

Harpswell residents keep form of government



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Jack Beaudoin

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Residents voted against making any major changes in the town's form of government Saturday, rejecting proposals to expand the Board of Selectmen from three to five members and to hire a town manager to handle administrative affairs.

In a separate vote that apparently underlined the anti-growth sentiment, voters also rejected a \$300,000 bond proposal that would have completed the unfinished Town Hall by installing central heating, an elevator to make the building handicapped accessible and reconfigured offices for the town's 19 staff members.

The proposal to increase the number of selectmen failed by a 557-491 a margin. The proposal to hire a town manager failed by a 550-487 vote.

The votes disappointed Selectman Katherine Chatterjee, who argued for the changes.

"Some of us feel strongly that it's time for this town, which is growing rapidly, to adopt the town manager form of government," she said.

Turnout was heavy at the town meeting. In addition to the questions about town government, other big draws were articles concerning solid waste and budgetary issues.

One big-ticket item that won approval was a \$300,000 bond to dismantle an aging incinerator that is unlikely to be relicensed. Voters also appropriated another \$113,000 from a capital account to begin the process of tearing down the incinerator and developing a transfer station.

A property tax increase is unlikely even if the school budget -which is determined later in the year increases by a projected 4 percent, Chatterjee said.

"Even if both bond issues had passed, the tax rate would not have changed," she noted, citing little impact on the town's operating budget of \$3 million.

In elections to fill town offices, David I. Chipman defeated John A. Floccher 603-484 in the race for a selectman's seat. David A Johnson and Wendy Van Damme finished ahead of Charles Bridge in a threeway race for two seats on the School Board, and Tax Collector Martha York, Town Clerk Rosalind M. Knight and Treasurer John E. Sylvester Jr. were all elected without opposition.

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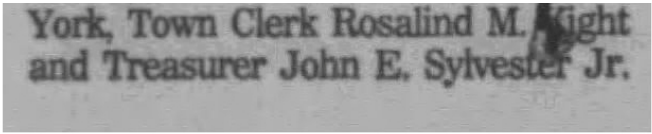
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Publication Data

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