

School support solidifies

New citizens group pushing for budget referendum

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WINSTED — It appears as though the May 26 town meeting will inevitably be adjourned to a referendum.

Both the Winchester Taxpayers Association and a group which wants to see money restored to education were busy gathering support this weekend.

Both groups estimated yesterday they had 100 signatures on their referendum petitions. Both said they could get another 100 with ease during the next few days. To bring the town budget to referendum, a petition of 200 signatures is required.

A group that wants the Board of Selectmen to return \$350,000 to education in the 1992-93 town budget, which now stands at \$11.35 million, met at the home of school board member Virginia Dethy Friday night. The meeting was not open to the press or the public, but a second meeting is planned for Thursday, when public participation will be allowed.

The group is calling itself the Winchester Citizens Association. It will file for political action committee status with the state today. Ray Dethy, Virginia's husband, said. Dethy said the group wants to get the budget to referendum, but also hopes to play an

active role in town politics in the future. "We have long- and short-term goals," he said.

Eighteen people attended Friday's meeting, Dethy said.

Walter D. Miller, a selectman and president of the taxpayers association, said he was pleased the group had formed despite its adversarial stance to the WTA. "I think it's good," he said. "People have to get all sides of the issue."

The Freedom of Information Act of 1975 stipulates that if a quorum of an official board gets together to discuss board-related matters, that gathering constitutes a meeting, and must in fact be open to the public until an executive session is called. A quorum of the nine-member school board is five people, or a voting majority, according to Community Lawyer Charlene LaVoie.

Board chairman Thomas M. Condon insisted Friday that at no time were more than four board members present at the meeting. "As others came, I was leaving," he said.

Thursday's open meeting is scheduled to begin at 7:30 p.m. at the First Church of Winsted on North Main Street.