

Q: Does LES have a budget crisis?

Yes, LES originally requested approximately \$88,000 for its budget *over* the 2% limit requested by the Select Board. That would have given us a level service budget (as in, just adjust for inflation/contractual salary increases). We've since proposed a few cuts and trimmed that number down to around \$45,000. That is roughly 2.6% more than the requested 2% increase, for a total of 4.6% increase over last year's budget.

Q: Has LES already made cuts to its budget to get to this number?

Yes, there are several significant cuts proposed, including: the Morse Hill Adventure Program for grades 4-6, a Para-Educator position, the elimination of a subsidy which helps low-income families send their children to the LES After-School Program, the reduction of hours for the Librarian and Speech Therapy positions.

Q: What is the process going forward?

After the public budget forum, the School Committee will discuss the budget more and vote on a final version of it. That budget will be shared with the Select Board/Finance Committee and they will decide what next year's overall town budget will look like. The town will vote on the overall town budget at Town Meeting on April 28th. We are hoping to reach agreement on the LES budget with the Select Board and Finance Committee prior to town meeting. If not, there will be significant discussion about it at town meeting. Your support will be crucial there.

Q: How does School Choice and Charter Schools affect the Town?

When students attend another district's public school approx \$5000 follows the student from the school state aide. Next year we are expecting to receive \$108,000 for school choice in students, and pay out \$15,000. When students attend a public Charter school the DESE calculated per pupil cost (approx 18,000) is deducted from the state aid and sent to the charter school. For Leverett the state is anticipating \$94,000 be sent to charter schools in the next fiscal year. The state does reimburse some of the charter funding (\$14,000 expected) but the legislator has never fully funded the reimbursement.

Q: I have heard the town says it cannot raise any more money to fund the LES budget gap through Property Taxes than it is already. Is this true?

No, this is not true. Leverett could have raised over \$200,000 more in 2018 Property Tax than what will actually be collected. We are currently taxing property at less than the maximum allowed by the Massachusetts law known as Proposition 2 ½. **However**, the Select Board and Finance Committee are concerned about reaching the tax levy ceiling for the town in roughly 5-12 years, depending on tax increase. Should this happen the whole town will face serious cuts. **This is a serious town-wide problem.**

Q: What is Proposition 2 ½?

This is a law that limits both the annual increase (Levy Limit) of property taxes and establishes an upper limit for the amount of property tax that can be collected (Levy Ceiling). The following link provides a helpful overview of the law. <http://www.mass.gov/dor/docs/dls/publ/misc/levylimits.pdf>

Q: Do we need to discuss voting for a possible "Override" of Proposition 2 ½ to raise taxes?

No, we do not need to consider an "Override" at this time as the town can collect more in Property Tax and still remain beneath the limit allowed by Prop 2 ½, but again, the implications of hitting the tax levy ceiling are a large concern.

Q: Is there anything the town can do to increase the amount of money for the town, including LES?
Aside from raising the Property Tax the town must consider alternative and sustainable means of increasing revenue for the town.

Q: Do I have a voice in determining how our town raises and spends money?

Yes. You can vote on the Town Budget at Town Meeting and you can attend all Public Budget Hearings to voice your concerns. The School Committee welcomes your feedback and concerns about the school budget.

Q: What can I do to help?

Please give us feedback, attend meetings and talk to your neighbors.

Help advocate to our state legislators to fully fund charter reimbursement, to re-evaluate Charter School funding, to read the State Auditors report on Chapter 70 funding and take recommended steps to fund public schools adequately.

THE NEXT TOWN BUDGET HEARING WILL BE HELD ON TUES, MARCH 6 AT 7PM AT THE TOWN HALL.

THE NEXT TOWN MEETING WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY, APRIL 28, 2018 IN THE LES GYMNASIUM.

Contact Information for the School Committee members:

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