

2023 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION

Question #1 – ‘Proposition 2 ½ Override’

Pursuant to the Commonwealth’s Acts of 2004 – FY2005 State Budget, §§ 285-288, ‘Town of Lancaster Voter Information,’ “...The Board of Selectmen of the Town of Lancaster shall, at least 10 days before any election at which a binding or non-binding question shall be submitted solely to the voters of said town, cause to be posted in one or more locations in the town and/or the Town’s official website ... and make available at each polling place, the full text of such questions, a fair and concise summary of each question...and said Board of Selectmen shall seek such written arguments [*proponents and opponents of any such question*]... containing no more than 250 words...” as outlined below.

Question 1

Shall the Town of Lancaster be allowed to assess an additional \$1,200,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budget of the School Departments and the Town Government for the fiscal year beginning July first, two thousand and twenty-three?

Yes _____

No _____

Fair and Concise Summary

G. L. c.59, §21C, otherwise known as Proposition 2½, limits the amount of revenue a city or town may raise from local property taxes each year to fund municipal operations. This amount is known as the annual levy limit. Proposition 2½ allows a city or town to increase tax revenues above that limit with approval of voters at an election.

Here, **Question 1** seeks to increase the amount of property tax revenue Lancaster may raise in fiscal year 2024 by \$1,200,000. The result is a permanent increase in taxing authority. The additional revenue will be used to fund the operating budgets of the School Departments and the Town government in FY’24.

→ A **YES** vote on **Question 1** allows the operating budgets of the School Department and the Town government for FY’24 to be funded.

→ A **NO** vote on **Question 1** disapproves the operating budgets of the School Department and the Town government for FY’24.

A ‘YES’ VOTE

A **YES** vote stabilizes Lancaster’s finances and ensures the Town’s ability to fund and sustain its current level of service for all municipal, public safety, educational, cultural, and social service activities through, at least, 2028. Affirmative action effectively passes a level-service budget which adequately provides for the Town’s day-to-day operations including the functions and staffing levels within Town Departments and throughout the Nashoba and Minuteman Regional School Districts. A **YES** vote preserves the Town’s free cash and reserve fund balances which contribute, in part, to sustaining Lancaster’s credit rating and thereby ensuring lower interest rates and payments for all bonded Capital municipal and school projects. Affirmative action reduces the Town’s need to propose additional overrides in future years and allows the Town the ability to focus on proposing an operational override once additional revenues are received from both current and future commercial projects. Select Board Chair Stephen Kerrigan stated, *“In short, if people want a first-rate education for their children, nice roads, sustainable parks and conservation lands, responsible human service operations and civic or cultural engagement programs, you must pay for it. It doesn’t just happen.”*

A ‘NO’ VOTE

A **NO** vote indicates that the Town does not authorize an override of Proposition 2 ½ and, as a result, agrees that decreasing School programming, town services, and closing certain Town buildings and operations are necessary in order to keep taxes down. It could be likely through further utilization of one-time funds and/or the allocation of current reserve funds, that Lancaster will be able to meet its minimum obligations relative to elections and other State-required services. However, public amenities, infrastructure repairs and other non-essential services must be stalled, or cancelled, until Lancaster’s revenues better align with its expenses. Many neighboring communities have tax rates so high residents have been ‘priced-out’ of their homes; Lancaster does not want this. While it will be challenging, it is not impossible to operate the Town’s schools, emergency services, and limited government operations with \$1.2 Million less. Voting **NO** says no to the proposed budget and directs the Town to cut \$1.2 Million more and keep taxes down.