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Town Moves on Housing Fund

Board doubles maximum income for eligibility

BY JOANNE PILGRIM

A public hearing at East Hampton Town Hall Friday on establishing a "community housing opportunity fund" for some residents drew only supporters, though several made suggestions for improving the proposal.

Town board members decided on Tuesday to initiate the fund by issuing \$3.25 million in bonds, the same amount they have agreed to spend on a joint purchase with Southampton Town of the Poxabogue Golf Center in Sagaponack. The majority reasoned that if the town could spend that much on golf, it should spend at least as much to begin to relieve the housing crisis.

Town Councilman Pete Hammerle, however, was reluctant about placing so much money in the fund before a specific plan for how it would be used was adopted. "The town should put in seed money to show good faith, and then reach out to the community," he said.

The board had backed away last week from putting a \$5 million referendum before voters in November to finance

the fund after hearing the results of a poll commissioned by the South Fork Housing Coalition. At the same time, however, the board agreed to set up the dedicated fund, which will be able to accept grants and money from taxes and other bond issues.

The housing coalition, as well as representatives of the League of Women Voters and Tom Ruhle, director of the Town Office of Housing and Community Development, had urged the board to postpone the vote until after an educational campaign could solicit voter support.

At a work session on Tuesday, the town board, noting that several speakers on Friday had criticized the maximum income limits for eligibility for assisted housing as too low, agreed to increase it. The maximum income for a family of four had been set at \$52,000, the median in town. Instead the board agreed the maximum should be 200 percent of the town median, or \$104,000.

Even though it sounds like a lot of

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