

DAILY HAMPSHIRE
GAZETTE

South Hadley special Town Meeting approves expanded utility commission; places Community Preservation Act on ballot

By ERIC GOLDSCHIEDER
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SOUTH HADLEY — Town Meeting voted unanimously Wednesday evening to expand the number of South Hadley Electric Light Department commissioners from three to five, and a majority agreed to have voters decide next spring whether to join the Community Preservation Act.

Two additional SHELDCOM commission seats will be on the ballot in April's town election. One will be for a three-year term and the other for an initial two-year term, which eventually will become a three-year seat.

Nobody spoke for or against the proposal, which was introduced by Select Board member Ira Brezinski.

Town Meeting members also voted 53-38 to put the Community Preservation Act question on the ballot in April. Voters will decide then whether to impose a property tax surcharge of 1.5 percent, exempting the first \$100,000 of value.

Money allocated to the CPA fund is supplemented by the state.

Roger Beer, co-chairman of the town's Open Space Committee which backs the CPA, said it would provide money to leverage grants that require a local match.

Money in the CPA fund can be spent on projects related to affordable housing, historic preservation, outdoor recreation and open space conservation.

South Hadley created a 15-member study committee in 2001, a year after the state legislation enabling the CPA was enacted. It recommended against participation. Another study committee formed in 2006 endorsed participation in the CPA, but voters rejected the proposal 1,257-1,121 at the annual election in April 2008.

Locally, Amherst, Belchertown, Hadley, Northampton and Southampton have adopted the CPA, while Granby, Holyoke, Chicopee, Ludlow and Springfield have not.

The special Town Meeting, which lasted three hours, also approved by majority vote a measure to spend \$15,000 to study whether to upgrade the telephone system for town offices.

Several spending measures passed by unanimous voice vote. Those included \$120,000 to replace a gearbox on a clarifier, which is part of the filtering process at the wastewater treatment plant, and another \$55,000 on a utility pickup truck with a plow for the facility.

Town Meeting members also unanimously approved a total of \$150,000 on a police vehicle, as well as two pickup trucks with snowplows and a compressor for the Department of Public Works.

A question of whether to make email addresses of Town Meeting members available to the public was defeated 46-26.

Eric Goldscheider can be reached at eric.goldscheider@gmail.com.