Amherst Media has created a 5½ minute video of Mr. Gregg' remarks. It can be viewed at <a href="http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PO28xeDJvk&feature=player\_embedded">http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6PO28xeDJvk&feature=player\_embedded</a>. The video is also available for free download from Amherst Media's iTunes Store at <a href="https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/amherst-media/id439722787">https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/amherst-media/id439722787</a>.

## Amherst Town Meeting Moderator Harrison Gregg's Farewell Remarks November 28, 2012

Could I ask you to wait just a moment. I'd like to make a personal statement before I recognize Ms. O'Keeffe.

Unless the SB calls us back before the next election, this will be my last Town Meeting. This will be my last Town Meeting as Moderator, and I'm not running for reelection. And I wonder if you'll indulge me for just..., I promise to stay under 3 minutes. [laughter]

I want to briefly first of all just to thank everybody that I've worked with, but most particularly the Town staff, and the Clerk and her staff, the Town Manager and his staff, especially his staff, and all. The list is too long so I am not going to try to thank everyone. But you've all found that being in Town government one of the great advantages of it is the great people you work with.

When I was elected 11 years ago as president of the Massachusetts Moderator's Association, I was asked to say a few words and this is part of what I said.

Like most of you, I love Town Meeting. I love the ideal of participatory democracy, the right to speak one's mind, the right to petition one's government for redress of grievances or simply to bring forward a good idea that might benefit the community as a whole. I love the reality of everyone in town – or at least those who care to do so -- coming together to talk things out and share responsibility for the actions that will be taken in their name. I love the way every issue has at least two sides and sometimes five or six, the way the undecided members of town meeting agonize over difficult decisions, swayed one way by one speaker, the other way by the next. I love the fact that those who come with their minds made up at least have to listen to the other side, and listen politely. I love the fact that these folks who have spent a few hours together facing the difficult choices of budgets and bylaws and zoning will never again be able – at least not honestly – to pretend that governing a town is an easy thing to do.

I love it when reluctant taxpayers are persuaded to pay a little more for something worth having, and when those who come eager to promote their pet project discover that a town must choose among priorities. I love when skeptics are persuaded and when dreamers are brought down to earth. I love it when the town administration or the planning board discovers that it hasn't thought things through as thoroughly as it thought it had, when some mere town meeting member sees something that committees, boards, and town employees have missed.

I love it when someone speaks from the heart and gives a mere issue a deeper meaning. I love it when the presenter of an article explains it so clearly that everyone understands it at once, or when an advocate for or against a motion presents an argument so lucid, so tightly reasoned that minds are changed and the inevitable

becomes an impossibility. I love it when, after listening to 45 reasons not to do a good thing, town meeting decides to do it anyway.

There are other things that make me love being a moderator. I love remembering people's names and guessing what they will say. I love knowing the rules and applying them well. I love treating everyone equally, fairly, and respectfully – even those who don't deserve it. I love guiding the meeting through complex parliamentary situations. And finally, I love helping my town to make the decisions that have to be made.

Ms. O'Keeffe for a motion.
[standing ovation]
[gavel]
Applause is not welcome in Amherst Town Meeting. Ms. O'Keeffe.

Stephanie O'Keeffe: Thank you so much to our Town Moderator who has just given us extraordinary service for all of these years. You can imagine how difficult that job is. Thank you very much on behalf of the whole community and Town Meeting. Harrison, thank you.

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## REMARKS TO THE MASSACHUSETTS MODERATORS ASSOCIATION BY HARRISON GREGG, PRESIDENT - NOVEMBER 1, 2002

I am honored to accept the presidency of this association, as I have been honored over the past six or seven years to partake of your company, your experience, and your wisdom. Each of us holds a unique position in his or her community, and I know we all find it a comfort and a joy – in meetings like this and in exchanges by phone or by computer– to share the burdens and rewards of our position with the only other people in the world who know what it's really like.

Next March the voters of my town will decide whether to approve a proposed charter that would abolish Town Meeting and the Select Board and replace them with a counsel and mayor. Some of you have faced such referendums in your own towns and you are still here; some members of this association are no longer with us because of just such a regime change. But I may go down in the annals of this organization as the only president to have his own town meeting abolished halfway through his term.

Like most of you, I love Town Meeting. I love the ideal of participatory democracy, the right to speak one's mind, the right to petition one's government for redress of grievances or simply to bring forward a good idea that might benefit the community as a whole. I love the reality of everyone in town – or at least those who care to do so -- coming together to talk things out and share responsibility for the actions that will be taken in their name. I love the way every issue has at least two sides and sometimes five or six, the way the undecided members of town meeting agonize over difficult decisions, swayed one way by one speaker, the other way by the next. I love the fact that those who come with their minds made up at least have to listen to the other side, and listen politely. I love the fact that these folks who have spent a few hours together facing the difficult choices of budgets and bylaws and zoning will never again be able – at least not honestly – to pretend that governing a town is an easy thing to do.

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I love guiding the meeting through complex parliamentary situations. And finally, I love helping my town to make the decisions that have to be made.

I don't know what will happen to Amherst Town Meeting. I don't know how many of you will face in your towns what I am facing in mine, or whether New England Town Meeting—the purest example of government of the people, by the people and for the people — will succumb to alienation and indifference and ultimately perish from the earth.

I do know that as long as there are town meetings there will be moderators—people like us who are not only able and willing but (if the truth be told) EAGER to pick up the gavel. And as long as there are moderators they will enjoy the support, encouragement, and fellowship of the Massachusetts Moderators Association.