

Town Meeting

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school spending packages and the resolutions that voters will be asked to approve.

In preparation for the financial town meeting, the council will provide a special presentation Monday, May 22, at 7 p.m. at the library about the new town hall plans that are expected to cost \$1 million more than originally estimated. The increased costs reflect two items — prevailing wages used for base-cost estimates and costs of a full, finished basement. Original estimates from late last year were for a partial, unfinished basement and base costs of \$200 per square foot. Town officials are now recommending a full basement providing for emergency management needs and storage. The latest cost estimates are \$265 per square foot.

Proposed budget

The 2006-2007 budget figures reflect an increase of 4.4 percent for a tax rate of \$9.49 per thousand dollars of property valuation as compared to \$9.09 for the current fiscal year that ends June 30. That rate reflects an increase of \$152 for the owner of a median-valued home of \$380,000 on the island.

Changing ratio

A few weeks ago, Council

President David Long reported what he called a “remarkable development” in taxpayer spending. The proposed budget is his seventh as a multi-term council member.

Every year in the past that he has served, Long said, the total budget represented about one-third of the money for the town and about two-thirds for schools. “This year, the split is 41 percent for the town and 59 percent for the schools. This is a good thing,” he noted.

Bonding practice

Another new feature in the proposed budget is the principle of bonding for major equipment and repair needs. That bonding approach was adopted during the council’s budget sessions in March. Town Administrator Bruce Keiser proposed bonding for major equipment purchases, with \$550,000 earmarked for the public works department next year. Bonded for five years, that spending would cost about \$66,000 in interest but that could be offset by at least that amount in savings on repairs to very old vehicles, according to Keiser.

As an extension of that principle, Keiser and the council decided to reduce funds for fire department apparatus this year, with the

promise of such bonding to finance fire department needs in the 2007-08 budget year.

The capital plan for next year will include \$100,000 as the town share with a state matching grant for a new salt-storage structure at its existing location at the Taylor Point wastewater treatment plant.

Budget features

Among features of the council budget are a 3.75 percent salary adjustments for police and 3.5 percent increases for all other union employees and department heads. Also new is the phasing in of the second part of the new emergency medical services incentives at an added cost of \$83,174 that is offset by more than that amount in revenue.

In addition, there is a phase in of \$519,573 in recommended improvements to the police, library, and Community Center buildings and capital spending for \$550,000 under debt service for heavy equipment, which includes two dump trucks, a street sweeper and a backhoe, to be leased for five years at a gross cost of \$616,875 for ownership.

Resolutions

Three resolutions to be adopted are for the town hall, exemptions for volunteer firefighters and emergency medical services volunteers, and a new formula for tax relief for totally disabled people being provided in response to requests for tax relief for people who are deaf.

Four resolutions are annual “housekeeping” items: authorizing the sewer-line frontage tax rate, continuing at 68 cents a linear foot; the borrowing of up to \$1 million in anticipation of taxes; the use of back tax collections assigned to the general fund for current costs; and setting the new tax rate.

Last year, a total of 265 of

some 4,602 eligible voters — less than one percent — turned out for the annual financial town meeting when all resolutions were approved as presented by unanimous or nearly unanimous voice votes. The session took 20 minutes to complete voter registration and 35 minutes for voting.

See mask exhibit at library

The Conanicut Island Art Association, Jamestown library, and Jamestown Lawn Avenue School have collaborated to display an exhibit of masks created by students in the eighth grade.

This display is a final project for Maureen McGuirl’s history class, which started with period research of countries in the late 19th and early 20th century. With the support of Art In Motion, a local group that supports art integration, students worked with costume designer Lee White to transform plain black masks into thought-provoking reflections of nationalism. By working with White, students learned about the use of masks throughout history and the impact of color and texture on communication. The result was an understanding of how national identity sources can impact world events. The masks are on display at the Jamestown library.

Condos

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like to encourage for affordable housing, for which some compromises might be possible.

Town Solicitor Lauriston Parks said that if Bazzano plans to use more than 164,000 gallons of water a year, “you can’t have the connection.”

The councilors reviewed other similar applications in the past. They noted that last year a change of use proposal by George and Eirene Dolos for their commercial property at 23 Narragansett Ave. fell by the wayside over the water-limit regulation. The councilors praised the status of water use at Slice of Heaven at 32 Narragansett Avenue, where owners Steve and Maria Liebhauser have instituted several water conservation methods to stay within the maximum water limit for their property. Councilors also noted that the new Jamestown Place condos, which supplement its town water with two wells, have water limits included in deed restrictions.

Parks and the councilors said any violation of the maximum that is monitored quarterly would result in a water shut-off. That aspect led to Bazzano’s inquiry if he must install separate meters for each of the 16 condos. He was advised that he must or all occupants would face a shut-off if one caused the maximum to be violated.

Bazzano was also told he could assign whatever maximums he wished to each of the 16 units, as long as the total does not exceed 164,000 gallons a year.

The vote on his application was 4-1, with Councilman Michael Schnack recusing himself because he had a business association with Bruce McIntyre, Bazzano’s lawyer.

St. Michael’s School holds ArtsFest tomorrow

St. Michael’s Country Day School and its commitment to the arts will be in full swing on Friday, May 19, from 6 to 8:30 p.m., at the seventh annual ArtsFest, when students are given the opportunity to celebrate the many outlets for creative expression that exist at the school.

Admission and parking is free, and the public is welcome to attend.

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