

Merrimack Station decision looms over elections in Bow

While the tax rate won't rise, Supreme Court ruling affects community building, budget

By CAITLIN ANDREWS - Monitor staff

The state Supreme Court decision on the valuation of Merrimack Station is already having an impact on issues put before Bow residents, including changes to the proposed project for the community building and a jump in the budget to pay back Eversource Energy.

Hot topic: A petition warrant article opposed by Bow's select board and the budget committee would look to make serious electrical and fire code upgrades to the community building.

Discussion about what to do with the old structure, which used to host the town's fire department and is still the site of its recreation department and some of its programs, is in dire need of repair. The article would look to raise \$94,345, which would take care of some of the costs needed to keep the community and recreation side of the building open.

The select board was originally going to put forth a warrant article to have the building demolished but withdrew it in light of the Supreme Court's ruling on the Merrimack Station valuation case. Members have said that making any changes to the building is an unnecessary expense at this time.

There have been discussions about moving the recreation department to the library; if the budget passes, the department will have to move while renovations take place.

Budget: The proposed operating budget is \$11,662,735, up \$1.6 million from last year's budget of \$9,987,107.

The biggest increase comes from the \$1.75 million jump in the town's legal services line, which will be used to pay back the interest Bow owes Eversource in regard to the Merrimack Station court case, according to town documents. The town recently paid back \$5.7 million of what it owed Eversource for the power plant's valuation in 2012 and 2013; it's unclear when the estimated \$1.8 million in interest will be paid back.

If approved, the budget will have no impact on the tax rate.

Noteworthy articles: The town of Bow will be asking residents to raise \$560,300 to bolster the bridge and high capital reserve fund, with \$460,300 coming from the unreserved fund balance.

There is also a proposal to bring a tax increment finance district to the Bow Mills region near the Interstate 93/89 interchange; a \$210,000 proposal to purchase a dump truck "and other accessories" for the town's public works department; and a \$335,000 proposal to reconstruct roads.

Contested races: Shannon Rhodes, Matthew Poulin and Michael Wayne are competing for two open positions on the select board to replace Eric Anderson and Ben Kiniry.

Incumbent Jeff Knight will be facing competition for one of two open spaces on the Budget Committee. Also in the running are Joseph Rheaume, Melissa Radomski and Ben Kiniry.

When and where: Ballot voting will take place from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday at the middle school. The town meeting will be held at 7 p.m. Wednesday at Bow High School.



The Merrimack Station power plant in Bow is seen at dusk on Thursday. The Supreme Court decision that the town overvalued the plant has affected a number of issues to go before voters at town meeting.

ELIZABETH FRANTZ / Monitor file