

Burlington Union

Town Meeting work done

By Arthur Katz/Correspondent

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BURLINGTON - With almost a third of elected members missing, the 2008 May Town Meeting came to close Monday, finishing the 54-article warrant in three sessions. Of the total of 108 elected members, 74 showed up to vote on the series of financial articles left to consider.

Early in the meeting, Moderator Philip Gallagher addressed a possible reconsideration of the previous meeting's vote on a new concept in trash handling, telling the meeting, "The vote you took on Article 3 was to allow the Board of Selectmen to negotiate a five-year waste disposal contract, along with other towns.

"Whatever is negotiated will be subject to public hearings, and everyone will have a chance to discuss the issues involved."

Gallagher also announced the appointment of five Town Meeting members to the Land-locked Parcel Committee, authorized at an earlier session. Chosen were Thomas Conley, Capital Budget Committee, Shari Lynn Ellis and Phyllis Roussel, both from the Land Use Committee, Richard Howard, Bylaw Review Committee, and Nolan Glantz, Ways and Means Committee.

Together with four members from other town bodies, the group will meet with representatives of Patriot Partners to discuss possible futures for the 247-acre site across Route 3 from Northwest Park and the Sun Microsystems site.

The remaining 17 articles were disposed of quickly, except for a prolonged discussion of the proposal to appropriate \$51,000 to complete rehabilitation of three playgrounds at Francis Wyman School.

The total needed to finish the work, which began last year, is \$102,000, and the Francis Wyman PTO Playground Improvement Committee has committed to raising \$51,000 to match the town's contribution.

Mary Sweeney of the Playground Committee reported that commitments were already in hand for more than \$20,000, and was "confident that we will raise the rest. We now have a detailed plan for the work that we can show to prospective donors."

With the School Committee voting 5-0 in favor, the Capital Budget Committee voting 6-0 in favor, but the Ways and Means Committee voting 11-0 against, the project elicited negative comments from a number of members, centered around the size of the amount being spent on the playgrounds.

School Committee member Thomas Murphy pointed out; “This [playground] is a town asset, and the only one that I know of that has to go to the public for funding to maintain it. There are topography and geographical issues with the site that have to be addressed to make it safe for the special education students who use the playground.”

An attempt to amend the motion to require the public money be raised in total before any town money could be spent was defeated. Gallagher called for a standing vote when it appeared a sizable number stood in the negative; but on the final tabulation, the motion passed by a 48 to 26 margin.

Earlier in the session, the meeting approved the purchase of 5 new vehicles for various town departments, reversing a long held policy of using handed-down police cars for other departments’ needs.

A study by the administration pointed to savings to be found in “replacing the fleet of Ford Crown Victorias with small, fuel efficient vehicles appropriate to the particular intended use.”

“In fuel efficiency and in repairs, this is a move that will save the town money, and a move that will result in greater safety for your employees,” said Selectman Gary Giano. “The typical Crown Vic is more five years old when it is handed down, with many engine hours as police vehicles are typically idled to maintain all computers and communication equipment from draining the battery.”

“With this program in place, we hope to reduce the town fleet from 25 to 20 over the next three years,” he added.

Detail of attendance may be found on the town’s Web site.