

Investing in a Strong Community

Reasons to Support Beverly's Proposition 2½ Override

On Tuesday, June 3, Beverly will hold a special election to approve a Proposition 2½ override. The override will generate \$2.5 million in new revenue for Beverly every year. This will prevent significant cuts next year affecting our public schools – particularly our youngest citizens at our brand new elementary schools. Investing in Beverly is worth it for our kids, our families, and our community.

Visit www.yesforbeverly.org to be sure you have the facts to make a well-informed decision on June 3.

Why do we need an override?

Proposition 2½

Implemented in 1982, the law caps real estate tax increases at 2.5% per year plus additional taxes from new development. The cap does not adjust even when expenses (energy, salaries, healthcare, state mandates, etc.) rise at a higher rate. In recent years, reductions in state aid coupled with fixed expenses rising beyond the 2.5% rate limit have created a structural deficit in Beverly and many other Massachusetts communities. Voters are allowed under the law to approve additional taxes to close this deficit by overriding the 2.5% cap.

Beverly's School Budget

Beverly faces the same issues impacting all Massachusetts communities. State aid has decreased, while operating costs and unfunded state and federal mandates have increased. Beverly has already cut dozens of classroom

teachers, increased class sizes, added school fees, and closed Memorial Middle School to avoid an override. In FY09, Beverly voters now face a choice of cutting public education services further or supporting an override to close a \$2.6 million budget gap for its public schools.

Proposed Cuts

- close two brand new elementary schools
- lay-off 61 teachers/staff
- increase elementary school class sizes by 24% on average
- program cuts – including reading specialists and music instruction at the elementary level
- eliminate one team at Briscoe Middle School resulting in class sizes of 33
- lay-off of English, Latin, Social Studies, PE teachers at the High School

How will the money be spent?

Year One

100% of the \$2.5M will be "earmarked" for the schools (as required by law).

Year Two and Beyond

In future years, the Mayor and City Council will be able to appropriate the \$2.5M to the high school construction loan, teachers, or any other costs. Passing this override guarantees \$2.5M in revenue for Beverly every year.

Superintendent Dr. James Hayes says:

"If an override is successful, I would recommend to the School Committee a budget for next year that restores the cuts I proposed on March 26th, maintaining the elementary schools as they are currently configured. I would also recommend that they form a study committee composed of Committee members, citizens, and school staff to examine a future reconfiguration of our schools."

How much will the override cost?

Cost to the "Average" Beverly Homeowner

The proposal would cost 41 cents per \$1,000 of assessed home value. That's \$46.60 a quarter – or \$185 a year – on a home valued at \$450,000. If your home is valued less, your tax increase will be less. If your home is valued more, your tax increase will be higher.

Visit www.yesforbeverly.org and use our online calculator to learn your personal override estimate.

Programs to Help Defray Taxes

Qualified taxpayers over 65 can receive a tax credit from the state for a portion of their property taxes. Qualified taxpayers over age 65 can defer property taxes until the property is sold. Beverly provides a state-mandated real estate property tax exemption of \$500 for income and asset limited taxpayers over age 70. Other tax relief: a disabled veteran exemption (\$250), an exemption for widows over 70, and an exemption for the legally blind.

How does Beverly compare?

Beverly's First Operational Override

Should the override pass, it will be the first time since the law went into effect 25 years ago that Beverly has increased revenues for operations by more than the Proposition 2½ cap. Two-thirds of Massachusetts towns have already approved operational overrides, some multiple times.

Educational Costs

According to the Massachusetts Dept. of Education's 2007 figures, Beverly's per pupil expenditure was \$11,210.67, which is below the state average of \$11,864.91. Beverly spends less than Salem (\$13,665), Manchester/Essex (\$12,865), Lynn (\$12,220), Chelsea (\$12,199), and Hamilton Wenham (\$12,100).

School Committee President Annemarie Cesa says:

"Over the past few years the Beverly Public Schools have faced difficult challenges, such as the closing of Memorial Middle School and the addition of many new fees. We have struggled to maintain programming, which has been challenging with dramatically rising costs in Special Education, utilities, and Health Care. I believe that without additional funds the cuts next year will be severe and irreversible. With an override, the school district can develop a plan for a future configuration that will be sustainable and appropriate. As an educator, parent, and School Committee President we need to show the community how much we value education here in Beverly."

Superintendent Dr. James Hayes says:

"As the educational leader of this community, however, the citizens of Beverly need to know that we are at a crossroads. Over the last several years we have chipped away and chipped away at the kind of education we should be providing the children of Beverly. The professionals we employ have done their best to adapt what they do with the resources they have and have "made it work." We can make this reconfiguration work, too, but it will not be easy, and Beverly will not be providing the quality of education we aspire to. That difference in quality has a direct correlation to the perceived quality of a community. And that has a direct impact on all Beverly citizens. If you think these cuts to education don't affect you, you are wrong. Yes, it costs a lot to educate a child; it costs even more if you don't."

Beverly *Worth the Investment*

Vote **YES** on June 3