

## **Pownal voters OK new zoning**

ANDY McKEEVER, Staff Writer

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POWNAL — The yeas have it. Voters approved a revised set of zoning bylaws during a special election Tuesday by a margin of 319 to 123.

The special election was forced by a citizen petition, in which supporters hoped to enact a moratorium on any new mobile home parks. The Planning Commission initially submitted bylaws that disallowed any new mobile home parks in town, but before adopting them on Feb. 11, the Select Board made a change that allowed them under conditional use in the village zone.

Vermont law, however, states that parks must be allowed in some area of the town, and the board feared a lawsuit if they were prohibited entirely.

Select Board member Harry "Hap" Percey said that if the change was not made, a court ruling could allow a park to be built and take away the board's ability to regulate it. "I'm happy the people came out to vote and came out to support the Select Board," said Percey.

The revised bylaws are now in effect and include restrictions on mobile homes and that they must be on cement slabs, tied down and skirted. It also disallows halfway houses and new mobile home parks from most of the zones. With those changes, the board hopes to begin focusing on enforcing the bylaws to improve living conditions in town.

As the results were read, Select Board Chairman Nelson Brownell pumped his fist in celebration.

"I'm hoping we can now work on the real issues. We've already hired a lawyer to go after the person who has the most complaints," Brownell said. "I thought the vote would be closer than it is." Brownell said the residents that started the petition did a good job with campaigning for votes and he was nervous about the results. The public forum held on Monday night helped attract "yes" votes, he said.

Board member Stephen Kauppi stood at the end of the firehouse driveway leading to the polls from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to help provide additional information about the vote. He said that many people said they were misled about the vote.

"I spent the day answering questions from people who said they didn't know what they were signing," Kauppi said.

Much of the discussion leading to the vote centered on the living conditions in current mobile home parks. The petitioners claimed that placing a moratorium, which is legal, on new mobile home parks would provide time to improve those conditions and to do that would require voting down the bylaws and having the Planning Commission resubmit them with interim ones that disallowed new parks.

Brownell said the petition did trigger more discussion about the living conditions in the parks.

Percey, who also serves on the Planning Commission, said that a moratorium or health ordinances will be discussed, and a recommendation may be given to the Select Board. "I'm sure some of these issues will be revisited," said Percey. "I don't think anybody in town has a problem with trying to improve conditions."

Town Clerk Karen Burrington said the polls were "steady" throughout the day as 442 votes were cast out of 2,428 total registered voters.