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4 towns want the president out

NEWFANE — If residents of four southern Vermont towns, including Newfane, had their way, President Bush would be out of a job.

Four Vermont communities Tuesday passed town meeting resolutions calling for Bush's impeachment for allegedly misleading the country into war with Iraq, authorizing torture policies and for carrying out a secret program to spy on Americans without court oversight.

Residents of Newfane, the only town where the impeachment question appeared on the warrant, passed the resolution 121-29 by paper ballot.

Other towns passed the resolution under the "other business" portion of the meetings, including Putney and Dummerston in near-unanimous floor votes, and in Marlboro, where it passed 60-10 by paper ballot. Rockingham residents also may face the question at a special town meeting this spring.

Newfane Selectman Dan DeWalt said residents in the other Vermont towns were inspired by the impeachment question he wrote and proposed for town meeting. He expressed hope Tuesday that the effort would spread to other towns in the state next year.

"The war affects us here in Newfane," he said. "It affects us when our mothers and fathers and sons and daughters are sent off to war, and it affects us in our tax dollars to pay for that war."

Town and school budgets passed with ease in Newfane as the heaviest debate centered on the impeachment question, which consumed the final third of the town's four-hour meeting. Many of the residents spoke strongly in support of the motion.

Many voters remarked that it was vital for small towns to take the lead.

Abby Dillon said her daughter, who waited 10 hours in line two years ago to vote against Bush, would be "exuberant to know what we are doing here." Another woman, a local teacher, said many of her students unfortunately believe that decisions are made "from the top" and that democracy is broken.

"This is one of the only ways to show that (Bush) doesn't represent our wishes," said Margaret Stearns, after voting on the measure Tuesday.

Lynn Bedell, the chairwoman of the Windham County Democrats, successfully pushed

for an amendment, asking that the resolution be directed at the Legislature instead of U.S. Rep. Bernard Sanders, to whom it was originally addressed.

Bedell said a relatively unknown House rule allows that body to take up impeachment hearings when charges are brought by state legislatures. She suggested the Newfane resolution may lead to the Vermont House and Senate also holding impeachment hearings for Bush.

Sanders, the state's independent representative who is running for the U.S. Senate seat vacated by outgoing Democrat Jim Jeffords, said in a prepared statement that he understands why Vermonters want to impeach the president, but added that the Republican-controlled Congress makes such hearings impossible.

"Given that reality, it would be impractical to talk about impeachment," said Sanders, who added that those "outraged" by the Bush administration should vote in the November midterm elections.

Some Newfane residents were offended by the impeachment question. Lenore Salzbrunn was near tears as she described seeing friends "vaporized" during the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on New York City's World Trade Center, where she once worked.

She said she was "disgusted with the lack of respect" other residents had for Bush and his office.

"I am so grateful that we have a president that did not put his head in the sand and instead went out and fought for our safety," Salzbrunn said.

Carlton Brown called the accusations in the impeachment question "bogus."

Charles Chandler said the government should focus on "feeding people and making sure they don't freeze to death" instead of engaging in impeachment hearings.

Residents opposed to the controversial question tried to indefinitely postpone the vote Tuesday.

Gunther Garbe, who proposed the delay just seconds after the article was read by Moderator Hendrik W. van Loon, said "this meeting is to discuss town business — not national issues."

But residents like Norm Kuebler, who reflected on his own German ancestors' silence during the Nazi regime, disagreed. While Kuebler said he did not want to compare Bush to Adolf Hitler, difficult issues such as war need to be addressed at the local level, he said.

"My ancestors are very ashamed of their silence," he said. "And we have this opportunity today to speak and I suggest we take advantage of it."

A motion by Tate Erickson also to impeach Vice President Dick Cheney failed in a

voice vote because many voters felt it would water down the resolution against Bush.

In addition, Newfane voters Tuesday also approved a \$1,582,195 school budget and a \$1,000,127 town budget. Also approved were \$357,142 in capital projects, \$148,500 in town borrowing, \$75,000 allocation to the capital reserve fund, and \$50,000 to begin work on the town's property reappraisal.
