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Two votes set for same day

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WINSTED — Townspeople voted Monday to bring the town budget proposal to an Aug. 13 referendum, the same day proposed \$10.2 million water filtration plant will be decided.

Mayer John F. Gauger told the 25 people gathered for the annual budget meeting he would not accept the budget referendum date of Aug. 15 because of a technicality.

State statutes allow the referendum to be held seven to 14 days after the submission of a petition for referendum.

But referendum hours are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. If the budget referendum was to be Aug. 15, it would be one hour beyond the 14 days allowed by statute, Gauger said. In refusing to consider the Aug. 15 date, he was protecting the town from a legal challenge, he said.

Gauger said he posted the town meeting for 7 p.m., which in effect eliminated the Aug. 15 date. "That's my responsibility," he said.

Some residents have speculated

if both referendums are held on the same day, they will fail. Gauger opposes the \$21,194,449 proposed budget and has spoken against the water filtration plant.

When asked whether it was a scheme to have both votes on the same day, Gauger said, "No."

Although the Secretary of State's office frowned on having both votes on the same day it is legal, Town Attorney Kevin F. Nelligan said. "It's a structural issue working it, (but) legally we can," Nelligan said.

The logistics of the referendum will be difficult, Susan Mahoney, a moderator, said. Each voting area at Pearson School will have to be separated, with different entrances and exits, she said. "You're asking for trouble," she said.

Community lawyer Charlene LaVoie advocated having both votes on the same day for convenience. "The point is what's easiest and best for the voting public," she said.

Although this will be the third vote on the fiscal 1995 budget,

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townspeople still voiced their opinion at Monday's meeting.

Some members of the Winchester Taxpayers Association, which has spearheaded the budget referendums, talked about town employees and how labor cuts should be considered.

Selectman Porter C. Griffin III urged Richard Westervelt, president of the taxpayers group, to submit proposed labor cuts, rather than making "flowery statements."

Rosemarie LaGueux complained of the Board of Education hiring two administrators without combining positions. She called the action arrogant. "Until they

start listening to what the real world is like, I'm not going to vote for (the budget)," she said.

Board of Education Chairman Virginia Dethy emotionally warned the 25 people at the town meeting the town was heading for disaster, and destroying not only the town, but also personal relationships within it.

"Every single one of us knows something that is wrong, and we're sitting here screwing each other and screwing this town," she said.

Dr. William Arquette said it was ludicrous for the town to be embroiled in a budget battle that involves expense, hassle and bad publicity when some taxpayers may see a \$90 increase in taxes annually under the proposed 1.49 mill rate increase in the budget.

The taxpayers group does not want taxes to be increased.