



Water treatment backed

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By **DIANE LEDERMAN**
dlederman@repub.com

HADLEY - The Board of Selectmen, which is also the town's water commission, would like to go ahead with building the treatment facility for the Callahan wells.

The board last night met with water consultants from Comprehensive Environmental Inc. of Merrimack, N.H., which have been reviewing the town's water issues. The consultants presented the board with a fee schedule with and without the treatment facility. Town Meeting May 5 must approve the appropriation for the facility.

Town water rates will rise even without the treatment facility because they are not adequate to meet projected operating budgets, according to the consultants' report.

But with the additional cost of building the treatment facility with a 2-percent state loan, the town's average water user would pay about \$50 a year more.

Farmers and the town will not see any hikes because of the treatment facility. Hotels, nursing homes and car washes will see the largest increases.

The town last year had to shut down one of its Warner wells because the chemical perchlorate was found in the water in levels believed to be unsafe. In the meantime, the town began using the Callahan wells, but those are contaminated with manganese and iron.

The town has been treating the wells, but the treatment is not a long-term solution. Joseph Lanzafame, the town's water resource coordinator, pointed out last night that while perchlorate is the issue now for the Warner well, the well also contains a herbicide, chlorthal dimethyl, for which the federal Environmental Protection Agency has not yet set safety standards. It also contains nitrates. Some in town have wondered about whether the well would be able to be used again if federal officials lowered perchlorate safety guidelines.

"I believe wholeheartedly this is the right way to go," said Selectman John P. Connor about building the facility.

"We're not going to save a penny or a dime today for something that's going to cost us a dollar down the road," said Selectman Brian C. West.

For Selectwoman Joyce A. Chunglo the decision was between putting the cost on the tax rate or adding it to the water rate but she realized adding it to the water rate made the most sense.