

## The Republican.

### Water permit freeze lifted

Friday, September 16, 2005

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HADLEY - The Board of Selectmen lifted this week a 2-year old moratorium on water-line extensions.

The moratorium was recommended by planners of Comprehensive Environmental Inc. in May 2003 because they were afraid the town would not have enough water for existing customers.

The state Department of Environmental Protection allowed the town to pump 790,000 gallons a day, and the town got close to those limits and sometimes exceeded them.

The town applied for an increase in the number of gallons pumped, but state officials wanted to see a reduction in the amount of unaccounted-for water. The town could not account for 24 percent of the water pumped, and the state wanted the number cut to 15 percent.

With some leak detection, that number is down to less than 15 percent, said town water resource coordinator Joseph Lanzafame this week. He expects it go lower.

And, while the state has allowed the town to increase its number of gallons to 830,000 a day, the water usage from December to August dropped to an average of 628,000 gallons a day from 765,000 gallons a day in the same period from the year before, Lanzafame said.

He said that conservation may have affected usage as well as repairing the water line leaks.

With the new information, Board Chairman John P. Connor brought up the question of what to do about the moratorium. Selectmen are the water commissioners.

"You can't rely on a moratorium as your policy," said Connor. "It becomes less and less a justifiable policy."

He said this leaves the town open to lawsuits from developers. But he wanted to be sure whether officials were comfortable in lifting it now or waiting for more numbers.

"We still have our controls on the number of water permits," said Selectman Brian C. West.

The town allows only 20 permits to be issued a year.

Lanzafame said the town can restrict outside watering if needed.

"I'm not sure there is a need to continue the moratorium," said Selectwoman Katharine R. Nugent. "Should something happen, we could change our policy. I don't have a problem lifting the moratorium."

The vote to lift it was unanimous after a 45-minute discussion.