

# Stadium, \$28 million budget on docket

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HUDSON, N.H. -- Discussion of a \$28 million operating budget, a new senior center at Benson Park, and a 25-year lease for the land under "Zach's Stadium" should draw the most interest among 15 articles on the agenda for the annual town Deliberative Session, Selectman Roger Coutu said.

The session begins Saturday at 9 a.m. at the Hudson Community Center, 12 Lion's Ave. It will be broadcast live, and later rebroadcast, on Hudson's cable-TV government Channel 22.

Coutu said he plans to introduce two of the warrant articles: one containing the selectmen's proposed \$28,223,641 operating budget, and later, a slide-show presentation on the proposed land lease for Zach's Stadium.

Zachary **Tompkins** , 11, died March 8, 2010 of Long QT Syndrome, a genetic disorder that fatally stopped his heart without warning.

The slide show will illustrate how the land agreement will provide a 10-acre lot at 9 Industrial Drive to the Hudson Litchfield Youth Football Cheer organization to build a youth sports stadium named after Zachary, "with no impact on the tax rate whatsoever," Coutu said.

"It's strictly a contractual arrangement with the Hudson-Litchfield Bears program, so they can build the stadium themselves," said Coutu.

If the article is approved at the deliberative session, residents will be asked to vote on the Zach's Stadium lease in the town election March 8.

Though attendance at town deliberative sessions has steadily declined over the years, Town Administrator Steve Malizia predicted many supporters of Zach's Stadium will come to this year's session.

Many supporters attended the selectmen's Jan. 4 meeting to witness the board's ceremonial signing of the 25-year lease, with Zach's parents, Mike and Necole **Tompkins** , looking on.

"The recent signing of the 25-year contract between the town of Hudson and Hudson-Litchfield Bears organization is a true testament to the hard work of the many volunteers who have been donating their time to make Zach's Stadium a reality," Necole **Tompkins** said.

"This represents an enormous milestone for the Zach Fund, and also shows how very special Zachary is, and how we'll be able to honor Zachary's legacy for generations to come."

Thanks to the "support and kindness of Hudson, Litchfield and many surrounding communities," the builders of Zach's dream stadium hope to continue raising enough funds to begin construction after town-election approval in 2012, Necole added.

Also to be discussed at the deliberative session is a warrant article that will ask voters to approve spending \$150,000 on an architectural drawing of a proposed new senior center on the Benson Park property.

This article also would have "zero impact" on the tax rate, according to Coutu.

"Of that estimated \$150,000, one-third would come from the town's surplus fund, another \$50,000 would be from the capital-reserve fund, and \$50,000 would come from the seniors' capital reserve account," Coutu explained.

"While we don't think we'll need the full \$150,000 for the architectural design -- we think it will cost less than that -- it'll be split proportionally among those three funding sources."

Due to a year's worth of pennywise budget-cutting by selectmen, Coutu said the board's proposed town budget of \$28,223,641 is lower than the default budget of \$28,383,705, which will also be presented to voters March 8.

Coutu cited a fourth article of interest to be discussed Saturday as the finalized town supervisors' union contract. It calls for a zero percent pay raise for the supervisors this year, followed by 2 percent raises in the next two successive years, coupled with concessions on health insurance.

"This will save the town money in the long term, and help rein in health-insurance costs, an issue that we've had a problem with," said Coutu.