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TOP STORY

## Jaffrey town meeting Installing fiber has broad appeal at Jaffrey town meeting

By Olivia Belanger Sentinel Staff  
Apr 24, 2021



Voters weigh in on an article at Jaffrey's town meeting

Saturday, the second time it's been held in a drive-in format due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Olivia Belanger / Sentinel Staff

JAFFREY — For the second year in a row, Jaffrey residents voted on the town warrant from the comfort of their cars during Saturday's socially distanced town meeting.

One hundred twenty of the town's 4,668 registered voters showed up to the Hope Fellowship Church parking lot on Prescott Road for the meeting.

Town officials spoke from a raised stage, while voters listened through open windows or tuned in to 87.9 FM, which broadcast the proceedings. To vote, people stuck red or green cards out of their car windows.



Anyone who wanted to speak to an article — an option few chose Saturday — could get out of their car and talk into a microphone.

Last year, the town opted for the same format due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rather than continuing with its traditional meeting setup indoors.

On Saturday morning, voters approved the entire warrant, which yielded minimal discussion from the crowd.

One of those articles raises \$1,229,020 to install a fiber-optic broadband network throughout town, all of which will be financed through a bond. There will be no impact on taxation, as the bond will be paid for with Consolidated Communications user fees.



The dollar amount was amended from \$2.5 million by the selectboard to better reflect the plan's true costs.

Town Manager John Frederick told The Sentinel after the meeting that when the article was written, the town hadn't yet picked out a vendor, so officials put a higher figure down to ensure it allotted enough money for the project.

The article, which needed a three-fifths majority to pass, was approved 116-0.

Voters also accepted the town's operating budget of \$6,494,493, which is down \$97,391, or 1.5 percent, from the budget approved last year. The town's proposed water and sewer budget of \$2,904,220 was also approved.

Other approved articles established a road-paving capital reserve fund — which the selectboard will have the power to spend from — and put \$575,000 into it, and added funding to several other capital reserve funds.

Residents also gave the green light to 10 articles submitted by petition, a majority of which involved donating funds to various area nonprofit organizations.

These allotments are \$17,000 for Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services; \$8,000 for Monadnock Community Early Learning Center; \$7,500 for The Community Kitchen; \$6,821 for Monadnock Family Services; \$5,413 for Southwestern Community Services; \$4,000 for the Jaffrey Civic Center; \$2,000 for the Community Volunteer Transportation Center; \$1,500 for The River Center Family and Community Resource Center; \$5,000 for Hundred Nights; and \$11,873 for Reality Check.

*Olivia Belanger can be reached at 352-1234, extension 1439, or obelanger@keenesentinel.com. Follow her on Twitter @OBelangerKS.*

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Olivia Belanger