

Financial town referendum deserves support

I want to thank Laura Epke for inadvertently making the strongest argument in her Aug. 18 letter to the editor for why the financial town meeting should be replaced with a financial town referendum during the Nov. 8 special election in Tiverton. The current financial town meeting structure envisions a few in charge of drafting the town's budget, with limited input from voters. And with only three amendments allowed from the floor at the meeting, the voter's current ability is to vote a reactionary "no" or "yes" to someone else's budget proposal.

In contrast, the financial town referendum envisions a greater involvement, empowerment and participation of the Tiverton voters in the town's annual budget. Any voter who disagrees strongly with a particular budget proposal, whether put forth by the Budget Committee, the School Committee, the Town Council or any elector petition, has the ability and right to do more than just vote "no." That voter can, with 50 signatures, have his or her own budget proposal on the referendum ballot to be voted on by his fellow citizens.

If no budget proposal on the ballot receives a majority of the votes, then the two budget proposals attaining the most votes in favor at the referendum would be involved in a run-off two weeks later. The financial town referendum ensures both majority vote adoption and finality.

The option of a financial town referendum extends ease of participation to every voter in Tiverton, even absentee voters, in both the creation of the town's budget and in voting on it. The proposed referendum empowers all voters, not just those willing to endure a financial town meeting, to participate in Tiverton's budgets and taxes. This is a far different and far more exciting vision from Ms. Epke's, where a limited number of voters (based on recent financial town referendum attendance) decide the town's budget by reacting to someone else's proposal.

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