



For immediate release

September 9, 2025

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## **City of Amesbury Considers Council Bill to Add Prop 2 ½ Override Question to November Ballot**

In September, the City Council will consider a Council Bill proposing a Proposition 2 ½ budget override question as part of the November 4, 2025 city election. The proposal states “Shall the City of Amesbury be allowed to assess an additional \$6,000,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purposes of funding the operating budgets of the City and of the Public Schools for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026?”

Placement on a ballot requires a majority vote of the City Council and approval of the Mayor.

In preparation for filing the council bill, a Financial Advisory Board (FAB) was formed of core members from across city and school leadership, assembled for the purpose of defining the components of a Proposition 2 ½ Override question that balances long term financial planning with voter interest seeking to establish tax and budgeting predictability. The goal of the advisory board was to ensure the certainty of revenue and levy capacity in advance of the FY27 budget, consider the needs of all city departments, make decisions in compliance with locally accepted policies, and provide transparency to voters.

The FAB reviewed the projected revenues and expenses for the upcoming fiscal years to determine budget shortfalls and made careful determinations about the city’s financial outlook. These assumptions were made using the best available data, building permits, market trends in real estate, and guidance from the Commonwealth on valuation practices. A planned reduction in the use of Free Cash was also factored in. Free Cash is one-time funds from surpluses; using it year after year to cover recurring expenses is

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risky and unsustainable. Phasing down reliance on Free Cash will allow for greater financial stability for Amesbury.

Combining revenue assumptions with projected expenses, the FAB identified the gap between what the city can legally raise and what is needed to maintain current services. The result is a proposal that not only covers the immediate gap in the coming fiscal year but also positions the city for stability over future years. By building in responsible revenue projections, the override is expected to support balanced budgets beyond next year.

For several years, city officials have been signaling that Amesbury was approaching a financial breaking point. Inflation, rising service costs, healthcare, and contractual obligations have outpaced allowed budget growth (Proposition 2 ½). To balance the budget without new revenue, the city has relied on short-term fixes – using reserves, delaying maintenance, and trimming department requests. While these strategies bought time, they weren't sustainable and have created a structural deficit. If approved by the voters in Amesbury, the override will be used to help with the structural deficit and maintain "level services". Without additional funding, schools and other city departments will experience critical reductions in staffing, programs, and maintenance.

A page on the city website has been created to keep those interested informed with important information, public forum schedules, and frequently asked questions. Constituents may fill out an online form with their questions about the override which will be compiled, answered, and added to the list on a case-by-case basis.

[www.amesburyma.gov/Override](http://www.amesburyma.gov/Override)

**Mayor Kassandra Gove** - "For many years, I have been asked to bring forward an override question to the ballot so voters could decide. As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency and responsible financial planning, a November ballot question gives voters the opportunity to make their voices heard during a regular election, while also allowing city staff to plan ahead for the FY2027 budget.

The reality is that cost increases have outpaced the budget growth allowed under Proposition 2 ½. Rising student needs, unfunded mandates, reduced state and federal aid, and the expiration of pandemic-related funding have all added pressure. An override gives voters the choice: preserve the level of services our community relies on or move forward with reduction.

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Our responsibility as public servants and stewards of taxpayer dollars is unwavering. We will continue to seek efficiencies and implement best practices no matter the circumstances.”

### Public Forum Schedule

**Tuesday, September 16th at 5:30pm**

City Hall Auditorium  
62 Friend Street

**Wednesday, October 8th at 6:30pm**

Costello Center Great Room  
68 Elm Street

**Friday, October 10th at 9:00am**

Costello Center Great Room  
68 Elm Street

**Tuesday, October 28th at 6:30pm**

Amesbury High School Auditorium  
5 Highland Street

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