



**LANCASTER SELECT BOARD
FY24 BUDGET FORUM
of Thursday, March 23, 2023
6:00 P.M.
Town Hall Auditorium**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Stephen J. Kerrigan introduced the meeting at 6:00PM in the Town Hall Auditorium, 695 Main Street, Lancaster, MA. Mr. Kerrigan thanked the Finance Committee for their work on the budget, particularly Dick Trussell.

II. FY24 BUDGET FORUM

Town Administrator Kate Hodges gave an overview of FY24 Budget Position, Current Figures, and Financial Standing.

Thayer Memorial Library Director Joe Mule, Director of Community Planning and Development Jasmin Farinacci, Town Clerk Amanda Cannon, Fire Chief Hanson, Police Chief Moody, Public Works Director Kevin Bartlett, and Kelly Dolan, Director of Health and Human Services, described the impact of cuts on their departments, and the resulting impact on residents.

Mr. Kerrigan asked the audience for questions:

A Lancaster resident asked what the new tax rate will be if the override passes. Ms. Hodges and Finance Director Cheryl Gariepy confirmed that it would be \$18.13.

Rebecca Young-Jones, 94 Barnes Court, asked when the bond would be passed for the new high school and when it would take effect. Mr. Kerrigan replied that the impact on the town would be about \$40 million; Ms. Hodges explained that this will be an impact on the tax rate in 2026 and 2027. Ms. Young-Jones asked if union raises were calculated in personnel increases.

Denise Hurley, 102 Bolton Road, noted that increases may be scary but that it is important to consider what the override will do to keep the Town the way it is, with many great things happening.

Sherry Cutler, 67 Harvard Road, asked if the Senior Work-off program would be put back in place to help people on a fixed income to cope with a higher tax rate. Mr. Kerrigan explained that the Senior Work-off program remains in effect, and hopefully a Tax Fairness Committee will be established by Article at the Annual Town Meeting will have impact in a couple of years.

Ralph Gifford, 861 George Hill Road, talked about relationship building in the community, and the cost of conflict, noting that the cost of litigation has skyrocketed in Town, and that division in Town creates less cooperation and therefore fewer helpful ideas for the budget.

Dave Mallette, 2748 North Main Street, asked about the bond rating, and how failure of the override vote would impact this. He expressed concern that a lower bond rating would cost more money when the school is financed. Ms. Hodges explained the impact that this would have. Mr. Mallette also asked how a later under-ride might work. Ms. Hodges addressed this.

Lesley Allison, 343 Brockelman Road, said that in the short term this would cost residents more money, but in the long run, it would save money.

Mr. Allison noted that the budget includes minimum services, no fluff.

Ms. Turner thanked all involved for a very thorough process and urged residents to bring forth any questions they may have.

Mr. Kerrigan noted that if the override fails and budgets are drastically cut, then the situation next year will still be even worse.

III. COMMUNICATIONS

1. Upcoming Select Board Meetings:

- Special Meeting Monday, March 27, 2023, starting at 12:00PM, ZOOM ONLY
- Special Meeting Wednesday, April 5, 2023, starting at 6:00PM, HYBRID.

2. Other Upcoming Town Wide Dates:

- Warrant Review Meeting: TBD, Old Town Hall Auditorium
- Annual Town Meeting: May 3, 2023, starting at 7:00PM, MRE/Luther Burbank Schools
- Annual Town Election: May 8, 2023, polls open 7:00 AM – 8:00 PM, Old Town Hall

IV. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Turner moved to adjourn. Mr. Allison seconded the motion. *Vote taken; Alexandra W. Turner, Aye; Jason A. Allison, Aye; Stephen J. Kerrigan, Aye; Motion passed. [3-0-0]*

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Rocco
Executive Assistant

APPROVED

Alexandra W. Turner, Clerk
Dated: April 18, 2023