

Special TM aims to boost legal fund

By CATHERINE BAUM Staff Writer

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SOUTHAMPTON - Tonight participants at a special Town Meeting will be asked to approve a transfer of nearly 69 percent of the town's free cash to other town accounts, including \$24,000 to cover legal expenses, an account which currently has no money at all.

The meeting is set for tonight at 7 p.m. in the Norris Elementary School on Pomeroy Meadow Road.

"We just paid December's bill and we are completely out of funds on the account," said Town Administrator Diana Schindler. "We have several cases that are in pending litigation and we expect that there's going to be legal costs involved."

There are four ongoing cases, three of which are land-use and zoning issues and one of which is a personnel issue, according to Schindler, though she declined to offer more details. The town is represented by attorneys from Kopelman and Paige, a Boston-based law firm that represents over one-third of the cities and towns in the state.

Also at the meeting, voters will be asked to approve requests to transfer money into accounts for the Selectmen's expenses, police, veteran's benefits, as well as to cover gas and electric bills for both the Larrabee building and Town Hall, among several other financial transfers.

The town's budget is \$12,448,258 - \$100,994 of which is free cash, according to Town Accountant David Kielson. He noted that if all of the articles are approved tonight, the town will spend \$69,390 in its free cash, leaving a balance of \$31,604 for the 2008 budget year, which ends June 30.

"A lot of the accounts that we're putting money into are the accounts that we cut in October by 20 percent," Schindler said. "It isn't that we're actually spending more money than we intended to spend; we're actually putting back the money that we cut."

Prior to the Special Town Meeting, there will be a public auction for tax title land at 5:30 p.m. in the cafeteria at the William E. Norris Elementary School on Pomeroy Meadow Road. At least six pieces of land will be auctioned. Most parcels are just below an acre in size. There are five pieces for sale on Hillside Meadows Road and one on County Road.

Selectman Chairman Jess Dods will be the auctioneer.

"It should be interesting," Schindler said at a February selectmen's meeting.

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