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Farmingdale voters agreed to fund firetruck purchase

Farmingdale is setting aside \$250,000 for a future land purchase for a new fire station and town office facility.

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FARMINGDALE — Voters here whizzed through a 67-article annual Town Meeting warrant Saturday afternoon, finishing their work in less than an hour.

And as the 29 voters and others filed out of the Hall-Dale Performing Arts Center and headed for the bright sunshine, the Board of Selectmen took a quick straw poll about moving the time of the annual meeting to a weeknight or earlier on a Saturday.

The majority of those remaining appeared to favor a weeknight, and some people suggested a Thursday.

Town Clerk Rosemarie Webster said it should follow the Tuesday date for the primary election.

Voting went smoothly on the proposed \$1.68 million town budget, with attorney Mary Denison as moderator, and with the townspeople going along with Ben Sanborn's suggestion to group similar items and take a single vote on all of them.

Voters held up blue cards to indicate their assent on the questions.

They agreed to set aside \$250,000 in Capital Improvement Reserve Account to acquire land along Maine Avenue for a future town facility. The proposal indicated it

would remain active until the Town Meeting in June 2019. Town officials are hoping to erect a new facility that would include a larger fire station and the Town Office.

They also approved the purchase of a new firetruck, funding it with a \$300,000 bond and taking up to \$100,000 from the Capital Improvement Account.

According to the article, the estimated interest on the bond is slightly less than \$43,000.

Michael LaPlante, assistant fire chief, assured residents that the truck would fit into the current Maine Avenue station, which has 10-foot-wide doors and even greater restrictions when snow begins to pile up.

Selectman James Grant explained that the town is offering a 1 percent discount this year for property owners who pay their real estate taxes in full within two weeks after the tax rate is committed. Formerly, the discount was 2 percent.

“The reason we’re reducing it is in reality we were taking from one hand and giving back with another,” he said.

Webster said that voters would have to appropriate an additional \$45,000 to continue the 2 percent discount.

Voters funded the constable services budget at \$29,400 but rejected an alternate proposal that carried a \$38,000 budget and included a vehicle, equipment, fuel and insurance for the chief constable.

Selectwoman Nancy Frost said the vehicle was to be unmarked, and she thought it should be identified if local taxpayers’ money is paying for it.

“People have come to me saying they wanted that vehicle to be identified so they can see the constable doing his job,” Frost said.

Currently the chief constable, the three other constables and the town’s animal control officer — who are all under the constable’s budget — use their personal vehicles.

The \$29,400 amount approved includes a raise to \$12 per hour from the \$10 per hour that has been in effect since 2003, Chief Constable Mathew Guilfoyle wrote in his proposed budget message contained in the annual town report. All the constables, including the chief, get the same pay rate. Of the budget, \$11,000 is for constable salaries and \$4,500 for the animal control officer salary.

The budget total increased from last year's by \$160,563. to \$1,674,223, or about 10.6 percent, but Webster said that increase would be offset by money in surplus and the town's reserve account. Webster said the current tax rate, \$14.25 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, would increase because of an increase in the Regional School Unit 2 school budget and the county budget.

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