

**CITY OF MASON  
COUNCIL MEETING  
JANUARY 23, 2012**

The meeting was called to order at 7:03 p.m. Pastor Jerry Pelfrey opened the meeting in prayer. All those present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ATTENDANCE**

The following members of Council were present: Victor Kidd, Barbara Spaeth, Rich Cox, Tom Grossmann, Charlene Pelfrey, Don Prince, and David Nichols.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A motion to approve the January 9, 2012 Council Meeting Minutes was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Rick Inskeep of Butler-Warren Road raised concerns regarding tax abatements and the fixed donation the schools receive. He does not think that it is fair that residents' property taxes increase with additional school levies while the donation from the abated company does not change.

**ORDINANCE 2012-4 APPROVAL OF THE EASEMENT ACQUISITION FOR THE STORM SEWER ACROSS LOT 70 ("COMMON AREA" AKA OPEN SPACE) OF CONCORD CROSSING SUBDIVISION, SECTION "C" FOR THE CONCORD CROSSING HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION PROPERTY**

A motion to read by title only was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Cox. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Richard Fair addressed Council and stated that the Concord Crossing Homeowners' Association has agreed to dedicate a new stormwater easement at no cost to the City. This easement is about 330' x 20' located north of the intersection of Buerkle Drive and North Forest Avenue. The easement is necessary to repair an existing stormwater sewer that drains into Branch No. 1 of the Muddy Creek.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Councilmember Pelfrey, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2012-4 was made by Councilmember Prince, seconded by Vice Mayor Kidd. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**PROCLAMATION IN RECOGNITION OF ROGER CUPP AND HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE FESTIVALS OF MASON**

Mayor Nichols invited Councilmember Pelfrey and Councilmember Prince to join him as he read and presented the proclamation to Roger Cupp. After the presentation, Councilmember Pelfrey stated that as the first president of Festivals of Mason, Roger put together great events that Mason residents enjoy and that he isn't even a resident of Mason. Councilmember Prince stated that under Roger Cupp's leadership Festivals of Mason was able to end the year with \$8000 in the bank. Mayor Nichols thanked Roger for his hard work.

**ORDINANCE 2012-5 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF \$25,000 TO FESTIVALS OF MASON, INC., IN SUPPORT OF THE 2012 HERITAGE FESTIVAL AND CHRISTMAS IN MASON**

A motion to read by title only was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Eric Hansen stated that in 2004 the City entered into a formal agreement to provide funding for the community festivals held in Mason through the FOM organization. In 2011, funding for FOM was substantially reduced from \$50,000 to \$25,000 due to economic conditions and the City's need to control expenses. He explained that the City is the primary financial backer of these events in addition to providing other resources and significant labor hours to make the events successful. Last year, Scott Pierce, Chairman of the event, worked with the City to find opportunities to further reduce labor expenses, while continuing to provide a high quality event. FOM also relies on sponsorship, sales, vendor fees, and other revenues to offset the expenses of these events. Eric stated that in 2007, the City was asked to help provide ongoing administrative support for FOM. The city began providing on a trial basis a year-round contact point and business support through a Finance Clerk. While this arrangement worked well, with the departure of the Finance Clerk last year and the City's moratorium on filling vacant full time positions, FOM took on more of the administrative support for the event. He stated that Festivals of Mason had an opportunity to meet and present their request to the Finance Committee as part of the 2012 budget process. The Finance Committee recommended continuation of the reduced funding amount of \$25,000.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Council discussed Festivals of Mason's (FOM) efforts to seek additional funding through sponsorships, perhaps a matching funds program. Roger Cupp stated that FOM financial statements are open to the public and he felt that all possible sponsors have been approached. He stated that the Heritage Festival budget is around \$35,000. Mayor Nichols stated that the Finance Committee did consider a matching funds requirement, but decided it would be difficult to succeed in this tough economy. Councilmember Prince stated that there are a significant number of donors contacted and in recent years these donations have diminished possibly as a result of the poor economy.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2012-5 was made by Councilmember Cox, seconded by Councilmember Grossmann. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**ORDINANCE 2012-6 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT IN THE NOT-TO-EXCEED AMOUNT OF \$4000 TO THE WARREN COUNTY HUMANE ASSOCIATION A PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Pelfrey, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Eric Hansen discussed the next three ordinances which fall under the same policy established in 2006 by the Finance Committee which guides contributions to local non-profit organizations. The policy recommended limiting City contributions to \$8,000 and no more than a third of a group's budget. This is accomplished through a matching program where the City contributes one dollar for every two dollars raised from other sources by the non-profit group. The maximum contribution would remain \$8,000. During the 2011 budget process, due to economic conditions of the City, the Finance Committee modified the policy to adjust the maximum contribution for 2011 at \$4,000 for all groups. All other guidelines for receiving these matching funds remain as established. Eric explained that after meeting with outside groups, the Finance Committee recommended financial support in the 2012 Budget consistent with the 2011 Budget and allow Council to consider increased requests in 2012. All three groups have submitted a request for increased funding. Amendments to the attached Ordinances will be necessary if Council is interested in increasing funding for these groups. He stated that the Warren County Humane Association's first year to participate in the City's matching program was 2010, they received \$4000 in 2011, and are requesting \$8000 this year. Eric stated that the Mason Historical Society has been partnering with the City since 1993 and has received various amounts over those years including \$8000 in 2009-2010 and \$4000 in 2011. They are requesting \$10,000 in 2012. He stated that the Mason-Deerfield Arts Alliance has been partnering with the City since 2006 with an initial donation of \$25,000 and has received contributions from the matching program since then. They are requesting \$5000 as part of the matching program and an additional \$15,000 for the Arts Festival in 2012. They are also requesting in-kind services from City staff in support of the festival, valued at approximately \$4000. Eric stated that representatives from all three groups are here to answer any questions.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Mari Lee Schwarzwald, Executive Director of the Warren County Humane Association, stated that their facility at 230 Cook Road in Lebanon is the only animal shelter in Warren County. She explained that this shelter provides a safe haven for homeless pets, reunites lost pets with their owners, and prepares animals for adoption. She expressed her appreciation for Mason's support and said that any additional support will make an immediate and positive impact on their ability to continue this life-saving work. Mari responded to Council questions by stating that increased funds are needed to care for the higher number of animals left at the shelter. She also explained that adoption fees have been reduced to encourage more adoptions.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2012-6 was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Grossmann. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**ORDINANCE 2012-7 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF \$4000 TO THE MASON HISTORICAL SOCIETY, A PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Pelfrey, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

During Council discussion, Judy Cox, President of the Mason Historical Society at 207 Church Street, discussed the work and expenses of this organization. Recently they provided research, pictures, and displays for the Mason Central High School 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the James Knott Firehouse events. The Mason Historical Society maintains a museum, the building, grounds, and preservation of artifacts that promote and preserve Mason's history. She thanked the City for their continued support and stated that an increase in this financial support would be appreciated. She stated that they anticipate additional work with Mason's bi-centennial celebration. In response to Mayor Nichols question she responded that they will explore corporate sponsorships to support their bi-centennial work. Council had a general discussion regarding the important work that all these organizations do. They discussed following Finance Committee recommendations at this time and considering additional donations later in the year.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2012-7 was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Pelfrey. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

**ORDINANCE 2012-8 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF \$4000 TO THE MASON AREA ARTS COUNCIL, A PRIVATE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

A motion to read by title only was made by Councilmember Prince, seconded by Councilmember Spaeth. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to suspend the rule and allow for adoption after the first reading was made by Councilmember Pelfrey, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

Meredith Raffel of 5362 Farmridge Way and Executive Director of the Mason-Deerfield Arts Alliance (MDAA) clarified that the City contributed a total of \$20,000 in 2006 which included a \$5000 contribution for start-up and a \$15,000 match. She explained that the extra funds requested would be used to grow the Arts Festival beyond this region and increase attendance to a projected 10,000 to 15,000. The additional out-of-town guests would have a positive economic impact on the community. She explained that the funds would be used to pay for additional entertainment and increased marketing. With increased attendance, the event has the possibility of growing into a 2-day event. Ms. Raffel discussed business sponsorships and other art events MDAA provides to the community. Council questioned MDAA's consideration of moving the

Arts Festival to another location outside of Mason. She responded that this is being considered as a way to generate additional money.

A motion to adopt Ordinance 2012-8 was made by Councilmember Grossmann, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

A motion to provide in-kind-services for the Arts Festival was made by Councilmember Pelfrey, seconded by Councilmember Prince. VOTE: ALL YEAS.

### **CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**

▶ The City's 2011 Hope for the Holidays program assisted 51 families, 123 children this year. Donations from the American Legion and VFW, as well as Mason City employees, employees of Tramonte & Sons, CMC Properties, Sleep Diagnostics Center, and a growing number of residents helped to make this year's event a success.

▶ City offices will be closed on Monday, February 20, in observance of President's Day.

▶ The City will host its 10<sup>th</sup> annual United Way Bowl-a-Thon beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Monday, February 20, at Mason Bowl. The proceeds from the games will be donated to the City's 2012 United Way Campaign. Council members are welcome to attend. This has traditionally been one of the more successful fundraisers raising about 20% of the total contributions.

▶ A New Resident Coffee will be held in the meeting rooms at the Community Center on February 1 at 10:30 a.m. This is a wonderful opportunity for new residents to learn more about Mason and the Center.

▶ On February 18, from 8:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. the Center, in partnership with the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, will host the second annual Race-to-Anyplace event. The Race-to-Anyplace is a stationary bike event where teams of 4-12 riders compete to see who can ride the farthest to raise money for the cause.

▶ In February, the Center will launch the new Mason Swim Academy. This innovative swim lesson program will be led by Ken Heis, Head Swim Team Coach, and Todd Billhimer, Assistant Swim Team Coach. The Academy uses a lesson program developed by Swim America-experts who have coached swimming as high as the Olympic competition. The program is taught by certified coaches and is designed to teach swimmers of all interests and does not require participation in the Manta Ray Swim Team. Anyone interested in the Academy can register online at [www.imaginemason.org](http://www.imaginemason.org) or call the Center at 229-8555.

▶ The Center, in partnership with Sgt. Jerome Deidesheimer and Sgt. Jeremy Saylor with the Mason Police Department, will offer women ages 18 and older a class to learn the basics of self-defense including home, vehicle, and personal defense. The class is offered February 23 and March 11. To register go online at [www.imaginemason.org](http://www.imaginemason.org) or call the Center at 229-8555.

► February is American Heart Month. During February, purchase a heart for \$1 for display in the Center and be entered into a drawing for a free massage from the TriHealth Pavilion Spa. Also on February 3 anyone wearing red into the facility can be entered into a raffle to receive a free Italian dinner from Campionis Pizzeria.

► Last November City Council authorized refinancing of \$30 million in sewer revenue bonds which represents about 1/3 of the City's total debt and goes to utilities. Staff proposed a unique opportunity to use the City's Aaa Moody's rating and issue general obligation bonds to generate a lower rate and eliminate some of the reserve trust and other requirements. At the time, staff cautioned that the refinancing would only move forward if a reasonable savings could be realized in a volatile bond market. Staff hoped for a savings of as much as \$600,000 per year or about \$8.5 million over the life of the debt. The actual bond sale was completed last week and the City's credit rating and market timing led to a historic low interest rate. As a result the annual savings are closer to \$700,000 per year or about \$11.5 million over the life of the loan. Council's careful financial management, a high credit rating, and fortunate market timing lead to substantial savings to Mason residents and the utility fund well into the future. Eric referred Council to the Moody's presentation in the packet and suggested that this may be worth keeping in a permanent file. Eric responded to Mayor Nichols' inquiry by stating that this represents about \$3 million in net present value to the City. Council had a general discussion on the City's financial position and congratulated City staff for their efforts in attaining the Aaa Moody's rating. Council recommended communicating this information to Mason residents.

► Council had a general discussion on modifying the typical Council Meeting schedule by changing from two regular Council meetings each month to one meeting. Points raised during this discussion included reserving the second meeting for work sessions and committee meetings, length of meetings, residents' access to Council, public reaction to a reduced schedule, and possible reduction in workload for City staff.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS** none

#### **OLD AND NEW BUSINESS**

Councilmember Pelfrey asked Richard Fair whose responsibility it is to repair a large hole near the southern entrance off of US-42 into the UDF. Richard responded that it is the owner's responsibility and that engineering has brought the issue to the attention of the owner and will speak to them again. She also reported some trees down near the Gould property.

Councilmember Cox said that some residents have contacted him regarding long delays at the Mason-Montgomery and Tylersville intersection for traffic travelling southbound late in the evening and Sunday morning. Staff will investigate.

Mayor Nichols thanked the park employees who saved the City installation costs by laying carpet in the Municipal Center community rooms. Mayor Nichols announced Council Committee assignments. He explained that time was taken to review current and future needs of the City. As a result of this consideration, he stated that some committees have been deactivated and two new committees have been created. The Building Committee has been dissolved and

any building tasks will be handled by the Public Works Committee. The two committees added are the Centennial Committee in preparation for the City's 200 year anniversary and the Veterans Affairs Committee. Mayor Nichols distributed Council Committee Assignments.

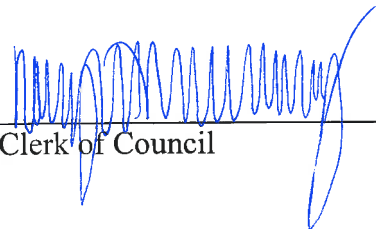
A motion to approve all Mason City Council Committee appointments as provided was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Cox. VOTE: ALL YEAS

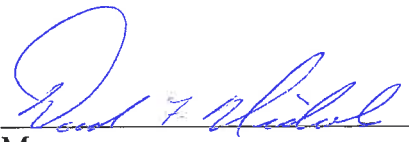
**RECOGNITION OF VISITORS**

Perry Schwartz of 6309 Tarton Fields Lane asked if the committee assignments and meetings are public. Mayor Nichols responded by stating that the committees each Councilmember serves on is on the City website and that committee meetings are open to the public. The public is notified of these meetings by email subscription.

**ADJOURN**

A motion to adjourn was made by Vice Mayor Kidd, seconded by Councilmember Cox. VOTE: ALL YEAS. TIME: 9:43 p.m.

  
Clerk of Council

  
Mayor