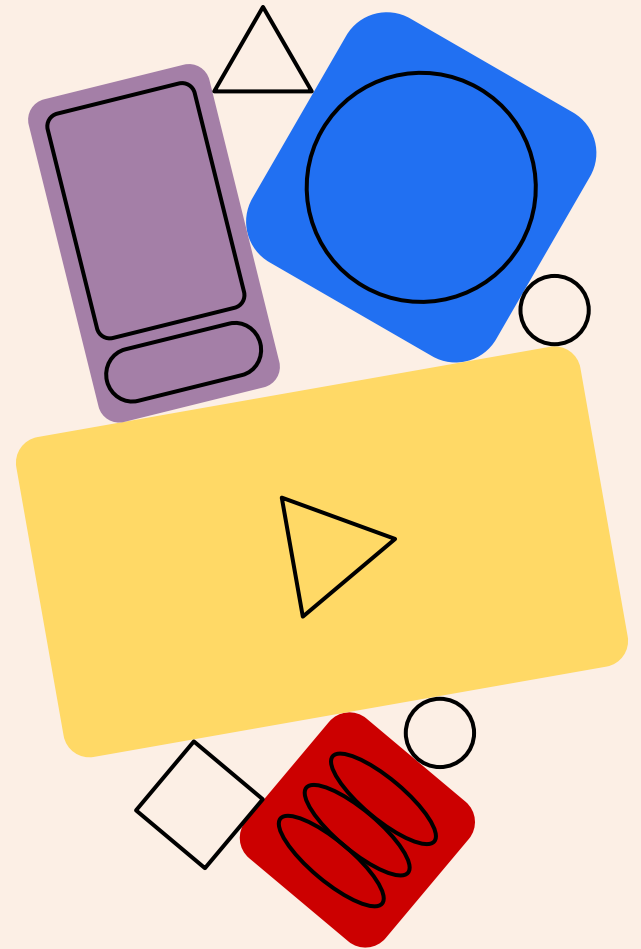


HUDSON

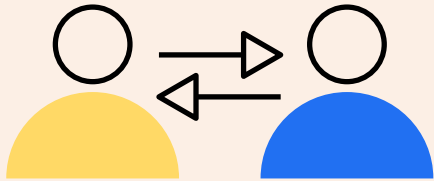


PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Proposition 2- $\frac{1}{2}$ Override Strategy



Today's Objectives



Share

Explain Hudson's process including strategies that we believe helped lead to a successful vote.



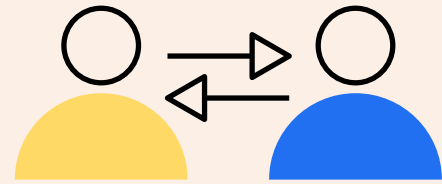
Answer Questions

Respond to audience questions and comments to help you apply elements of our experience to your community.

Override Planning

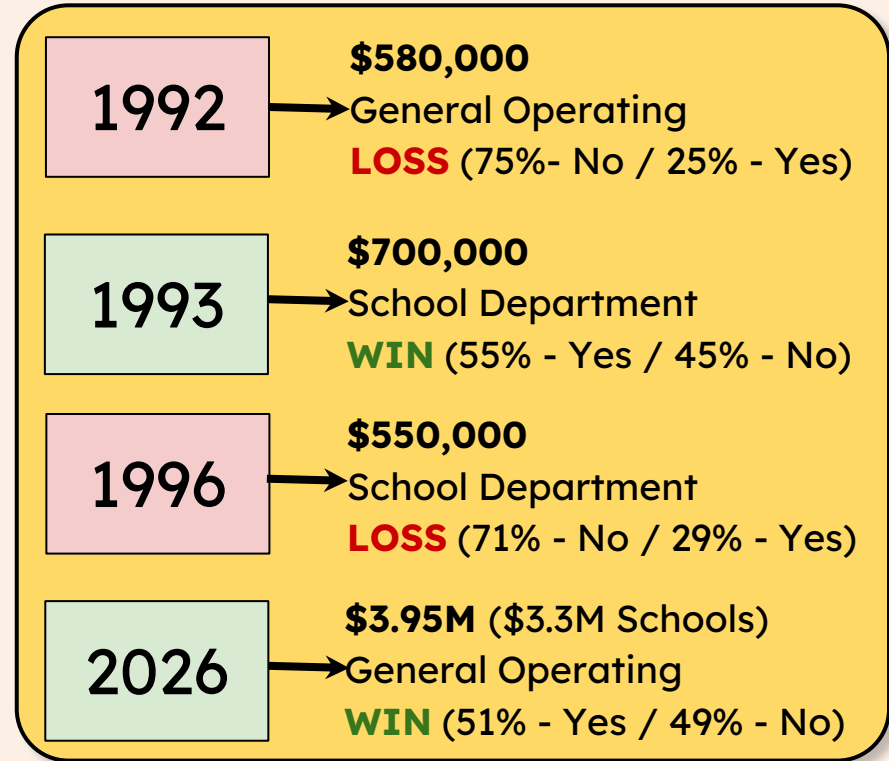
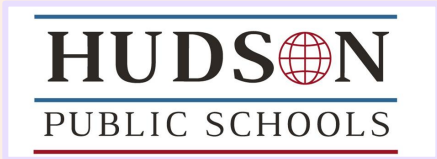
- Anticipate the need as early as you can with multi-year projections
 - Sometimes unforeseen circumstances/perfect storm
 - Talk internally in school about options and how much needed
 - Superintendent/Finance Director are responsible for clear factual data on budget needs and why the override is needed. Also, estimate projected reductions to add to presentations. Be prepared to tell the story
 - Talk with the Town about if they also have a need
 - Talk about if you will ask for an amount to get you through one year or multiple years
 - Encourage a parent group to form
 - DOR Tax Impact Calculator, or create your own like Mendon-Upton
 - Give presentations at public meetings/events
-

Overrides campaigns increasing

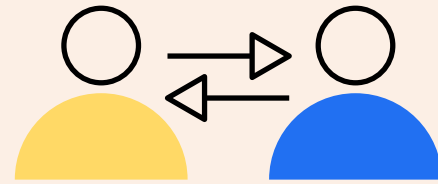


About Hudson:

- Population: 20,000
- Suburban - Mostly Residential
- 2,300 Students / 5 Schools (3 elementary, 1 MS, 1 HS)
- Per Pupil Expenditure (2023) \$22,355
- School Choice Revenue Used Consistently to Close Persistent Budget Gaps
- Perfect Storm in FY26

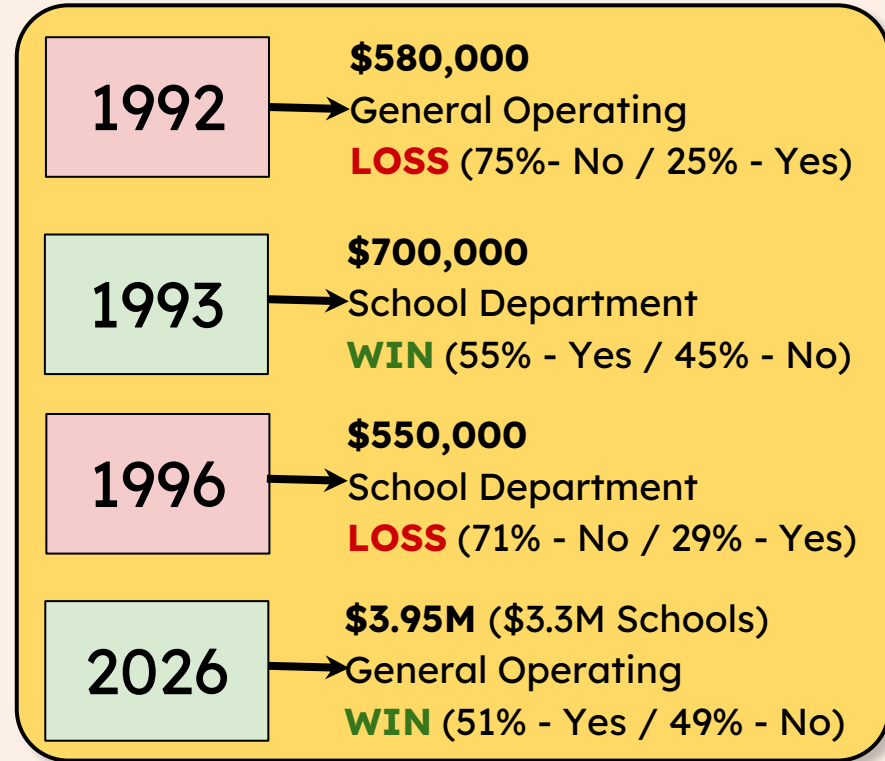
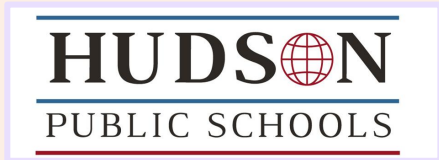


OVERRIDE HISTORY



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- School Choice Revenue Used Consistently to Close Persistent Budget Gaps
- Perfect Storm in FY26



Ensure that ***EVERYONE*** knows what ***NOT*** to do

Important and most common:

- Campaigning **by staff** for the override (holding signs, attending or organizing events, etc) must occur outside of contractual work hours
- Cannot use district resources for the override effort
 - District email
 - Copiers / Paper
 - Physical Spaces
 - Distribution Lists
- When in doubt, consult legal counsel



Establish a Timeline

Advanced planning is critical. Hudson maintains a 5-year budget projection document. This document placed the need for an override in the public's eye multiple fiscal years in advance.

Hudson's Timeline - 2024-2025



- June 2024: Tri-Board Meeting
- September 2024: Tri-Board Meeting (***commitment to reduce if able prior to Warrant being established***)
- October 2024: MASC Override Best Practices Presentation at School Committee Meeting
- November 2024: Ballot Campaign Committee Initial Volunteer Meeting
- December 2024: Override added to Annual Town Meeting Warrant, Town Prop 2 ½ Q&A Published
- March 2025: Ballot Campaign Committee Public Kickoff
 - Public Officials Invited
 - Speakers to Frame the "Story"
 - Moderated Panel
 - Yard Sign Handout
- February - April 2025: Budget presentations at School Committee, Select Board, Finance Committee and Community Events (Downtown Business District, Over 55 Housing Communities, Rotary Club)
- May 5, 2025 - Town Meeting ([Handout at Town Meeting Entry](#) / [QR Codes for Questions](#))
- May 12, 2025 - Town Election (Holding signs at polling places)

Share The Story

Why are we at this point?

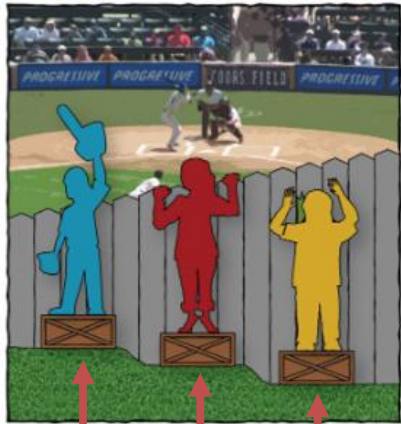
Expenses vs. Revenues	Use of Choice Funds	Expiration of ESSER	Transportation Costs	OOD Tuition Costs	Charter Schools
<p>Annual trend of expenses outpacing available resources</p>	<p>Use of all of the district’s School Choice funds to close the FY25 budget gap. School Choice funds have been used in Hudson for decades as stabilization funds to close unexpected School Department budget gaps.</p>	<p>The expiration of funds provided through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), specifically ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief).</p>	<p>Increases in transportation costs (increase of over \$1M in FY25 that will increase by an additional 6% in FY26 and 6% in FY27)</p>	<p>Increases to out of district tuitions (\$800K increase in FY25 that will continue to escalate in FY26 and beyond)</p>	<p>Annual charter school tuition assessment will increase by 17% in FY26 (\$4.1M). Charter tuitions shift funds away from the Hudson Public Schools.</p>

Share The Story

Public Schools Then and Now

Years ago...

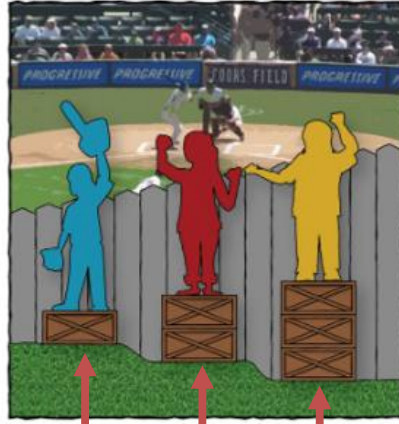
Instruction delivered by one educator in one mode regardless of individual needs of students



Tier 1 Support Tier 1 Support Tier 1 Support

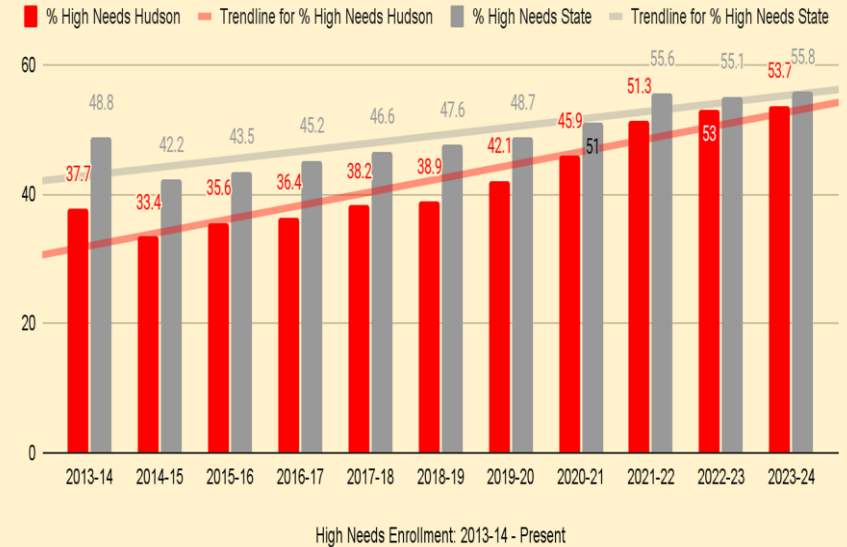
Today...

Instruction delivered in flexible ways, often by multiple educators, to accommodate different learning styles and varied needs



Tier 1 Support Tier 1 & Tier 2 Supports Tier 1, Tier 2, & Tier 3 Supports

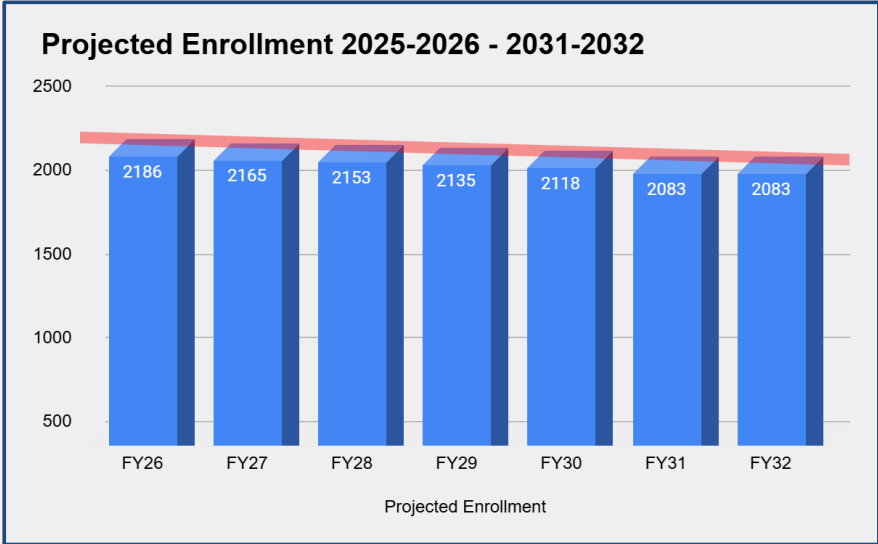
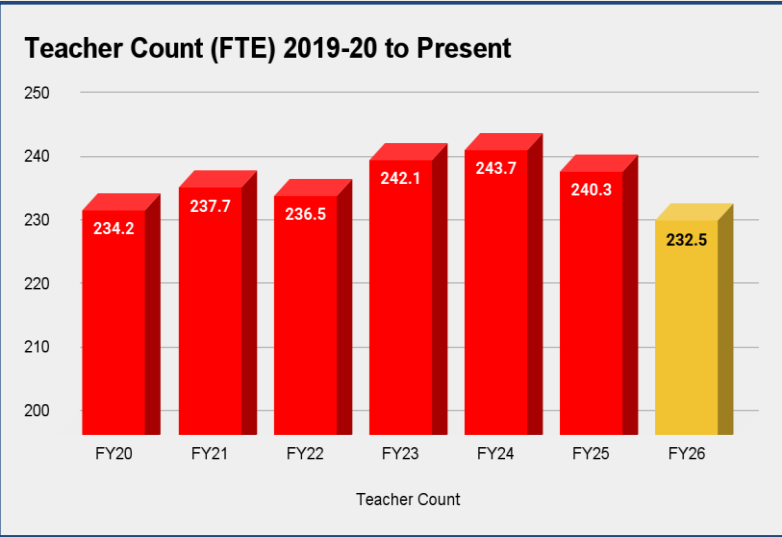
% High Needs Hudson vs. State 2013-14 to Present



Share The Story

Historical Enrollment-Based Reductions

Targeting enrollment-based reductions
FY25 Budget - 4 enrollment-based teacher reductions
FY26 Budget - 6 enrollment-based teacher reductions



Facts Over Feelings:

Be Prepared to Share:

A Clear and Concise Explanation of the Situation


- Projected Gap for FY26 = \$4.4M
- Need for Override Established
- Reduced \$1.1M (enrollment-based, retirements, reductions in force)
- Projected Gap for FY26 Adjusted to \$3.3M (after \$1.1M reduction)
- Projected Gap for FY26 Adjusted to \$2.05M (after adjusted New Growth)
- Failed Override Requires Additional Staffing Reductions (20-30 FTE)

Facts Over Feelings:

Be Prepared to Answer: *How will this impact me?*

Hudson Override Tax Impact: Assessing Full Amount in Year 1 vs. Phasing Over 4 Fiscal Years		
	Original	Phased
Fiscal Year 26	\$480	\$287
Fiscal Year 27	\$480	\$387 (add'l \$100)
Fiscal Year 28	\$480	\$451 (add'l \$64)
Total	\$1,440	\$1,125
% Saved		22%

Facts Over Feelings: Be Prepared to Share: *Multiple Reduction Scenarios*

	Scenario 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTE Reductions Eliminate JV Sports Eliminate Extra Curricular 	Scenario 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTE Reductions Increase and Add Fees 	Scenario 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTE Reductions Reduce Athletics Reduce Extra Curricular Increase and Add Fees 	Scenario 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> FTE Reductions Eliminate JV Sports Eliminate Extra Curricular Increase and Add Fees
Personnel	\$3,020,000	\$2,930,000	\$2,700,000	\$2,570,000
Personnel FTEs	55 FTEs (2025-26)	50 FTEs (2025-26)	47 FTEs (2025-26)	45 FTEs (2025-26)
Clubs / Activities	\$113,000	\$0	\$50,000	\$113,000
Athletics	\$167,000	\$0	\$30,000	\$167,000
Athletic Fees	-No Change-	\$70,000	\$70,000	-No Change-
Bus Fees	-No Fee-	\$250,000	\$400,000	\$400,000
Rental Fees	-No Change-	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$40,000
PK Fees	-No Change-	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000
TOTAL	\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000	\$3,300,000

Data on overrides

Division of Local Services - Data Analytics and Resources Bureau

Proposition 2½ Override and Underride Votes

Data current as of 04/01/2026

https://dls-gw.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Votes.Prop2_5.OverrideUnderride

- **Download to excel**
 - **Sort by most recent**
 - **Look at details of winning campaigns**
 - **Research their website for how they approached the campaign**
-

Stoneham - Tiered Options

<https://www.stoneham-ma.gov/1102/Override-Study-Committee>

Municipality	Vote Date	Win / Loss	Yes Votes	No Votes	Department	Description	Amount
Stoneham	12/9/2025	LOSS	3,600	3,643	GEN GOV	Funding School And Town Expenses For Fy27	12,500,000
Stoneham	12/9/2025	WIN	4,001	3,274	GEN GOV	Funding School And Town Expenses For Fy27	9,300,000

Melrose - two attempts

<https://www.yesformelrose.org/>

<https://www.cityofmelrose.org/798/Override-Impact>

Municipality	Vote Date	Win / Loss	Yes Votes	No Votes	Department	Description	Amount
Melrose	11/4/2025	WIN	6,018	5,052	GEN OP	Override	13,500,000
Melrose	6/18/2024	LOSS	4,296	5,174	GEN OP	Funding School, City, And Public Safety Personnel, Associated Benefits, And Services	7,700,000

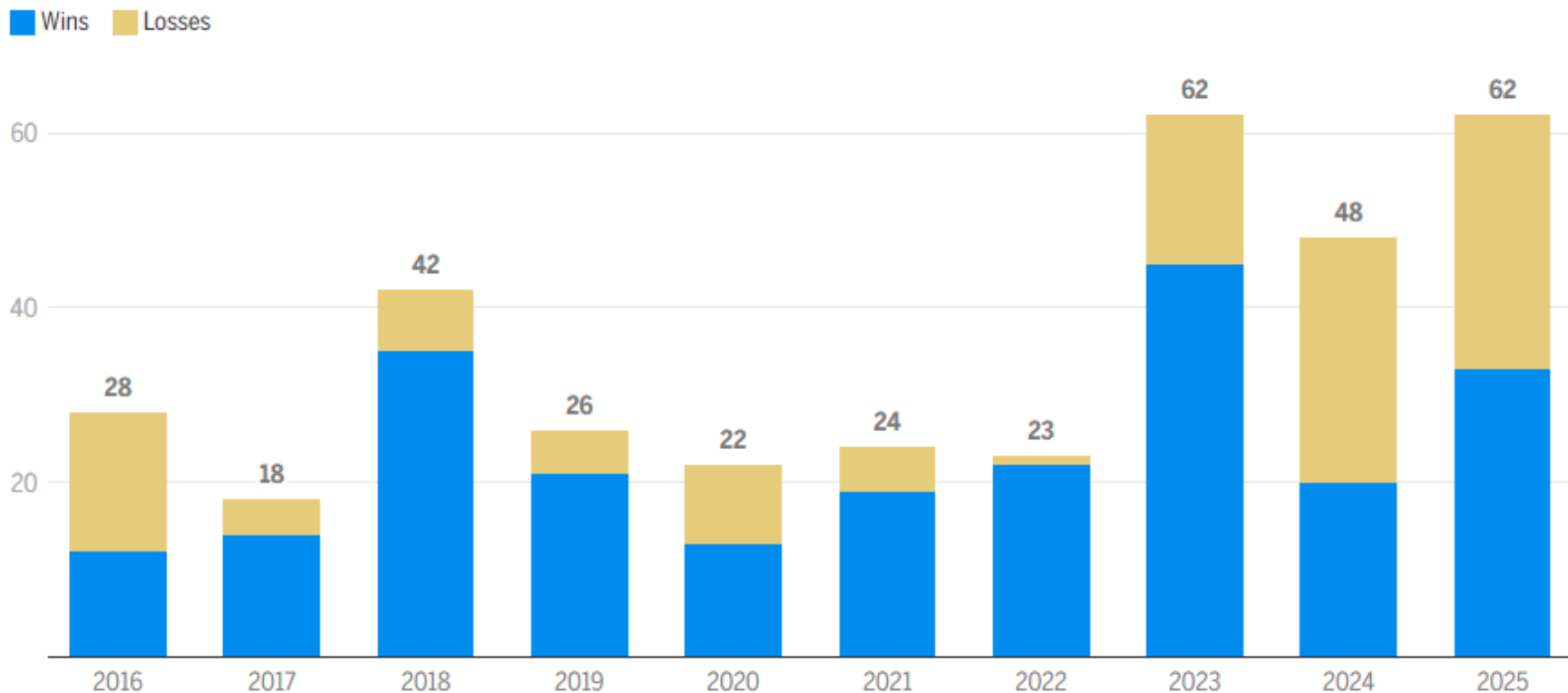
Melrose - Tiered Options

Melrose 2025 Override Ballot Question Summary

	1A: Strengthen \$13.5MM	1B: Repair \$11.9MM	1C: Stabilize \$9.3MM
Fund Current Positions	✓	✓	✓
School Positions Restored	17	9	3
DPW/City Positions Restored	5	3	0
Police Positions Restored	2	2	0
Road + Sidewalk Maintenance	✓	✓	Essential Repairs
City Building Maintenance	✓	✓	✗
Public Works Programs	✓	✓	✗
Educational Materials	✓	✓	✗
Parks + Field Maintenance	✓	✗	✗
Senior + Veterans' Services	✓	✗	✗
Library Programs	✓	✗	✗
Restore All Cut Positions	✗	✗	✗

A look at 10 years of override votes

The number of votes local officials in Massachusetts have sought from residents to increase their property taxes above a state limit of no more than 2.5 percent annually has been on the rise in recent years.



Helpful Links to Hudson's Override Documents



[FY26 Budget Documents \(Public Facing\)](#) - Click on FY26 Budget Docs

[Together for Hudson Facebook Page](#)

[Sample Community Presentation Slide Deck - Spring](#)

[Sample Board Slide Deck](#)

[School Finance Overview for Boards](#)

[Multi-Year Projections](#)

[Town Meeting Handout](#)

[Prop 2-½ One Page Overview](#)

[Prop 2-½ Q and A Doc](#)

[Prop 2-½ Guidance for Staff](#)

[MASC School Committee Presentation - Fall](#)

[Tri-Board Handout - Schools](#)

[Tri-Board Handout - Town](#)

VOTE
YES FOR
OVERRIDE

TOGETHER FOR HUDSON

2283 yes - 2147 no

**Save Hudson Schools
& Town Services**

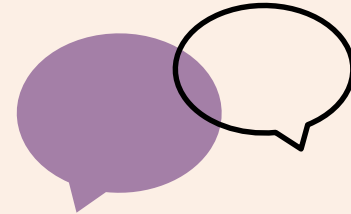
TogetherForHudson.com

MAY 05
Town Meeting
7:30pm
Hudson High School

MAY 12
Election @ Polls
7:00am - 8:00PM
Your Polling Station

Paid for by the Massachusetts Teachers Association

Questions



How We Passed a Prop 2½ Override in 6 Weeks — Lessons Learned

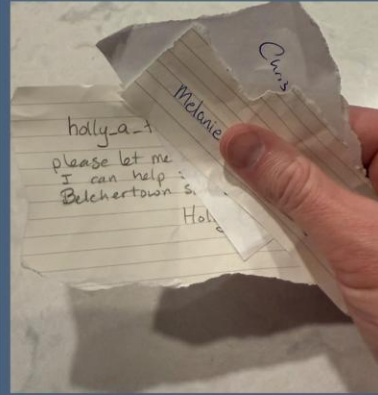


The Website



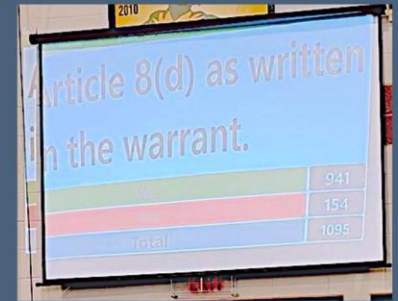
Info Booklet

How it Started...



How it's going!

QUESTION 1	PRECINCT A	PRECINCT B	PRECINCT C	PRECINCT D	TOTALS
Shall the Town of Belchertown be allowed to assess an additional \$2,896,400.00 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding municipal and school operating budgets for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025?					
YES	603	547	499	497	2146
NO	463	599	579	484	2125
BLANKS	5	1	6	1	13
TOTALS	1071	1147	1084	982	4284

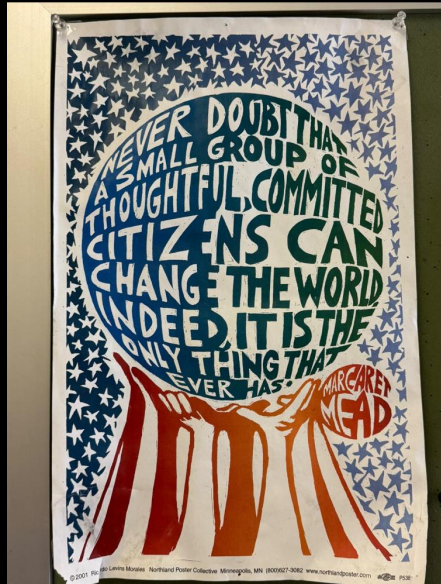


Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

—Margaret Mead



Main Points



Background: familiar story

Residents can't support what they don't understand

4 Steps: How we passed an override

Results/Wrap-up

Belchertown: Background

1. Demographics
 - a. 2,000 students
 - b. 15,000 residents
 - c. Median household income: \$100K
2. History of underfunding (amount under level service)
 - a. FY23: \$327,000
 - b. FY24: \$485,179
 - c. FY 25: 1,312,889
 - d. FY26: \$2,118,339
3. Cuts had already impacted personnel/programs
 - a. An additional 20+ positions would be cut
 - b. Elementary school building closure
4. The year before (June 2024) a \$122.6M middle school building was voted down (2,539 against & 1,548 for)
5. January/February Selectboard:
 - a. "There is no solution/no help coming":
 - b. 2 supported an override, 2 were against, and 1 felt it was rushed/poorly timed



Residents can't support what
they don't understand

Most Voters Don't Understand Property Taxes

"My assessment went up, so my taxes must be skyrocketing."

There's a disconnect between assessment, tax rate, and the levy. People believe that prop 2.5 means their property taxes increase by 2.5%. The reality:

Town levy: \$20,000,000

Total assessed property value: \$2,000,000,000

Tax rate = $\$20,000,000 \div \$2,000,000,000 \times 1000 =$
\$10 per \$1,000

If your home is assessed at \$400,000:

$\$400,000 \div 1,000 \times \$10 = \$4,000$



Jake Hulseberg they 2 1/2 is added on every year. Call it what you may, it is added to our tax every year. The Override is going to permanently change the town mill rate, what you chose to verb as levy, which it is but it is the mill rate. Never did I say it was 2 1/2 % of the override and I am sure that the citizens know that. I am sure they know that every year that is the increase, not in our mill rate but on our tax.

This override effects the mill rate, something everyone is avoiding speaking about. The mill rate will be changed for ever. With the mill rate changed the year 2 1/2 override is higher, ever year, because the mill rate, which is the amount of tax per 1,000 is now higher so the yearly increase will be higher because it is now based on the new Mill Rate or Levy as you wish to say.

Facebook: Belchertown Community
Forum



Most People Don't Understand Prop 2½

We know...

Prop 2½ caps the increase in the levy at 2.5% per year, regardless of inflation.

Inflation has been ~4–4.5% for several years.

Our budgets can only increase 2.5% + new growth (which in most places isn't much).

That gap = cuts. We can't keep the services and programs from last year.

And in schools, cuts = people.

Teachers, counselors, paraprofessionals, programs — because we are a people business.

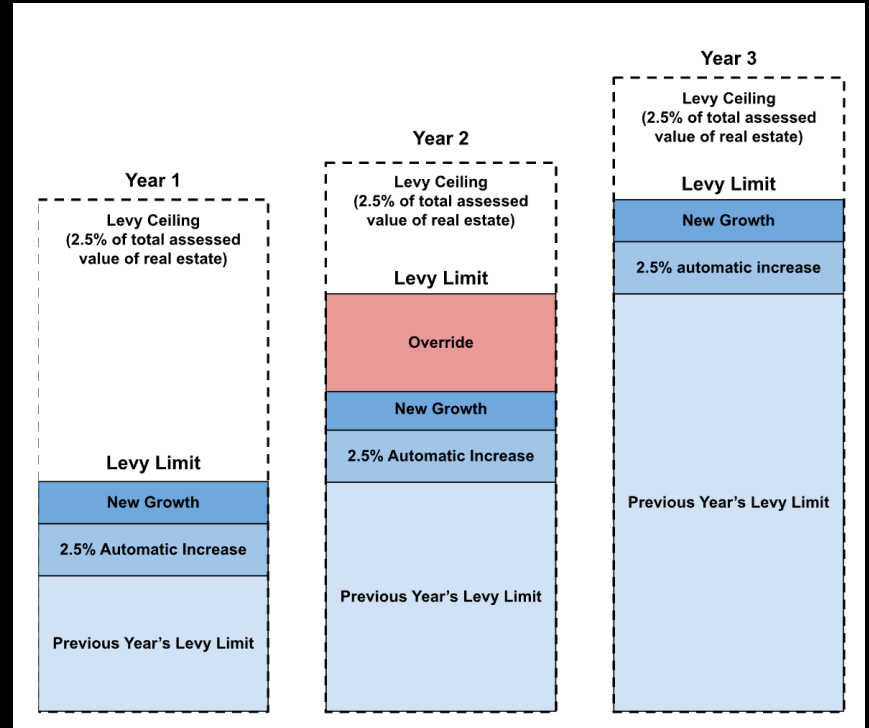


Image:

<https://themelrosemessenger.org/articles/2025/09/prop2.html>

How to pass an override?

People are doing the best they can with what they know.

Step 1: Build the Core Group

A familiar story...

In February 2025, during a School Committee meeting our Superintendent informed residents that the current budget would result in 20+ positions getting cut.

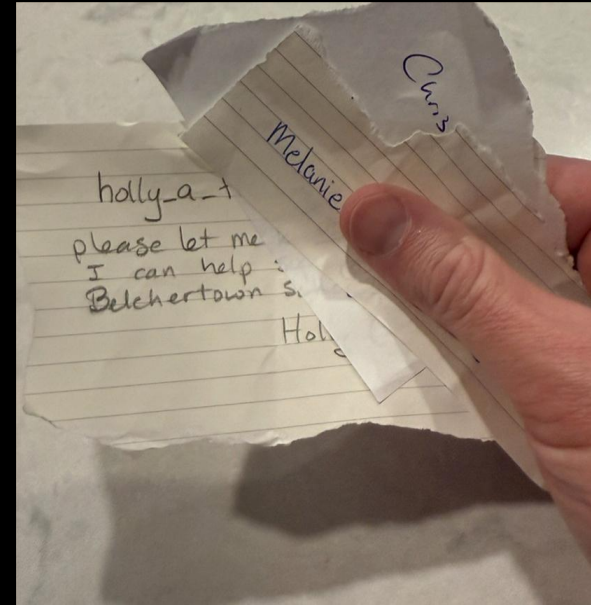
Many residents addressed the School Committee as expected: we need our teachers, we value our schools, education should be a priority, etc...

I listened to a young man talk about losing a related arts class last year and how this would be worse... it really impacted me - so I went up to the mic:

"We're in the wrong room. This isn't a School Committee problem — it's a Select Board problem."

We had less than a month to convince the Select Board to allow an override vote or fully fund the schools. Most of them were opposed. A school override had just failed.

Most residents do not know how to navigate this - neither do the teacher unions... or school committees.



Step 1: Build the Core Group (cont.)

How do you get an override on the ballot? Then how do you convince people to vote to increase their taxes?

So we: **Organized parents and staff**

- Showed up at select board meetings even though **public comment was denied** (an opportunity in disguise)
- Met individually with board members - info sessions
- Made our case respectfully, repeatedly

That struggle bonded the group.

You need that bonding moment. It creates commitment.

It eventually passed 3–2 to head to the ballot, but it would not have if not for one critical component...



Step 2: Social Media... *sigh*

This is the part nobody likes — but 90% of voters get their “news” on Facebook. Especially, local news.

If you lose the social media narrative, you lose the vote.

So... trick the algorithm:

We posted constantly and fact checked all naysayers because the voters are lurking and watching

We made graphics and short videos (under 2 minutes) to stay at the top of everyone’s feed.

We trained volunteers on:

- How to comment constructively
- How to keep posts at the top of the forums
 - Trick the algorithm
- How to not escalate with trolls (they do exist)



Jake reminds me of Mr. Eustace Haney from the TV show Green Acres. Don't fall for his line of hog wash, VOTE NO.



No new taxes. All departments of Belchertown need to cut their budgets by a lot. There are years ahead of us where inflation alone is going to be a major factor under this federal government. Now is the time to take action and say no.



Remember just a few short months ago the school committee thought it would be wonderful to build a \$125,000,000 middle school with luxuries such as an outdoor cafeteria? These people have zero concern for the budget of taxpayers and there's a track record proving their frivolous ways to blow money. They knew we had budget shortfalls then, and they pushed forward regardless. And now they are demanding more money mere months later. Vote NO.



Step 2: Social Media... (cont.)

***Video is king.**

Anywhere I went in town, people said,

"Oh, I saw your video — can I ask you something?"

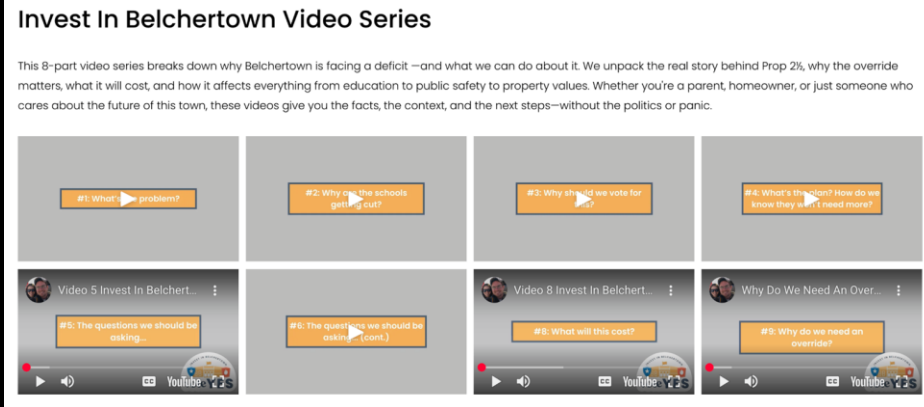
We had:

5,000+ website visits

60,000+ social media impressions

...in a town of ~15k.

Unfortunately, social media is where public opinion actually shifts.



Step 3: Ballot Question Committee & Fundraising

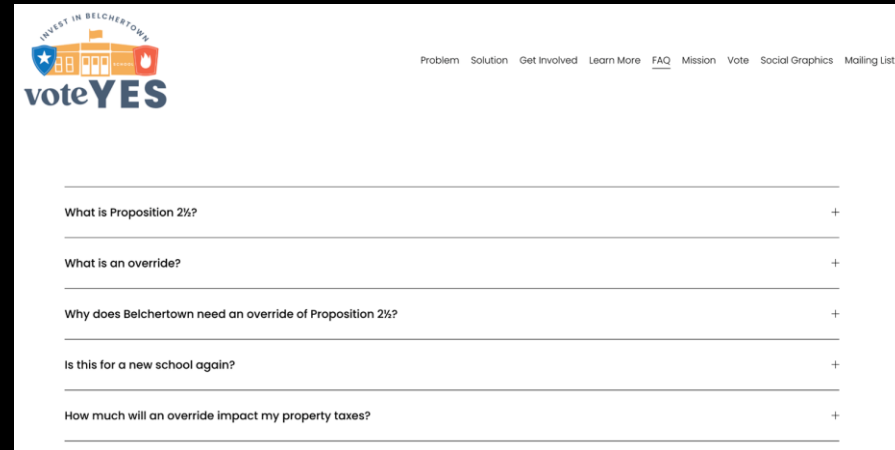
Research says:

- Yard signs don't change votes → but they protect volunteer morale
- Mailers don't change votes → but they drive people to your website
- Video/Door-knocking DOES change votes - at least locally

*So we knocked on doors. A lot of them. This will push your volunteers wayyy out of their comfort zone. Start with small asks... build up to it.

The website was Invest in Belchertown's "home." The place we pushed folks to to answer their questions.

Social Media is where the majority of residents read about the issues.



Step 4: Build a Real Campaign Operation

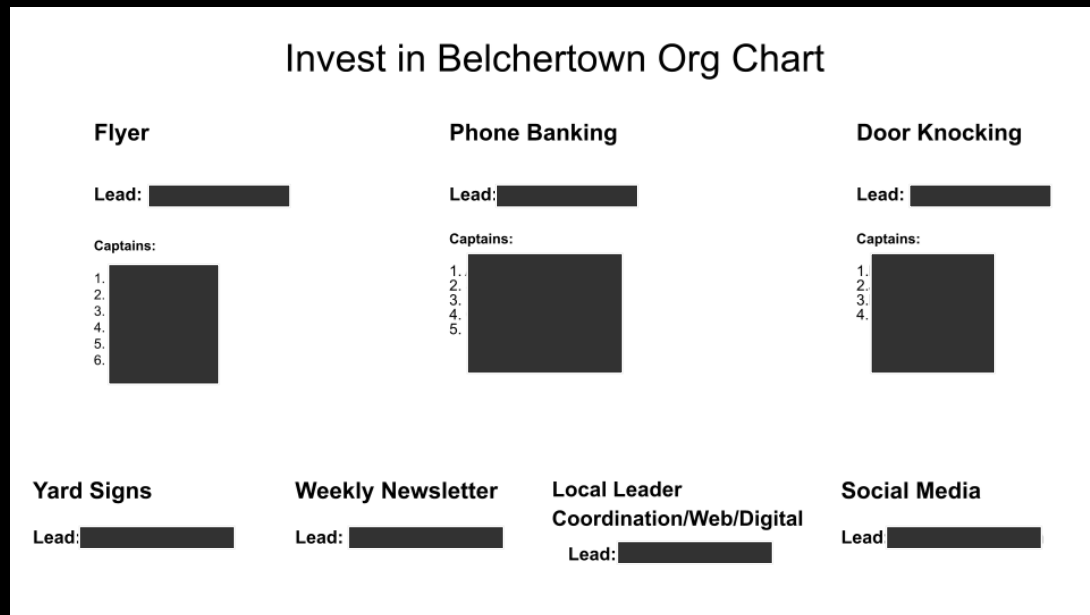
This is basically running a small nonprofit for 6–12 weeks.

Roles we assigned:

- Social Media Captain
- Door-Knocking Captain
- Phone Banking Captain
- Flyer/Events Captain

We calculated:

- The turnout of the largest similar past election
- How many “yes” doors we needed to knock
- And we went until we hit it... we weren't able to get all the way there



Results

Ballot Vote: Won by 20 votes

Town Meeting: Landslide win with record turnout

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BLANKS	5	1	6	1	13
TOTALS	1071	1147	1084	982	4284

Which means:

- Video matters
- Social media, social media, social media.
- Every door mattered. Every text mattered. Every conversation mattered.
- And people kept their jobs.
- Programs stayed open.
- Schools stabilized.



Wrap Up

1. Educate the public on taxes & Prop 2½ — early and often.
2. Organize people before you need them.
3. Control the narrative on social media.
4. Social media & door-knocking is the difference.
5. This is winnable. Even when the default is no.

Example websites:

- <https://saveourstoneham.org/>
- InvestinBelchertown.com



The Website



Info Booklet

Questions?

