

## State

# Plan for police station debated

■ **Raymond:** Only one resident spoke out against the new police station plan, saying the town has other priorities, like an addition to Lamprey River Elementary School.

By **JASON SCHREIBER**  
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**RAYMOND** — Multi-million dollar proposals to build a new police station and expand the Lamprey River Elementary School faced questions from the public Tuesday night before voters decide their fate at the polls in March.

Public hearings were held on the two big-ticket items that will dominate the ballot — a \$6.8 million police station and a \$9.4 million addition and renovation to the elementary school.

The police station plan attracted the most attention as Police Chief David Salois outlined reasons why it's time for the town to build a station on town property next to the public safety complex where the police and fire and rescue departments are now housed.

"We have come up with a real solid plan," he said.

Aside from members of the board of selectmen, school board and budget committee, a few members of the public attended the two hearings.

Resident Dana Hanson was the only one to speak against the police station proposal, arguing the town has other priorities, like the



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Raymond Selectman Greg Bemis makes a point during a public hearing Tuesday night.

school addition, and that a new station wasn't necessary. "It's Raymond. It's not Exeter. It's not Manchester," she said.

While voicing opposition to the police station proposal, Hanson referred to the portable classrooms that have housed elementary school students for years as "glorified shipping containers."

Salois has pointed to numerous problems related to the cramped space in the current safety complex, including the lack of holding cells and a booking room that's not large enough. The department doesn't have enough office or storage space and has five windows, but two can't be opened because they're bullet resistant.

A space assessment report found that the police department needs a total of approximately 15,000 square feet of space, which includes room for growth, for the next 25 years.

Hanson questioned whether police have ever had problems with people in custody because there are no holding cells.

Salois said people have become violent and have escaped the booking room. He also pointed out that police often deal with the mentally ill.

Others spoke in support of the new station. Resident Ed French said he recently toured the station and was "flabbergasted." "They're bursting at the seams," he said.

While he understands the

concerns about tax increases to pay for the project, French said, "I don't want to see my taxes go up, but I also want to see the services that we need provided."

Budget Committee Chairman Josh Mann, who spoke in favor of the plan as a resident and not in his official capacity, said he was against the proposal until he saw a presentation by Salois.

While some residents may be worried about two building projects appearing on the ballot at the same time, Selectman Colleen West Coates said voters need to look at the merits of each and then make up their minds. "Don't try to pit one project against the other," she said.

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