxation. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (No effect on the tax rate.)

*Article 15 carries unanimously.*

**Article 16:** Charlie Moser moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to rescind the authority under RSA 289:2 and make all cemetery plot sales part of the General Fund. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (No effect on the tax rate.)

Charlie said cemetery plot money currently goes into a cemetery fund for each individual plot and is an accounting nightmare. The money will now go into the general fund for general maintenance of the cemeteries.

*Article 16 carries.*

**Article 17:** John Suiter moved and it was seconded to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,500) for the purpose of maintenance on the rail trail and to further authorize withdrawal of said funds from the Forestry Maintenance Fund. (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.) (No effect on the tax rate.)

*Article 17 carries unanimously.*

**Article 18:** Kate Batcheller made a motion and it was seconded by Charlie Moser to amend this warrant article to conform to the Department of Revenue (DRA) wording after the town report went to print. The article, as printed, reads...

Shall the Town readopt the Optional Veterans' Tax Credit in accordance with RSA 72:28, II for an annual tax credit on residential property of Two Thousand Dollars (\$2,000)? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.)

The article, if amended, would read...

To see if the Town will vote to readopt the Optional Veteran's Tax Credit (RSA 72:28 II) to allow for the expansion of the criteria needed to qualify for the Optional Veteran's Tax Credit of \$500 to now include those service members that are currently serving and have not yet been honorably discharged from the armed services. The readoption of the Optional Veteran's Tax Credit, if approved, would continue to offer a \$500 tax credit to all honorably discharged Veterans that qualify under the current requirements, but as of April 1, 2023, it would expand the eligibility requirements to now include

those individuals that have not yet been discharged from service in the armed forces and meet the eligibility requirements as described in revised RSA 72:28n and 21:50.

Bookkeeper Brenda Wiley said the wording was misunderstood but approved by the DRA. The word “optional” really means “standard.” This article is allowing for current armed service members to have this benefit as well.

Motion to amend carries.

*Article 18 carries unanimously as amended.*

**Article 19:** Charlie Moser made a motion and it was seconded by Kate Batcheller to amend this warrant article to conform to the Department of Revenue (DRA) wording after the town report went to print. The article, as printed, now reads...

Shall the Town readopt the ALL VETERANS TAX CREDIT, in accordance with RSA 72:28-b, for an annual tax credit on residential property which shall be equal to the same amount as the standard or optional veterans tax credit voted by the town under RSA 72:28? (Majority vote required.) (Recommended by the Selectmen.)

The article, if amended, would read...

To see if the Town will vote to readopt the All Veteran’s Tax Credit (RSA 72:28.b) to allow for the expansion of the criteria needed to qualify for the All Veteran’s Tax Credit of \$500 to now include those service members that are currently serving and have not yet been honorably discharged from the armed services. The readoption of the All Veteran’s Tax Credit, if approved, would continue to offer a \$500 tax credit to all honorably discharged Veterans that qualify under the current requirements, but as of April 1, 2023, it would expand the eligibility requirements to now include those individuals that have not yet been discharged from service in the armed forces and meet the eligibility requirements as described in revised RSA 72:28.b.

Mike Bromberg wanted to know the difference between Articles 18 and 19. Charlie said the exemptions are under different RSAs. Brenda explained that if it were not readopted, the exemption drops from \$500 to \$50.

Motion to amend carries.

*Article 19 carries as amended.*

On motion of Dotsie Millbrandt and duly seconded by Louise Lavoie, Town Meeting was adjourned Sine Dai at 10:17 am.

Debra A. Morrison  
*Mason Town Clerk*