

**ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**  
**MINUTES**

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, January 26, 2017  
**MEETING PLACE:** Walter C. Polson Middle School

Town Clerk Nancy J. Martucci called the Annual Town Meeting of the Town of Madison to order at 7:02 p.m. on Thursday, January 26, 2017 with a quorum in attendance of 300 residents (checked in with Registrar of Voters) which included 5 Board of Selectmen & Town Clerk. Additionally, in attendance were 1 reporter, IT personnel, Cable Access personnel, and 6 town employees that reside out of town.

Bob Hale of 76 Fairview Dr. nominated Ron Clark of 6 Evarts Ln. as Moderator, Second by Bruce Wilson of 45 Dairy Hill Rd. No other nominations. Motion for Ron Clark as Moderator, all in favor.

Moderator Ron Clark read the Legal Notice.

First Selectman Tom Banisch:

1. Reviewed State of the Town Report
2. Reviewed Five-Year Capital Plan
3. Received the Annual Report of the Permanent Boards, Commissions, Agencies, Committees and the Town's Auditor Report in accordance with Article II, Section 2.1.4.1 of the Town Charter.

First Selectman Thomas Banisch gave a Power Point presentation of the State of the Town and Five Year Capital Plan. An open question and answer period followed.

Resident questioned what the details are for Phase II of down town and funds. First Selectman Banish responded that he didn't talk about it because there were no funds. He anticipates it being done more piece meal because the cost is 1 million dollars. He would like to proceed as funds are available. Going forward it will depend on what other things will draw our resources.

Resident asked what Phase II would consist of. First Selectman Banish answered from Henny Penny down to Rt. 79. Median work and about 10 more street lights, 5 on each side of the street. The underground is done but still looking at a price tag of 1 million dollars. There may be some things that can be done that won't have to rip up the ground.

Bonnie McManamy of 198 Opening Hill Rd. said the walkway from Rt. 79 to Henny Penny seems adequate, and there has been talk about sidewalks on Bradley. First Selectman Banish answered that we don't need to touch the sidewalk from Rt. 79 to Henny Penny because we don't

need to rip up downtown unnecessarily. There is a grant earmarked for sidewalks on Bradley Rd. He has discussed with property owners on Brandley Rd. about a partnership to help put in sidewalks. The \$400,000 the town has won't do everything he wants to do but they are working on that now.

Barbara Davis of 97 Stone Rd. asked what project was causing the bump up that appeared on the Debt Service chart. Stacy Nobitz, Finance Director, responded that it was a result of refunding bonds that saved over \$400,000 last year and the payment got pushed to 2017.

Lynn Charles of 5 Nichols Hill Rd. said that residents will be meeting with a moderator regarding Academy School but asked First Selectman Banish to elaborate on the economic tax base he mentioned. First Selectman Banish said it's not his decision rather the town's, but he thinks it should be developed privately because the town doesn't have the funds to develop the school property. Cost would be 5-12 million dollars. He would like to see a private developer so it goes on the tax rolls because they can accomplish what the town can't.

A resident asked about what work is expected on roads in North Madison, finishing up Opening Hill Rd. and County Rd. There is no protection on the side of the road so ruts are terrible. First Selectman Banish responded our goal is to get to as many roads as we can. We can do heavier maintenance to take care of the problems. Public works is dedicated to addressing the issues. Call his office to tell them specifically. Spring will be a big push. Resident said the Opening Hill drains are set too deep and the road isn't wide enough. Banish pointed out that the Public Works Director was present at the meeting and will have him look into it.

A Resident noted that last year there was a lot of concern about a spike in health care costs to the town. Asked what town is trying to proactively do to reduce those costs. First Selectman Banish responded that we have done a number of things. First proactive wellness health programs with employees to keep them healthy so premiums go down. Reviewed programs in schools went to HSA plan and contribution from employees. On town side we are changing the plan so it isn't as rich and employees pay more to bring down cost. Offering incentives to employees to follow what the doctors tell them. Our experience is stable now and tapered off.

Resident asked if what First Selectman Banish mentioned regarding what he would like to see happen to Academy Street School would be the only plan, or are other plans going to be looked at as well. First Selectman Banish replied absolutely. There will be workshops to hear what the residents want. But he doesn't want it to drag on and would like it to be open but move on. Solving the problem can be an economic contributor to the town.

Emily Eisenlohr of 168 Neck Rd. asked why workshops are being conducted on Academy St. School after the Library is going to Referendum when that's where the Library should be. Why can't we look at all the options before the vote. Looking at Guilford's library is not anything near Madison. Guilford parking has no time limits but Madison has time limits. Madison parking is always full. What will the Madison Library expansion do to downtown. First Selectman Banish answered that 10 million can't do for Academy School for what it can do for the Library. Library people have chosen their own path. It does not include Academy School. There has been a lot of inactivity at Academy and it needs a direction but it's costing us \$800 a month for electricity without turning the lights on. It's been a long time and would like to see positive movement.

A resident from Neck Road questioned Tom Banisch's vision of Academy St. School. He responded that it is a 55,000 sq. ft. building that has been closed up for 12 years. It hasn't had heat in it so the structure has suffered. It's leaking. We looked at other things to utilize the building but didn't look at selling it. Vision appraisal puts a value on the building but the opportunity for down town could be a lot in tax revenue. He doesn't want to lead the discussion on what it should be but should hear creative ideas and feedback from the public. It could be shops and housing. He would like to see it on the tax bills and paying us all back for carrying it all these years.

Janet Nicolini of 8 Madison Ave. asked if town & school employees are paying enough for health care costs. First Selectman Banisch said the plan is not as good as the State but we are now looking into it. The school is different because of contracts but for the town we are looking into it. We are raising their portion for premiums so it is more in line with other towns so it will go into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Having said that Tom said this is now an announcement because they haven't been told that yet.

Beth Coyne of 39 Winter Hill Rd. asked that the BOS look at all facets of compensation to employees because health care is just once aspect in their compensation package and not just defray the cost to employees that work really hard for the town and our children.

RESOLVED, that the Annual Report of the permanent Boards, Commissions, Agencies, Committees and the Town's Auditor Report in accordance with Article II, Section 2.1.4.1 of the Town Charter, are hereby received.

#### RESOLUTION APPROVED

4. To consider and take action to enact the proposed Town Ordinance Section 20-11. Property tax relief; Senior Tax Freeze Program for Certain Elderly and/or Disabled Homeowners as approved by the Board of Selectmen on December 19, 2016.

Bob Hale made a motion to go to paper ballot, seconded by Gus Horvath of 34 Aylesbury Circle.

Moderator Ron Clark in an effort to be fair and flexible asked how many people wanted to ask questions and how many wanted to make comments. Only a few people said they would ask questions so he thought it would be doable.

Bob Hale made a motion to take action to enact the proposed town ordinance for Senior Tax Freeze, seconded, all in favor.

Maureen Lopes of 25 Old Farms Rd. questioned what happens to existing programs to seniors and if the total bill from Senior Tax Freeze went to all the other taxpayers, and how many programs will there be. Alma Carroll, Tax Collector, responded that there would be 3 programs. Abatement and Deferral program and this will be a third if it passes. Person will qualify in whatever program benefits them the most. All programs combined will be 1 percent of the town budget which will be \$750,000 approximately. Additionally, Scott Gyllensten owner 5 Bridle Path Ln. who was on the committee that put together the model they built to project the ordinance spoke. There are three plans but they are a coordination of benefits between the plans. The cap would be 1 percent. \$700,000 is not completely accurate because we are already allocating under

the 2 existing programs. It will cost the medium house \$15 a year and by the time you get 30 years out the average tax pay who is not part of the program pays \$130 a year (\$11/mo.).

Dwight Lopes of 25 Old Farms Rd. asked if he was going to vote on it tonight he would like it explained to him and why should residents vote favorable for the Senior Tax Freeze. Moderator Ron Clark responded that it has been going on for quite some time now and asked if anyone was equipped to answer. Scott Gyllensten (former Finance Committee Member) and Bennett Publin of 18 Salt Meadow Ln. (current Finance Committee Member) stood to give an overview. Scott explained there was a need because the existing programs weren't working. A study brought to the Madison Coalition (a number of towns and organizations) wanted to look at a proposal to help seniors stay in town. They went around to organizations and they put together a plan that is similar to what is in place in Guilford now. They had the basis to look at what the tax relief plans are in other towns - 20-30 towns for income qualified seniors. This program freezes the taxes to stay the same even through revaluation. The other 2 programs don't help in a revaluation. You will get the best benefit. Takes into account the number of years you have paid into taxes. Bennet said it has been a very long hall for this ordinance to get here. There have been other studies but did not recommend a freeze. This time a bipartisan committee voted unanimously for this ordinance. This is based on the models from Guilford and Durham and increased the eligibility requirements from what those towns have. Those towns have no cap. This caps the property value at the median home price in Madison. Guilford and Durham have 100% income eligibility. Our ordinance has the income eligibility reduced to 70%. So after living here for 20 years and paying taxes the maximum income is about \$75,000. Less generous then our neighboring towns. Idea is to reward those that have been here the longest.

Dennis Crow of 141 Twilight Dr. said they didn't explain the program itself. Is the increase of taxes forgiven. Moderator Ron Clark answered yes.

Sandy McKissick of 17 Copperfield Dr. asked Scott Gyllensten about his comment that seniors are leaving town. Asked if there supporting data of people leaving town because taxes are too high. Scott said it was based on conversations he has had with people. Moderator Ron Clark stated there are too many variables and we don't want to go down that road to make a fair assessment.

Mark Casparino of 43 Hammonassett Mdws Rd. said Bennett said a person can qualify with a medium house value. He then read section 4a of the ordinance which states 100% of the assessed value of the property...shall not exceed 100% of the value. Would like everyone to understand and clarify for everyone that it's the assessed value which means 70% of the appraised value. Scott Gyllensten said it is based on assessed value. When the Board of Finance approved the ordinance it went back to BOS and hey made changes and use of the census to the Assessors own records. Source of the comparison changed but not the difference of assessed and medium.

Lianne Herdle of 36 Manzoni Farm Rd. asked if more seniors will benefit with this new program or fewer. Alma Carroll answered yes more people will benefit because the income limit is higher on the freeze program. About an \$11,000 difference between the maximum income on the Abatement program as opposed to the Freeze program. As Scott said when you apply to the programs you are going to get the benefit based on wherever you fall. Having the higher income between the programs maximum and the cap that is increased from .70 to 1% of the budget there is a larger pool of money also.

Walter Lodynsky of 86 East Wharf asked will someone counsel people who want to participate in programs as to which program benefit is better for them. Austin Hall, Director of Senior Services and resident said applications, questions and counseling will be held at the Senior Center.

Charles Beckman of 509 County Rd. asked about the numbers in the article if correct or not because he thought it was a scare tactic. The article said there will be a cost of \$700,000 per year in taxes to residents. He read numbers from another article that Joe McDougald (Board of Finance) wrote from January 17, 2017 and the numbers used in his article showed about \$5,000 per year and there would be an anticipated \$1,000 with the new Freeze program which seems correct with the number of people in the current Abatement program. Scott Gyllensten responded that he didn't agree with the \$700,000 in the Source article. It's an alternative fact. The number comes from taking the total town budget and multiplying it by 100 basis point which is the cap of the program which gives you the number referenced in the Source today. That's not correct because its 100 basis points, we allocate 70 basis points and the difference is 30 basis points so the max increase if you look at the model the actual cost in the first year is about \$100,000 assuming every single eligible senior takes advantage of the program. Town of Guilford still doesn't have 100 % involvement and they have been running their program for 20 years.

Fillmore McPherson of 29 Evarts Ln. made clarification of the numbers from the article in the Source that he believed the \$15 was meant to be \$15 a piece for all the other tax payers in town.

Bonnie McManamy of 198 Opening Hill Rd. stated she was a real estate agent and worked with the Deferral program with some people and doesn't know why it can't stay in place. She sold a house for someone that all taxes were taken from proceeds. It was a great program and it doesn't put the burden on the whole town. Alma Carroll commented that that the Deferral program won't go away. There will be 3 programs for people to take advantage of. That program has helped people.

Jennifer Lee of 17 Bradley Rd. asked for confirmation that the program is a sliding scale, how many years do you have to live in Madison, and if Income was included. Someone answered that was correct and it's total number of years in town.

Ron Hick of 15 Hamilton Dr. stated the increase in his taxes over the years.

Roger Patrick O'Hanlon of 17 Fern Ln. stated we are talking about people that give to this town asking for the opportunity to not leave town. Why are we having a debate about such a small amount of money that will have such a big impact. Moderator Ron Clark said the people are deciding and that's what the process is about. Point is well taken but it's a democratic process and we will see the outcome tonight. It's complex and involves a lot of questions.

Wendy Lewis of 75 Garnet Park Dr. asked what qualifies number of years in Madison and can it be that you have lived in multiple locations within town. Scott Gyllensten responded that it's total time of paying taxes in town.

Resident in audience asked if there will be a point to make comments, not questions. Moderator Ron Clark asked the audience to raise their hands who would not like to see comments and it was a majority. He said we will not entertain comments and everyone is ready to vote and responded majority yes and it seconded. Majority rules.

Moderator turned vote over to Town Clerk Nancy Martucci. It was explained that the Town Clerk's office staff, Deputy Registrar of Voters and Alma Carroll would each take a seating section in the auditorium and would collect everyone's ballot. Everyone should complete the green ballot that was handed to them as they checked in. Answer yes or no.

Motion made and seconded to conduct a vote, all in favor to go to vote.

Moderator said while the votes are being counted the meeting will continue on and when results are completed we will stop so the results are known.

**Item 5 & 6: Library discussion.**

Referendum on February 7, 2017

Moderator Ron Clark reread the question: Shall the Town of Madison appropriate \$9,100,000 for costs related to a \$9,000,000 grant to the EC Scranton Memorial Library for Additions, renovations and improvements to the library building, and authorize the issue of bonds and notes to finance the appropriation?

This is a step to bring it to referendum.

Herb Gram of 287 Boston Post Rd. Wanted it known that the vote is for 9 million but the Library has raised over 5 million on their own. This is not all coming from the town.

Joe McDougald of 23 Silo Hill Rd. asked if someone from the library could please explain parts of the renovation. Beth Coyne, President of the Library Board, and Henry Griggs, Vice President spoke. Beth said in 2009 they participated in a facility review and considered Academy St. School as an alternative site but were told it was not an appropriate site. They moved forward with their plans and went for public/private partnership. They asked for 60 percent from town and they raise 40 percent. Henry said the 2008 vote was turned down and took it as a signal to scale back. At that time it was a 17.7 million dollar project and now it's a 15 million dollar project. What was a 13.3 million dollar bond is now a 9 million dollar bond. They have taken it down considerably but still get a great project and they are ready to go. Two (2) million was from the State with the help of Representative Noreen Kokoruda and another 1 million from State Library Construction Fund. If he were asked to put this on hold now the money is there now but can't say it would be there again in the future.

Eileen Banisch of Boston Post Rd. noted that along with this project they will be adding 47 additional parking spots.

Janet Nicolini of 8 Madison Ave. asked if this does not pass what happens to the 5 million raised - do you lose that or do you do a renovation. Beth Coyne responded that they will lose some of that. One of the 1 million dollars from the State is contingent upon this footprint and they would have to go back and reapply. There are a few private donations that are contingent upon this project as well and they would have to go back to ask. No guarantee that the 4.5 that they have in the bank today would still be there. They would have to go back to the drawing board.

Emily Eisenlohr of 168 Neck Rd. wanted to know what is the size of the new event room and of the 47 parking spaces how many will be allotted to staff. Beth Crowley, Director of the Library. Parking will be open to staff and public. By adding 47 spaces they are giving back to the town that many spaces in the public lot. They have a little side lot that their staff can park in. The event room 100 sq. ft. bigger and hold about 90 people. Most programs bring in 50-60 people.

Robert Morrison of 117 Ridgewood Ave. asked in view of the State situation, do we have that 2 million dollars in the bank now and can they take that away from us. Beth Coyne said it is her understanding no they can't. It is earmarked for this project. When we have a successful vote and we have a certain amount of money pledged and in the bank. There is a timeframe we have to meet. Otherwise we would have to go back to the drawing board.

Moderator Ron Clark read the results of the Senior Tax Freeze vote as 222 yes votes and 57 no votes.

Continued: Robert Morrison asked how the 15 million construction cost is derived. Beth Crowley answered it was done through their architect and includes construction, furniture and administrative costs. It is all documented.

Barbara Davis of 97 Stone Rd. stated that over ½ the people in Madison have library cards and it is the most used building in town by all ages. How soon after the referendum will they breakdown to start construction? Beth Coyne responded 6 months.

Resident questioned what would happen to the 2 houses that had been donated to library. Could they better serve the library as rental property. Henry Griggs answered that the Library Trustees purchased the land and it was not a donation. There has been rental income but there was an electrical fire and the roof repaired and the maintenance costs are mounting. The blue duplex will be demolished for parking because there is no other way.

Bob Hale motioned to adjourn meeting and seconded by Bruce Wilson. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy J. Martucci, CCTC, CMC  
Madison Town Clerk