

FY 25 Budget Update

At their April 3rd meeting, the West Boylston Select Board voted to support the inclusion of a Proposition 2 ½ override at the May 20th Town Meeting. The proposed override will also be on the June 4th town election ballot. The West Boylston School Committee followed suit at the April 10th school committee meeting voting 5-0 to endorse the process. Planning continues as the district has submitted five-year projections to the Town Administration. The compiled projections are based on the average historical annual increases over the past decade, in tandem with estimated operating expenses for the next five years.

The West Boylston Finance Committee will host an educational forum on Monday, May 13 at 6:00 to discuss historical revenue and expense trends in West Boylston as well as the challenges presented in the FY25 Budget, including options to address them, both now and in the coming years.

Additionally, there is little doubt that referenced one million dollar deficit during the March budget presentation was concerning, however a few vital points should be highlighted:

1. The deficit was not created by fiscal mismanagement. The deficit impacting the District this budget season is also impacting many communities throughout the State was created by the following.
 - School Districts budgets increasing by at least 4-5%
 - ESSER grants being phased out
 - Flat student enrollment impacting Chapter 70 funding
 - Low per pupil inflation growth of 1.13%
 - Reduction in Low- Income students (down 7,000)
 - Average Municipal Revenue Growth Factors increase of only 4.35%
2. The District can manage the deficit for FY 25 by heavily relying upon projected sources of revenue and reconfiguring existing programming and priorities. Although, the fiscal outlook for FY 26 is dire at this point.
3. The District is legally responsible to provide special education services for students with disabilities from ages 3-22. Services include instructional and behavioral support and a wide array of therapies. The District currently has 13 students receiving their education out of district. The average tuition for out of district placements is \$178,900 with transportation averaging \$45,880. These costs are uncontrolled and unpredictable
4. Sub Separate programs have been created at all levels to minimize the number of West Boylston students enrolled in out of district placements, including the expansion of the PASS program at Major Edwards, which expands to two classrooms next year.

The District's continued reliance on anticipated sources of revenue, with the grim fiscal projections in Massachusetts and the uncertainty on the federal level remains a source of concern. The District does not believe a "reduction in force" is necessary this fiscal year. We will continue our communication and

collaboration with the Town with the continued goal of providing quality education offerings for all students.