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Committee rejects warrant article

Committee member now regrets his vote

By REBECCA TSAROS
Monitor staff

Belmont

BELMONT - The budget committee voted not to back a warrant article for a new \$2.3 million town hall or a secondary warrant for \$500,000 in repairs to the existing town hall Tuesday night, saying voters won't support either measure.

All members agreed the current building is unsafe and that the town does need a new town hall. They also agreed that now is the best time to borrow the money for it, but refused to back the new building because of the expense. The vote was five opposed and three in favor.

Members also unanimously said repairs would be too costly to taxpayers and refused to back a warrant that voters would look at only if the new town hall building did not pass.

Budget Committee member Ken Knowlton, who was one of the most vocal in opposition to the new building and voted against it, said yesterday he's changed his mind. "My initial reaction last night was knee-jerk," he said. "When I got home last night, I reviewed

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the figure and in my mind, this is something that should be done now."

If Knowlton had voted to approve the new building at the meeting, it would have been a tie.

The town portion of the budget will be down 40 cents this year without the new town hall. With it, the budget will go up 60 cents to 80 cents over a 10-year period.

"I intend to explain that I have looked at the facts and figures," Knowlton said. "I now feel it is a proper time to do this. But it's up to the voters."

Because the budget committee didn't approve either measure, the board of selectmen must review both warrants again, even though they already approved them at the Dec. 18 and Jan. 8 meetings.

A public hearing for both warrants has been scheduled for Wednesday at 6 p.m. at the Corner Meetinghouse.

(Rebecca Tsaros can be reached at 528-2027, or by e-mail at rtsaros@cmonitor.com.)

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