

## **Vineyard Gazette Online**

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### **Vote in Aquinnah Thursday Attempts to Pass Override, and Restore Items to Town Budget**

By JULIA WELLS

Voters in Aquinnah go to the polls this week to conclude the annual town meeting which began two months ago - and to say yes or no to a \$130,000 general override to Proposition 2 1/2.

If the override is approved, town employees will get a cost of living raise and funding will remain in place for the town's share of the Martha's Vineyard Shellfish Group. Funding for a town-sponsored summer day camp for children also hangs in the balance.

If the override is not approved, selectmen will be forced to confront a series of difficult decisions about how to raise more revenues in the second smallest town in the commonwealth.

The special election will be held on Thursday at the Aquinnah town hall. Polling hours are from noon to 6 p.m.

This marks the second try for an override to the state-mandated tax cap.

Last month a \$260,000 general override was rejected by three votes in a special election that saw an extremely light turnout.

Selectmen later went back to the drawing board to try and cut more than ten per cent from the \$2.4 million town budget. In the end the actual cuts added up to about \$50,000; the picture was improved slightly by fiddling with projected revenues for the coming year and selectmen decided to come back to voters with a smaller override request.

The \$130,000 override is the only question on the ballot.

The mood of the voters in Aquinnah is often a hard thing to gauge and there were few predictions this week about the outcome of the election.

The three town selectmen have said repeatedly that they intend to schedule some kind of public meeting to talk about ways to increase revenues, but at their regular meeting last week the board members kept their heads down again on the subject.

"A lot of people in town have been asking about that revenue meeting," executive secretary Beverly Widdiss told the two selectmen who attended the meeting, but the selectmen did not respond.

"I guess they are waiting to see whether the override fails or not before they go ahead and address this," said Peter Temple, a member of the town planning board. Mr. Temple wrote a letter to the selectmen last month urging them to take a careful look at the problem, among other things highlighting the past due payments to the town from the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay

Head (Aquinnah).

The tribe signed an agreement with the selectmen some years back to pay the town about \$8,000 a year to help defray the cost of police, fire and ambulance service for the tribal housing project. No money has been paid since 1999 and memories differ about the agreement.

Another agreement signed in 1994 between the town and the tribe outlined a plan to find federal funding to help defray town expenses associated with the housing project, including school expenses, but that agreement has also apparently lapsed.

Mr. Temple said yesterday that rejecting the override may be one way to solve the core problem.

"The only way we are going to get the selectmen to address revenues is to turn down the override," he said.

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