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TOWN MEETING 2011

Claremont Rejects Spending

Claremont Voters Reject All Spending

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the board and has seen budgets lose before, said he was not surprised by yesterday's results but thought extending kindergarten and a proposal to replace a school bus would have fared better.

Lovett agreed. "For me the greatest disappointment was extending kindergarten," she said.

"That had a negligible tax rate impact (7 cents)."

Putnam said the board's immediate task would be to keep the promise it made to voters last week — that even if the new state budget brings less state aid for Claremont than the district has budgeted, the schools won't increase the property tax rate to offset the loss.

"Our default budget is what we will work with," Putnam said. "If there are any push downs (reductions from the state), we will absorb it. We are not going to increase the tax rate."

Assistant Superintendent Allen Damren said last week the city schools might lose \$162,000 in state aid and have to cover another \$431,000 in teacher retirement costs if

Gov. Lynch's budget proposal is adopted as presented last month.

The School Board plans to consult with its attorney about the legality of trying to reopen existing union contracts as a way to find additional savings to offset any cuts in state aid.

A one-year contract for aides, or paraprofessionals, for \$64,000 was defeated 709 to 453. An article to spend \$207,000 on technology lost 680 to 480, and a request to put \$150,000 in a capital reserve fund lost 667 to 481. Extending kindergarten lost 746 to 408, and replacement of a school bus, which required a 60 percent majority to pass, failed to get even a simple majority, losing 585 to 569.

The one article that did pass, 615 to 505, was a petitioned article defining the board's conflict of interest policy. School officials said it was advisory only.

A major question that remains unresolved is whether the board will be given authority by the state Supreme Court to hold another vote on a bond issue for renovating Stevens High School.

Putnam said the issue is complicated by Lynch's budget, which proposes to cut state building aid to school districts.

Putnam said the board now has to move past yesterday's results and continue its work.

"We are going to do the best we can and try to focus on what is best for the children and families of Claremont," he said. "We are obligated to find a way to give the best education to the children, but it is hard to do with the mandates and push downs."

All the spending articles fell short of the needed votes in every ward.

Picard placed third in Wards I and II but finished second to Irish in Ward III. Putnam was third in Ward III, but he won Ward II and Ward I. Irish was second in Ward I and Ward II.

Turnout in Ward I was 14 percent, Ward II, 18 percent and Ward III, 14.6 percent.

Moderator Thomas Connair, School Clerk Mary Woodman and Treasurer Jane Hunter were re-elected in uncontested races.

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Budget, Articles All Defeated

BY PATRICK O'GRADY
Valley News Correspondent

CLAREMONT — In all-day balloting yesterday, voters soundly defeated the proposed school budget of \$31.85 million along with five other spending articles, including a new contract for teachers' aides and money to extend kindergarten by 30 minutes in the morning and afternoon.

In the race for School Board, incumbent Chairman Dave Putnam and former city councilor Heather Irish won three-year seats over the third candidate, Robert Picard, also a former city councilor. Incumbent Cynthia Howard did not seek re-election.

"It is a tax issue, no question about it," Putnam said last night in reaction to the results.

The default budget of \$31.54 million is expected to add \$1.40 to the school tax rate, raising it to \$17.86 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Had voters passed the budget, which lost 713 to 431, and all other