

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>- I strongly support the Council on Aging request - Combining dissimilar funding requests will end up hurting all of the requests rather than a few</p>
<p>"Line item veto". People don't like the bundling of "pork" in the budget. Let the people vote on the specific services. Tiered doesn't solve the problem.</p>
<p>1) Cost of school administration is way too high - cut there first!! 2) The Library needs to understand you can have a beautiful house and not afford to live there!...of course the budget needs to go up with a bigger building but we may not want to pay for that...live and learn. Cut your hours so you can keep your people and beautiful building. 3) Do we really (honestly) need a supervisor n every shift at the Police Dept; do we really need the number of officers?</p>
<p>1. If, as reported, the school has secretaries making \$62,000 and \$78,000 per year, there is definitely "fat" which can be reduced. 2. If the School Superintendent has a clause in his contract giving him a raise if the override passes, it should be renegotiated and removed immediately. Or the School Superintendent should be fired or asked for his resignation. Anyone still on the School Board who voted in favor of such a clause should resign. I will NEVER vote yes on an override where the school gets increased funding as long as it means the School Superintendent gets an automatic raise. 3. It is time that every override includes a promise of no new overrides for at least 3 years. Every override raises the entire budget. Learn to live with what you have. 4. Why do we need to be Number One in MCAS scores? Being in the Top Ten Percent should be enough. 5. It is time to live within our means!</p>
<p>1. Move the budget/override decisions earlier into the year to allow more time for consideration. 2. Set some long-term goals for budget growth. 3. Use a menu approach not a tiered approach. 4. Ideally, the finance committee should conduct these surveys, not private groups, as happened in 1992.</p>
<p>A letter to the editor pointed out that over a million dollars was being spent on salaries for the school principals, the superintendent, and the administrators that assist those top positions. It seems that this is an area of excess that could be whittled back, if this is indeed true.</p>
<p>A major concern of mine is the high cost and layers of school department staff. For example, I am an Administrative Assistant for a global company employing 55,000 people worldwide. My company's pay scale is nowhere near what the Bromfield secretary makes. Also, my company's 2008 pay raises were only 3% across the board for our U.S. employees. Why have wages/benefits increased so far above the private sector?</p>
<p>A uniform code of compensation for both Town and School personnel is necessary. The rate of increase for salary/wages of Town and School personnel is excessive compared to private industry and Town's west of Harvard. Some degree of control must be applied when negotiating contracts. Pay increases of 5.5% to 6.2% annually will only defeat future override requests.</p>
<p>Adopt the menu as opposed to tiered override approach -- or better yet, make us live within our means.</p>
<p>Again, financial discipline is difficult and sometimes it hurts. We (and our schools) must begin to practice strict financial discipline and live within our means.</p>
<p>although, as a non-citizen, i am not eligible to vote i am a tax payer. i felt that the budget documents lack sufficient information for people to make informed decisions. i believe that if the case is made adequately for additional funds then people will support the proposals. none of the boards seems able to put in the effort required to make its case though.</p>
<p>Am assuming the town sent out an info flyer about the override. Guess I missed it. Please remember that only a smaller number of people attend town meetings, most drop in and out depending on the articles/vested interests and most people never attend at all. I prefer to vote at elections.</p>
<p>An override should be an occasional event to deal with an unexpected/unavoidable condition, not an annual event. The town should be expected to live within its means just as individuals do. In my opinion there have been too many consecutive overrides.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>Annual property taxes for residents have doubled or tripled for many residents in the past 10 years and we are in difficult financial times for many taxpayers...we need to figure out how to live within our means. When it comes time to make cuts, let's be honest with ourselves and cut the wants not the needs. Let's not play games like other towns that close library's and intentionally create hardship to punish taxpayers for not voting the override...there are lot's of opportunities to tighten our belts and we need to do those little things that add up. There were many good ideas at Town Meeting and these are a good place to start.</p>
<p>Are there elective classes at Bromfield with very small enrollment that could be cut so that money could be spent elsewhere? After middle school, should user fees be considered for art and music, as athletic fees are? Not all students have an interest in and/or talent for either/both.</p>
<p>As the town gets older, schools become less important. As the state mandates services that we may think should be at a lower priority while giving us less money for what used to be fundamental, we all question how to respond, especially when we have the choice to govern funding. I think that in a lean year, people say enough is enough. Unfortunately, that means the axe falls on what is currently at issue, taken out of context. That said, I suspect that many of us are just too darn busy with all the other stresses in our lives to pay attention to preserving the status quo that we take for granted. I meant to vote, but got sidetracked on the way. I think it's perfectly fine to keep asking us to decide. It may not be optimal, but attention is necessary.</p>
<p>At 86 is getting to be too much to support rising taxes. Retired military pay and social security does not go very far.</p>
<p>Because the school committee and Superintendent were not able to list specifically the cuts being made if we did not pass the budget, I don't think people were made to understand the consequences of not passing this budget. It seemed as if the town was threatened with 'you better pass this or else we are going to have to cut out something' which is nebulous and unconvincing. Especially in poor economic times, it would be prudent to give very specific details on which programs would be cut if we don't pass the override. I think people are more comfortable voting to keep a specific program (art, music,extra science, math, etc.) than being told something may have to be cut if we don't pass this budget. Additionally, at the 2007 town meeting, several town seniors stood up and said they would help pass the override, but that this would be the last year. We would have to find a different way to fund things. I wasn't too surprised after years of overrides, that this one did not pass.</p>
<p>Bob Moran's points about the budget and budgeting process (MY TWO CENTS, This week's edition) are definitely worth considering as we move forward on these issues.</p>
<p>Can some services be consolidated? Using schools/library for Senior Activities. Using Seniors who are looking for tax breaks in library or schools. Using high school seniors looking for community service hours to help in town services.</p>
<p>COA requests</p>
<p>COMMUNICATE! COMMUNICATE! COMMUNICATE!</p>
<p>Communicate, communicate, communicate</p>
<p>Consider future real estate tax bills and the impact on citizens on fixed incomes. Too much waste in Town expenses,i.e. school administration,library, energy use, use of aides in schools.</p>
<p>Consider limited government, having recipients pay for services, not driving the elderly out and stealing their property.</p>
<p>Consider the impact of all these over rides for those on a fixed income. I have to live within my means</p>
<p>Consider the needs of others besides schools. See how budgets can be cut.</p>
<p>Consider the seniors...Most of our taxes go to the schools, and we seniors pay to send our neighbors' kids to school. (In my neighborhood there is one family with 4 children and one with 5). Seniors who are living on fixed incomes, may have to leave Harvard as a result. I think that the results of the election of selectmen is a clear call for change.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Consider treating low impact citizen's in a new category of taxation than high impact. Consider regionalizing schools and other services to maximize efficiencies. Investigate options for commercial development, provide zoning incentives to bring it in with an appropriate tax rate. Develop some scenarios that demonstrate what would happen to town demographics if singles and empty-nesters are forced to sell large homes to people with school age children. [Taxes remain the same but impact on school population rises.]
Costs are rising faster than wage earnings. We've passed overrides and our children still have less than those who went through HES 5 years ago. We need to find other ways.
Cut administrative staff before cutting teachers, cut town administrators before cutting actual services, try to live within the available funds.
Cut back on parades and fireworks (very expensive). Stop arguing about money and start looking at where to make creative cuts. There's a lot of waste and no one is talking about it. You just ask for more money. Look at the Waste!!! Where are the suggestion boxes around the schools and gov't offices? Post a suggestion section in the newspaper for gov't waste and possible savings ideas.
Cut excessive management salaries and stop bowing before the unions.
Cut overhead at schools..too many expensive chiefs. Stop heating trucks
Cut some services to zero. Make 2 buckets - nice and necessary. Zero out all the "nice". That bucket is not yours to decide. Those are individual charity choices, or user fees.
Cut superintendent's annual raise, hiring freeze for schools, start new teacher's with lower insurance percentage than current. The town now pays 90% of teacher insurance, consider lowering it to 80%
Cut the Harvard Police Department budget.
Cutting back on senior taxes.
Cutting the exorbitant salaries of the school superintendent, police chief, etc.
Divide the school budget by the number of students and you see how much Harvard loses. The total amount of the over ride is equal to the extra cost of the choice students. It cost a lot more than the \$5k supplied by the state.
Divide the school budget by the number of students and you see how much Harvard loses. The total amount of the over ride is equal to the extra cost of the choice students. It cost a lot more than the \$5k supplied by the state.
Do more to recognize the plight of those on "fixed" incomes (actually declining incomes in real dollars due to inflation).
Do NOT put override in budget so folks are forced to pass it - i.e. school items included as tho' they were part of budget when it was really the override!
Do whatever if necessary to live within the amount that you had this year and do not even consider the added available funding increases that could be available with the maximum (2.5%) increase which town officials take for granted. Many people are actually living on less and do not desire even the assumed prop 2.5 increase. In fact with high taxes throughout Harvard may actually be more attractive if taxes were lowered. I for one have lived in the town for greater than 20 years, but plan to sell and move as soon as is practical. I'm sure that by forcing me out with higher taxes that you will in turn get a family with multiple children to educate at greater expense.. I would also suggest that we need to re-define what is "required". For example did we really require a new library which is now more expensive to run and its advocates are asking for additional staffing to support. If we cannot afford it then close it at least part time. If we cannot afford the contracts with the teacher then so may have to go. It will not kill our students to have slightly larger classes. If we cannot afford the price for fuel then like everyone else we will have to close off certain rooms and turn down the temperature. Certainly there are ways that we can truly cut and not fool ourselves that increases every year if only 2.5% are some automatic birth right. Let's get real here

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>Do your job. I did not vote for any of you in the past and will not in the future. There is too much nepotism and ego running amok and all of you are too lazy to actually DO the budget and BE fiscally responsible versus the "easy" thing and ask / demand overrides. The school system WILL NOT SUFFER so quit threatening that will happen. I fully believe, as in the past in this town, that regardless of what the voters tell you, you will opt to override the budget anyway. Thanks a lot. Our taxes are TOO HIGH due to your irresponsibility. People can't sell their house without taking a major loss due to the market and no one wants to live here because of the RIDICULOUSLY HIGH TAXES. DO YOUR JOB AND NO OVERRIDES !!!!</p>
<p>Don't pay a lot of attention to this survey because it could be biased by its mechanism of response (see below).</p>
<p>Due to the increased costs of energy &amp; food and minimal annual salary increases, I don't personally have a level services budget. I don't think that level services should be the starting point for the town budget.</p>
<p>During the 27 years that I served in the US Air Force, we were continually pressed to "do more with less" as a result of budget constraints. And we did. We can do likewise!</p>
<p>Financially, the town generally makes money on people without children in the school system and loses money on residents who do have children in school. We should not be driving out the former.</p>
<p>Find a bigger commercial base. Find space for school expansion. Solve the town center septic problem, so buildings can be fully utilized.</p>
<p>Find another way to tax people who move here just for the schools and leave us old timers (people who have lived here for more than 20 years) holding the bag. In addition, extra course beyond the means of normal education ie AP classes and online class should be paid for by the parent.</p>
<p>For the future, considering the difficulties faced in dealing with the defeated override, the town officials, particularly the new Selectmen who express opposition to Harvard retaining the Devens land, should objectively assess the potential revenue from Devens, withholding judgment until, at the very least, the information requested of MDFA by the Selectmen is received and evaluated.</p>
<p>Forget Devens! How much will it really save me and how much will that savings impact my quality of life? funding LEVEL services, is flying in the face of reason and common sense, as everyone else has to make tough decisions and cut back. The government needs to reflect the economic around it, rather than insulate itself from the realty of its citizens financial realty</p>
<p>get more funding from the state, support better chapter funding</p>
<p>Get more state aid for public education and stop relying on overrides. Lower taxes. End the Charter monopoly and bring in competition for broadband.</p>
<p>Get rid of the choice students. Divide the school budget by the number of students and it show you loose more than \$5k per choice student.</p>
<p>get the money from the state or the federal govt. i am taxed to the max</p>
<p>Give the elderly a break. We don't need a fancy library, running track, soccer fields etc, but we have to pay for them anyway. It's time to exclude the elderly from further overrides</p>
<p>Give us choices, don't make it all or nothing.</p>
<p>Go through existing budgets more carefully before determining override recommendations. E.g., do we really need to pay the fire chief's commuting expense? The menu approach is more compatible with our town meeting form of governance, by giving the voters a direct voice in choosing priorities for allocating additional tax revenues.</p>
<p>GO TO A ZERO BASED BUDGET PROCESS. ELIMINATE ROAD SALT. TURN OFF ALL PUBLIC BUILDING EXTERIOR LIGHTING. DO AN ENERGY SURVEY ON ALL PUBLIC BUILDINGS AND APPLT FOR GRANTS FOR ENERGY CONSERVATION MEASURES. CONSIDER REGIONAL HIGHWAY &amp; FIRE SERVICE. MAKE SCHOOL BUDGET LESS OF TOTAL BUDGET.</p>
<p>Harvarad needs to be on a "fixed" income as myself and many residents are.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>Harvard needs no override. We need fiscal constraint. We need to place the blame on the superintendent and the previous enabling school committee for the budgetary disasters. Then we need to go back to zero based budgeting. The \$305,000 outstanding taxes must be collected. Jefferson should not have been allowed to bring in his new hires at exorbitant salaries and better benefits. Of course, we must add into the equation the \$130,000 for illegal special ed expenditures and these may not be the only ones. In short, we need to eliminate the corruption.</p>
<p>harvard needs to budget theresources we have.</p>
<p>Harvard's town and character and quality schools are the biggest impact on property values and risking our property values will be a bigger financial impact to many us then paying a few more cents in taxes.</p>
<p>Have grandchildren in school.</p>
<p>Have more competent finance committee members vetting the various spending categories. I have very little confidence in the current Chair's business acumen.</p>
<p>Having a child in the public schools i agree education is important but we have gone way overboard in spend, spend, spend. We need to learn to live within budgets. I feel that money flows to the schools to the detriment of good roads and other important items that affect all townspeople, not just parents of school children.</p>
<p>How about more fees for service, such as for parents using the library for free day care/after school care?</p>
<p>How about seeing how much money the town has available to spend, and then creating a budget that reflects the available funds--rather than deciding to spend more than we have and then asking people to come up with the extra money through their property taxes? Adopt a household-finance mentality: don't spend more than you bring in.</p>
<p>How can we continue to fund schools and services with an override every year? As a recently retired individual, I am already finding it difficult to keep up with the annual real estate tax increases.</p>
<p>How can we expand sources of tax revenues in town beyond the property tax? Can we make Harvard part of a larger, regional area that helps a number of communities identify as an economic block so we have local food, shopping, medical care, schools all tie more closely together?</p>
<p>How difficult it is to make ends meet for many people here that have been long term residence.</p>
<p>I agree with the guest column in the Press that we are reaping the effect of accepting windfall money for Devens counted as Harvard residents and have been spending at that level. We need to spend at the level we can really afford and look to volunteers and other alternatives. We need to look closely at levels of administration in schools and town offices, possibly cutting back hours for some services, etc.</p>
<p>I agree with the tone of the finance committee's report--We need to consider the long-term sustainability of the town's current method of operating and funding Town government and schools.</p>
<p>I am a firm believer in good public education but I do not want to pay for a private school education. Many people live in town only for the schools they see as equal to a private school education. For them higher taxes are still less expensive then actual paying for their children to go to a private school. Let's see fiscal restraint where ever possible and in all departments.</p>
<p>I AM NOT ABLE TO FUND LEVEL SERVICE BUDGET AT MY HOME. I FEEL NO NEED TO INDEFINATELY SUPPORT LEVEL SERVICES FOR THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT</p>
<p>I am still angry about the decision to give in to teachers demand for lower health copayments than other town personnel. I think the pay increases for school personnel are way too high.</p>
<p>I am still unsure about passing an override of \$200,000 because I do not trust what the Superintendent of Schools tells us "we need", as opposed to what he wants to have in our schools. Administration seems to be a good place to cut back our spending in the schools.</p>
<p>I believe that in times of financial unrest, as now, it is prudent to avoid adding programs which will compound in the budget going forward. Same as with a household budget - live within your means.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

I believe that most town officials genuinely have the best interests of the town at heart but few except the finance committee have the slightest idea how to budget and plan. In my personal life and my business life spending was based on income and genuine need. Many things I WOULD LIKE TO HAVE, but depending on my financial ability to pay and general economic conditions I adjust my spending. I can't go out and ask neighbors for more money. Not so here. If we WANT we get it. I also don't understand why we are spending so much on COA at the expense of the schools and children. And just for the record I'm one of the senior senior citizens. We owe it to those who follow us. Waste seems to be everywhere and is demonstrated by how managers that leave vehicles idling, doors and windows wide open and ill thoughtout plans like ceiling fans etc.

I believe that this is a lovely Town to live in and raise your children. I also know that we have a limited tax base and many people in my circumstances cannot afford overrides that continually raise the RE Taxes to levels that we can't afford. I also believe that when workers be they teachers or department managers have to realize that this is a small Town and we have a limited tax base. If they wish to get paid at the rate that they are paid in Towns such as Concord and Weston then they should move there. Since the budget has a 2 1/2% opportunity to increase the budget without an override, the potential candidates should recognize from the outset that their salary increases will be limited to the 2 1/2%. Also their health benefits should be the same for all employees. They also need to recognize that the tax payers, a majority, do not get similar benefits. This Town does not have an unlimited supply of money. I believe that at this moment there are approx. 66 houses for sale. We need to create a budget that accurately reflects what it costs and live with it. If I only could manufacture money like this Town wants to do, it would be wonderful.

I do not think it is as bad to have 30 students in a class as it is to neglect art and music. I would like to see the COA, library and school special items separated.

I don't think there should be another vote on the override. Every towns person had the chance to vote on the April 1st Election. If some did not and now want a second chance, it's too late. They should have thought about it beforehand. The override failed to pass. It doesn't matter by how many votes. We don't have a re-vote when say, a certain Candidate loses to another by a slim margin. The one with more votes wins. Period. This override vote should be the same.

I feel that retirees on a fixed income should not have to contribute to the running of the schools.

I have never had any children in the school system and yet 70% of my taxes funds the schools

I know that a "menu" approach is appealing to many people, however by voting "line item by line item" I think it will have the effect of dividing people in town. In a democracy people need to realize that the common good (in this case taxes) can also include some things that we don't specifically want or like. Using a "Tiered" approach to budgeting I think achieves this

I know the schools are important and they require a large percentage of our tax dollars but please keep in mind the needs and constraints of older citizens who also have a stake in this town and who benefit from efforts to keep property taxes from escalating.

I personally would prefer a menu override, but unfortunately, they tend to draw out special interest groups to support only specific items only.

I think a tiered approach is better than a menu approach, but given my lack of trust in the school authorities to appropriately set priorities, in this go round, I'd like to see a menu. People who go to town meeting tend to be the ones that want to push their agenda through. Many people do not want to sit around all day to publically raise their hand against an override. They go to the polls to do that. It is not surprising to see the override defeated at the polls, and it is not the first time this has happened. Remember when the tier 3 proposed override won at town meeting by 10 votes? It was soundly defeated at the polls, and I think tier 2 was either passed or defeated in the polls by a narrow margin, but was supported by a wide margin at town meeting.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

I think rather than asking for more money repeatedly, the town should figure ways to cut costs and act more efficiently. When overrides are requested, there is always the threat that if they don't pass, then things will be SOOOO bad and services will be compromised. That bothers me. Intelligent people live in Harvard. You don't always need more money every year. Just like in any business, you cut somewhere. There's always fluff. We can do without a teacher or two. The sky isn't really falling. To go back again and ask for more money in a different way doesn't set well either. We had a vote. The override didn't pass. Deal with it.

I think the area of the budget that needs the most scrutiny is the schools. We have one of the top school systems in the state which is very expensive to maintain. I know we continually hear that Harvard spends less per pupil than other schools but that particular metric is uninteresting to me. The school is nearly three-quarters of the budget and it continues to increase at significantly more than the rate of inflation. The teachers demanded a contract that made teachers very expensive; we can't afford the number of teachers we have. Harvard could have an adequate and reasonable school system for less money than we are spending now. Why do we need to have one of the top school systems in the state? We simply can't afford it.

I think the override may have failed for the trivial reason that the override did not take into account the unanticipated extra amount that we will receive from the state. If you agree, think about how to avoid this snafu in the future.

I think the reason the override did not pass was because people are still very angry at Thomas Jefferson and the school committee. Until people see a change they will not support the schools. It is not a good argument but it is

I think the school administration is top-heavy. A system with only two principals doesn't need a separate superintendent, nor does it need as many other staff as it has. Before cutting any teachers, we should cut administrative staff. Please see my response to the next question for further ideas.

I think they should have parent volunteers to supervise after school kids at the town library. The high school kids that would be paid do not command the respect that adults would to keep the younger kids quiet. Adults could give a day every other week or so like parents used to help at the elementary school to supervise recess.

I want to see measures of the output define for EVERY department and how the department heads propose to turn the inputs, our tax dollars, into acceptable outputs.

I was surprised that the override did not pass, since majority of people present at town meeting were in favor of the override. Could it been vetoed at town election because some people would have preferred the override be decreased to \$530,000 to reflect approx \$200,000 Harvard will be receiving from the state? I think some people

I was surprised that as we live more than two miles from HES, a bus pick up and drop off would cost nothing, but if we lived within two miles it would need to be paid for. I realise this is a state law, however, with no sidewalks, walking to school for nearly any child is too dangerous. Perhaps we could put to vote to have everyone pay for this service, either to reduce the cost for the "within two miles" people, or use the extra funds for something for the town. I know we would gladly pay for the service, and I believe others feel the same way. Thank you.

I will add my voice to many before me who have noted that these are difficult economic times, and that running the town as an efficient business is the best course of action. Also, regarding the school budget, comparing Harvard's per pupil expenditures to those in other towns is not a valid or meaningful way to justify increasing school spending: Harvard student's MCAS scores have been exemplary, even at a lower per pupil spending rate. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of the town.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

I wish each area of budget expense would conduct a survey to evaluate the amount of waste and duplication before suggesting additional funds are needed. Spending more money is the easy way to deal with problems and needs. Evaluating carefully how things are actually being done and ranking needs and perhaps considering various ways of meeting them is another. For example, there are so many highly educated people in town who could be mobilized to provide services in the schools on a volunteer basis. Why not organize such an effort rather than just going the old route? And who says that paying more salary to school personnel is the way to get the best faculty? There are other conditions which affect teachers and make a school system desirable to top-notch people. It's like saying that paying inflated salaries to executives in business guarantees good policies. I think we are seeing widespread proof of just the opposite. Do we need to feed our own homegrown brand of greed or can we be more creative and build an excellent community on some other basis - like mutual responsibility and community sharing in service rather than just throwing money at everything.

I wish the new board of selectmen well. They must recognize they are the town's executives who must insist that the finance and school committees explain what outputs they expect to achieve in each department and how the tax dollars input into each department's well-defined processes (Oh, there aren't any define processes? Well, tell them that they must develop them.) will achieve the desired outputs and what penalties will be assessed against the "leadership" of any department which does not achieve its outputs. You should have created a button to allow people to print out their answers to the survey for future reference.

I would be interested in knowing what you consider "services" in the town of Harvard that isn't required by law.

I would be much more inclined to support an override for the schools and the library. Town leaders, and department heads, need to address other costs to reduce wasteful spending, ie; idling vehicles wasting fuel (which I have personally witnessed), heating the town garage to a ridiculous temperature, etc. Don't expect the voters to vote for higher taxes, if the wasteful spending continues.

I would like consideration given to long term residents who are elderly and earn considerably less than the average income. They have earned the right to stay in town.

I would like to see a tiered and a menu approach. Let the level services \$200,000 override stand alone and then menu extras. I don't like the Selectmen choosing what is in second and third tiers.

I would like to see town officials come up with a long-term financial plan (3 or 5 years?) to deal with this financial crisis. I would also like to see town services (or lack thereof) for those of us who do not have children in the Harvard schools receive higher priority than they do now.

I would really appreciate understanding why Harvard can't make it's budget and needs to ask for overrides year after year. I am not criticizing the town officials- I just truly don't understand why that can't happen and would appreciate a basic understanding. Perhaps I'm missing something? Thank you.

I'd like them to document their processes, publish how individuals voted, and explain any rationale and/or priority system they use in reaching their decisions. In other words, document thoroughly. (I also hope the Press covers these deliberations thoroughly.)

I'd like them to review current spending in regard to energy use. I'm appalled when I hear that the DPW garage uses 700 gallons of heating oil every two weeks, and when I frequently see the fire chief's SUV parked outside Town Hall with the motor running while he socializes inside. It's simply not true that no economies can be found within the level-service budget, and it's an outrage when the Council on Aging is asked to cut its budget for outreach to needy seniors while highway trucks are stored in an overheated garage. What on earth are we thinking??

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>I'd really like to see Harvard adopt some of Lincoln's strategies in planning ahead. (I lived in Lincoln for many years, and it's a very similar town, though QUITE a bit wealthier.) I'd like to see Harvard take the lead in building green (that was a missed opportunity with the library) -- it will lead to significant savings as oil, gas, electricity continue to rise. I'd like to see some innovative kinds of affordable housing, a la Lincoln's approach -- building housing for the disabled, for example, and the elderly -- what about loft space for artists in the old library or some other town-owned building? Could that count as affordable housing? Let's get creative, let's be innovative!!</p>
<p>If the budget does not pass, consider asking people to volunteer to continue services, for example to keep the library open on Saturdays townspeople could be asked to volunteer in 2 hour segments just like the program at the dump.</p>
<p>I'm tired of an override EVERY YEAR. I could not run my household like this and I don't expect my town to run like this. The overrides must stop and we must start to live with services within our budget even it that means drastic cuts.</p>
<p>Impact on FY10 budget, given likely sharp reductions in state aid for FY10</p>
<p>In any public company accountable to shareholders, the CFO would be fired for consecutive budget overrides.</p>
<p>In re-negotiating the contract with teachers, a more egalitarian 50 - 50 split for health insurance would be much more desirable. Many of us have needed to assume even more responsibility for this expense ourselves in recent years.</p>
<p>Informing people of what services would be cut if the override did not pass has always been helpful in the past ... why was it not done this year?</p>
<p>Is it necessary to fund a full-time superintendent for a town this size? How about his staff? Do these expenses justify the output?</p>
<p>It has saddened me to see people driven out of Harvard over the years, or contemplating leaving, because of too high taxes. I'd like to see Harvard living within its means, without overrides, even if it means cutting back on services. That's what responsible people do when money is tight - they cut back on expenses. Sad, yes, but a fact of life. And I'd really like to see if we couldn't for once find solutions to school problems that didn't always involve throwing money at them. Why must we believe that every solution to every problem has to come out of a wallet?</p>
<p>It is getting very hard to live in this town. The monthly cost is very high for very few town services. If we keep approving overrides, our family will have to consider moving.</p>
<p>It is hard to "trust" the numbers from the school-no confidence in the Superintendent-hope the school committee members and Dr. Jefferson have their facts straight. Do we really need SMART BOARDS? etc. Wealthy town and the kids have so much at home and through extra activities, we should not worry about them being "prepared" as far as technology is concerned.</p>
<p>It is my impression that the school administration and the school committee need to improve communications and the accuracy of those communications with voters. I am troubled that capable persons felt it necessary to resign their volunteer positions because of problems with either or both administration and school committee.</p>
<p>It is very important that town officials understand and explain the return on investment on changes to the town's infrastructure. For example, what would the ROI be on spending \$110k on expanding the DPW garage? Replacing the furnace at Bromfield, etc.</p>
<p>It seems like spending is out of control. Over the past few years, the town has expanded services and school staff, approved large capital projects (middle school, library, public safety building), some of which have higher operating cost, and which require debt to fund them. There was no slack in the budget to deal with any unforeseen expenses such as pensions and utilities. How can people be surprised to find that we need to fund these expenses through overrides and higher taxes? I think the town should do a bottom's up review of spending. I don't think the schools are spending their money wisely. I am not impressed with the quality of the teaching and administrative staff.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>It would be helpful if voters understood the precise services they may lose if an override is not passed. A highly detailed and itemized list of these services would be especially helpful for each resident as s/he evaluates the question of an override.</p>
<p>It would help the elderly, 62 or older to have a discount on their real estate bill.</p>
<p>It's obvious that the sped program is the monster that will eat all of Harvard-- just compare the per student cost this year to 5 years ago. I am sympathetic to the parents of truly (not supposedly) 'needy' children but they can't expect the rest of the town to take a few crumbs while these families-- without means testing-- consume most of the budget. And for those who aren't truly 'needy', their parents just want a bigger place at the public trough.</p>
<p>I've supported more than three generations of kids throughout their schooling. Separate the school tax and take seniors off that tax role.</p>
<p>Keep in mind those of retirement age who will have limited ability to pay continually increasing taxes.</p>
<p>keep the ceiling fans - keep up the good work</p>
<p>learn and listen more. some town officials have a poor or limited knowledge of the operational aspects of the departments serving the town and the importance of these services - the library being the primary example. I also believe town officials need to support value and efficiency - ie; bang for the buck. reward not penalize those who perform. The library serves everyone for less than 2% of the omnibus budget and operates on the lowest possible expense levels with the lowest paid professional employees of any town department who contributed for years to increased health costs of a promise not fulfilled.</p>
<p>learn to budget as if the money was coming out of your pocket. If there isn't enough money coming in, then get creative and cut back non-essentials like multiple administrative jobs. How about pay cuts for upper management?</p>
<p>Let us vote overrides on on smaller pieces and they might actually pass.</p>
<p>Limit tax rate for seniors over 70 - on a fixed income.</p>
<p>Limiting our choice to tiers or menu is a mistake. The Town Officials are abdicating their elected responsibilities by not reviewing the entire budget, agreeing on what is needed, recommending a single budget and a single override. The past practices of separating existing or level services from new services is a big mistake. Often new services have more importance than existing activities and may offer more cost savings opportunities. We need to start talking, collaborating and looking for ways to work together rather than fighting over whether taxes are too high. The fight just means that depending on the vote, one side wins and the other loses. Good management offers the possibility of a win win situation.</p>
<p>Listen carefully to what residents are saying. In my experience Harvard's residents are not whiners and complainers and naysayers unless they feel either insulted or frustrated or disrespected.</p>
<p>Listen to the voters.</p>
<p>Live within the means of ALL of Harvard's citizens, not just the fortunate wealthy. Do not contract for more than what the average person could afford. Stop comparing us with larger, wealthier towns as an excuse for raising taxes and salaries and benefits that we cannot afford.</p>
<p>Look at all positions in school system, get rid of and/or phase out unnecessary positions.</p>
<p>look closely at the budget to see where the services required would benefit the most people for the least amount and go from there</p>
<p>Lowering the taxes for seniors so they can continue to live here.</p>
<p>Maintain &amp; continue to improve the quality of our schools!</p>
<p>Maintain awareness of economic conditions that affect all voters. The town's budget must be based upon what all residents can afford. If we drive out people on fixed incomes or those who do not have an excess of disposable income, Harvard will just be a pretty place with no character.</p>
<p>Maintain the town property tax ranking in respect to other local towns. This ranking has been going up while other local towns i.e Stow, Bolton Littleton and Boxborough have maintained an approximately level ranking for a number of years.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Maintaining current teacher and public works dept staffing is important. I always believe there are probably places where cuts can be made, though sometimes new services are needed in order for long term financial integrity (e.g. keeping special education students in town). Town officials should try hard to work together - not against each other. Everyone must give a little to have a win - win for all.
Make a priority only that which is needed. No frills at this time like library monitors. Freeze Dr. Jefferson's increments until the state ethics board is satisfied. Reduce his new secretary Jackie's salary to a reasonable rate. Check/balance Town/School monies in the extreme during this time.
make some cuts accross boards
Make the issues clear, and communicate them. Schools have indulged in mechanics of teaching, at the expense of what is taught. Spend more on textbooks, less on administration.
Make well thought out proposals. Show fiscal discipline and push prioritization back onto town members. You must be able to balance a budget. State clearly your personal vision for the town of harvard (describe a 10 year scenario you personally believe in, with specific hot buttons addressed, so there is transparency to your true position - I do not trust some of the current selectpersons to openly state position). The Harvard population are an intelligent bunch so USE this, and spend more time EDUCATING vs MANIPULATING. 'Bigger' will not solve any problems, it will simply amplify our current disfunction to create bigger problems.
Menu option for the override seems best. That way residents can choose which items they want the town to support and which they don't.
menu style
More conservation should take place. The highway dept should evaluate the need to keep trucks at 55 degrees in the winter. Seems like we could lower operating costs there. I'm not in favor of paying for monitors in the library for kids who misbehave. I'm happy to pay for schooling for children but not after school programs (sending kids to the library when they have no where else to go). We do need a town sewer system for the town buildings and churches. We have all these empty town buildings which we should do something with - sell perhaps or lease.
More fiscal responsibility and a real effort to curb excess spending on outside consultants, for example, when local residents might be able to contribute.
My husband and I are already talking about how we may not be able to stay in Harvard once we retire because the property taxes are getting so high. That would be a shame, because this has been our home for over 32 years now, and his family dates back to 1948 when his grandparents first lived here. His parents have lived here since 1962.
My tax assessment on my land went up 25% this year. There were no changes or improvements to the property. Others who live on the pond received this same increase. Enough is enough!!
No

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

No business could survive in this economic client with constantly giving large raises to its staff and having overpaid town employees while all the while, having little increases in revenue. How many of us in the private sector get the kinds of raises we constantly give to teachers & town workers? At what point do we finally say "NO"? How can you have administrative staff in the schools making \$60-\$70K and more for being "only" a secretary ???!! How can you say that there are no cuts to be made? The Super's admin makes more than my entire staff and each of them is responsible for millions of \$'s in sales. How can that be rationalized? Who is monitoring these types of decisions? And then consider the amount of hours worked per week, the various holidays and summers off and you have me considering applying for the job. And how about the 80% pension? There is no one who gets that. Remember the pilots and airline unions threatened and screamed but when faced with no job, they all accepted reduced benefits and pensions. And don't get me started on the Super's contract, raise pegging and clandestine renewal! Heating the municipal trucks & garage? And at higher temps than many in town even keep their own homes? The list could go on and on. We are all tired of being asked to take cut after cut in our own jobs and then override again and again to give and give on top of what is already a comparatively sweet deal. How about for once, we approve the kick to the curb budget lines first for once? How about we respect the elders and fund their council requests. Everything is for the school and gets approved - almost everything not for the school then gets voted down. How about we address the "hit and run" parents? The ones who move here for the schools, vote in every school budget override and then leave the minute their kids have graduated? And what is the most often quoted reason? The town is too expensive / the taxes are too high. You are pushing this "old-timer" who has lived here for over 15 years too far....

No means No. The answer does not change!!

no more overrides

no overrides

no overrides

No overrides ever!!! We residents have to live within a budget the town should too. You have driven most of my friends and neighbors out of town. Taxes don't need to be so high!

Not so much something to consider, as an attitude to adopt and to live by: The town needs to learn to live "within its means", i.e within the constraints of Proposition 2.5. It needs to learn to make choices about all sorts of things as though it were a business operating in the marketplace: Some things you can afford; some things you can't; you try to get the most value out of every dollar spent. One might want to start a new trend by looking at the salaries and benefits of multiple town employees, which are absurdly inflated from a private sector perspective. I'm against any override because I think the town already pays far too many people far too much for far too little return.

Officials need to realize that taxpayers no longer have "deep pockets" and that budgets must become more realistic and address necessities not desires.

Please stop increasing our taxes. Stop the overrides and find other meaningful ways to address the needs of its citizens

On overrides, please separate out town functions like library, COA and town department funding from schools; the non-school budgets are low relative to the school (e.g., salaries, and of course lions share of the expenses) and should not have to compete with the school. Fringe services for school do not affect the quality of education necessarily, but inadequate funding of the COA does affect the services provided to the seniors, of which I am one.

one override question of \$200K. No tiers, no menu. take or leave it. If there is more than 1 question, I will vote no on all items.

Our administration costs in the school's have soared...we spend much too much on the Superintendent, Principal, Asst Principal area. We need to trim these costs before touching the teachers. Also, we talk about Choice and Devens income...how many of these students have IEP's and what are the costs associated with these students (if any). There is no reason not to have a revenue vs expense calculation - we would in no way violate any confidentiality issues just seeing the revenue/expense of the choice/Devens students.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>Our property taxes are now more than our state income taxes, and I still have to write a check to the schools for every activity, and we have to order our own science lab materials now. We have 3 schools, almost equally funded; HES, Bromfield, and Special Ed. Where are are town officials and, dare I say it, our teachers union, working together to get the added state funding that was promised and that other townss are supposedly getting. And remembe this - every dollar of tax break you give to senior citizens is a one dollar tak increase to the "working families." Everyone should share in this pain, and vote it down if they don't like it. Don't punish the kids, close the library and lay off two school administrators and anyone in town who's a secretary - we haven't had extra middle managers or secretaries in private sector businesses for 10-15 years now!</p>
<p>Our schools are what keep property values high</p>
<p>Overrides and high taxes drive people out of town who want to remain in town indefinitely. Harvard can not afford the best of all things for all people. Fiscal restraint is necessary. Please do not drive people out of town with overrides and high taxes who love Harvard and do not want to move. The real vote as to whether to raise taxes or not is made at the town-wide vote, not at the town meeting. This is common sense and seems to have escaped the comprehension of many people. Please do not keep coming back with additional attempts at watered down overrides.</p>
<p>Overrides have become a "way of life" and an expected part of the budget. The town MUST learn to live within its budget, and use overrides for true emergencies. The high taxes and this type of fiscal irresponsibility (i.e., heavy dependence on overrides) are making us seriously consider moving out of Harvard.</p>
<p>Pare the fat out of the budget. The school committee and the schools should work for the benefit of the town - not vice versa. No more landmarks (the brown school, the boat house, and I suppose, the late library, etc.) should be destroyed in the name of "progress". "Progress" is fine for the country as a whole. Havard should stay static. It is fine as it is and needs no "progress".</p>
<p><b>PAY FOR BAGS TO USE AT LANDFILL/DUMP/TRANSFER STATION, SO THAT THE BIGGER USERS PAY MORE AND TO ENCOURAGE RECYCLING</b></p>
<p>People have lost faith in our School leader, Thomas Jefferson. Now Charles Horn, a very honorable, honest person is stepping down. Thomas Jefferson stole \$ from Harvard. He needs to repay it, and leave. I will one reconsider voting for future overrides if/when this happens. Also, the economy is bad. Passage of continual overrides is not the solution for our town.</p>
<p>People who are on limited income and seniors. There are two ways of maintaining or increasing service: 1) apply more resources, or 2)use resources more efficiently through the use of technology or better management. It has been my experience in my 25+ years in Harvard that the School Committee tends to use the former approach more than the latter.</p>
<p>Please be mindful that for many of us our incomes are not increasing. We are having to manage and budget our lives with that reality and the town needs to do so too.</p>
<p>Please be more explicit what are we voting for. Breakdown how the money would be spent</p>
<p>Please be fiscally responsible. Not everyone makes \$169,000 in Harvard as reported by the Boston Globe.</p>
<p>Please consider freezing,or even lowering, taxes for the Senior citizens(over 65)who have lived in Harvard more than 10 years</p>
<p>Please consider how to measure efficieny in all departments. Some are far more efficent than others. And: Make Rich Nota prove (i.e. don't take his word for it) that trucks need to be kept at 55 degrees all winter, then get that garage insulated. Employees are losing jobs and taxes are going up while we burn 700 gallons of oil every 2 weeks keeping the trucks at 55! Shamefull!</p>
<p>Please consider that many of us are hurting financial with the economy (loss of job or potential loss of job or decrease in income) and also the increase in cost of gas and home heating fuels. Our taxes have increased so much over the past serveral years there has to be a stop to it.</p>
<p>Please consider that there is a recession going on, and that some people are having trouble paying their bills.</p>
<p>Please do not think that the state will provide any help to the Town. The source of stae money is the income tax. It is foolish to think that the state will help Harvard, it will never happen.</p>
<p>Please take a PROACTIVE role on getting rid of hostile 40B developments in town</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Priority one should be schools!! Now and always. The children of Harvard are the town's future.
Provide clear and honest answers to voters questions. Lying by omission facts is still lying. The chairperson of the School Committee should consider stepping down for her contempt of the public with her answers.
Public RFP relviews on new cap-ex efforts and other services that are out-sourced.
Punishing the schools budget to punish the school committee seems irresponsible. School Committee should consider excusing children from classes when room temperature exceeds a given level. Voter education is needed about finances, town meeting, and more.
Rather than threats about fewer teachers, kindly examine the number and salaries of the administrators. What exactly is the purpose of a school? Teaching our kids or creating well-paying unnecessary jobs? The school was very good 30 years ago. It would be interesting to compare how many individuals it took to run it then with now, besides the teaching staff.
real estate taxes
Recent political debates have created a new level of distrust towards ALL public officials, even those who benefitted in the short term by winning office. It will be hard for them to avoid reaping what they helped to sow. The town will be the big loser.
Recognise the greater economic situation. Do not assume that the twon residents have a bottomless pit of cash to continue to fund ever increasing spending. Run the twon like a business - assume a net sum game whenever possible. Fix the runaway cost increases in Special Education. Its clear that the current approach does not contain the cost to any acceptable level of increase (inflation on a level demand basis).
reduce administration in the schools
Reduce administration in the schools.
Regionalization of Police
Remember how small the vote margin was, i.e. how close the override was to passing. Remind those in town who don't have school-age children how much the reputation of the schools DIRECTLY contributes to their property wealth. Ask voters to consider if ANY of their personal expenses increased by less than 2.5 percent last year, and why they hold the town to a different standard.
Replace rusty town line signs -it would not cost very much!
Residents with school age children must pay a proportionately higher amount for the schools and extracurricular activities. There is a limit to what older people can pay or they will move out of town and homes will be sold to families with children; then higher taxes to accommodate the increased expe4nses for schools. etc. etc. etc.
Review the purpose of the 2-1/2 override of the budget and act accordingly. If you as a resident are having to cut back (& we all do) the town should do likewise. P.S. scratch doing anything to the town center. It's fine just as it is.
school budget is overstuffed with admin and sped. reduced these areas instead of raising taxes.
School secretarial salaries seem very high as are retirement packages; also appear to be overstaffed.Harvard Dump and road workers spend more time at Dunkin Donuts than at work; aaso overstaffed. Taxes are already too high making our family consider other towns to reside in.
Schools should NOT depend on Devens kids as a bail out. Each dept. in the town should make a specific list of the items, positions, etc. which WILL be cut for the varying override amounts. I want to know, for example, what choices the Superintendent will make in cuts...secretaries, support personnel, teachers, adminstration. The same for all other departments. And I would trust that the cuts they make would show sincerity of effort and NOT just to give the town a SHOCK effect. (Ex.:cutting 5 teaching positions and not searching for a SPED director for a lesser salary)
Seems like town officials were a bit surprised at some of the requests for justification on some of the spending proposals--not as well prepared as usual
Senior citizens on a fixed income cannot afford an override on top of high prices for gas/fuel, food and prescriptions. Many of the young families can't either. Some people in this town may be rich, but there are many who are not. Please keep them in mind.
Senior citizens on a strict budget.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Senior housing.
Senior housing.
Senior needs
Seniors are being forced out of their homes because of rising property taxes. Budet for no overrides.
Several years ago I remember filling out a similar survey about how we felt about educating the Devens school kids. I believe the results came back overwhelmingly against the idea, upwards off 75% if I remember. I intend to vote against the overrides. They should tell Dr. Jeffereson to cut the admin
Short term, the override is okay. But looking to the future, cost will only rise. Going back year after year or every 2 years for an override will at some point backfire. If someone doesn't have kids in the school system there is little or no impact to a significant reduction in town budget. So, Devens parcel becomes key and managed non-residential tax base... This is a strategy issue not a tactical problem...
Since the school budget dominates the town budget, I believe a root cause of the override failure is lack of confidence in the school committee. I think we need new leadership there, starting from the top. Some additional resignations would be appropriate. I also think the jury is still out on our new school superintendent.
Since we moved to town I believe every override has passed. It seems to me that the boards come to us every year for budget overrides with the idea that they will always pass. Our boards need to realize that the override is not always going to be passed and that they need to really have a good reason to ask for the override.
Some who live in town are on fixed incomes.
Take a very detailed survey energy costs within the schools, look at line items for last year's costs and identify what spending was and was not directly related to educational programs, and think long and hard about the \$16,000 going to the special ed audit. That money could be better spent!!!!
Taxes are already high, and many seniors on fixed incomes can no longer afford to keep their homes. Overrides only make this situation worse.
taxes are forever and these short term decisions will discourage further growth and lead to a mono-demographic in this increasingly bedroom town.
taxes have gone up over 50% in the last 5 years,
That a large majority of us thank them for their hard work as volunteers. Without their efforts Harvard could not continue to function as the wonderful place to live that it is.
The Board of Selectmen must reinforce its role as the Executive Board and show interest in funding. The School Committee must examine the organization and staffing levels in detail to ensure the work gets done with the fewest numbers.
The budget and override passed overwhelmingly at TM with the same order of magnitude of yes votes that it received at the ballot. It seems reasonable to infer that the no votes largely represent those who did not attend TM. I attended TM and I thought the town had make a good case for the override through the public presentations. The question is whether some number of the no votes from TM absentees might be reversed by awareness of the town's argument for presenting the override. I don't believe that the TM booklet is the right vehicle for this, and I would encourage the town to send a separate pithy and well-crafted flyer to explain directly to voters why the override is recommended.
The character of this town is significantly tied to the quality of the schools. A material long term decline in the schools will lead to a long term decline in the town as a whole.
The current thinking seems to be "business as usual" with unlimited spending of OPM (other peoples money). This had led to unsustainable increases in taxes and I vote NO to send a message that unsustainable spending can not be allowed to continue and that "thinking outside the box" needs to be done. Towns need to start acting like businesses and be more understanding of where the money comes from.
The DPW proposals were a disaster and I think contributed to people voting against the override. It suggested that the homework wasn't done and so, perhaps, the budget with override weren't ready either. For many it may have been a message.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>The economy is not good!!...run the town like your own house hold and cut back on expenses....you cant have it all!!Seniors are hurting because social security,bank interest is down,yet the town wants more...too much overhead,non teaching jobs at the school..school committee is not in touch with reality...dont need Superintendent and Principle...</p>
<p>The economy right now is diifficult. Many self employed people in town are struggling to make ends meet.</p>
<p>The fact that they already raised my taxes this year by increasing my tax assessment in a housing market that is the worst in decades. Now they want more of my money and do not consider the impact this has on the families in town.</p>
<p>The growing number of seniors in town who might not be able to retain their homes as the taxes continue to</p>
<p>The importance of going green, energy efficiency in all buildings and processes.</p>
<p>The information provided in preparing the school budget is misleading--if not dishonest. teachers got a contractual raise and a COLA. This weel in excess of what the general public working for private enterprises are getting and not realistic in the current environment. Taxes in harvard are making it impossible for lower income and older people to stay. The character of the town is changing for the worse. The finance committee must consider adjusting spending to revenues. if "services" need to be cut, be it. In recessions private enterprises adjust, so must the town</p>
<p>The number of homeowners in town is decreasing. It's time to consider reducing the per home tax rate to stop this loss.</p>
<p>The override failed at the polls by 86 votes. That is not a mandate to say there is strong evidence that people don't want the override. Additionally, a low turn out from school aged parents is the reason for this defeat.</p>
<p>The override was defeated and the results should be accepted.</p>
<p>The override was voted down. This is despite the fact that any election is more difficult for a working taxpayer to attend than it is for un-/under-employed resident. The Town Meeting vote is, in this case, irrelevant, as attending such a meeting on Saturday mornings is especially onerous for those who have to work for a living(and therefore actually pay taxes). If the override had been approved, there would be no discussion of any further votes on the matter. Repetitive votes on the same issue can only benefit those who support the override. If the town government was honest, they would accept the rejection of the override and "move-on".</p>
<p>The Peterson's did a study regarding the impact of 40B's on Harvard. Perhaps the Press should reveiw the study. Budgets are tight for everyone; people have to live within their means and that includes towns too.</p>
<p>The possibility of a lower percentage of the school portion of the tax rate for residents of 60 years or older.</p>
<p>The problem that I have with the overrides each year is that we are told that we are funding "level services" with no additions. And then we find later that there are new programs added in the schools, or new staff. While I am not necessarily opposed to improving school programs, I feel that there has been dishonesty in the justification for additional \$. I am also incensed that the school superintendent's contract contains incentives to increase school spending. This is exactly opposite to what should happen. I also object to the "dire" consequences that are presented in the event that an override does not pass. Threats of severe cutbacks in those areas which the townspeople most value amounts to extortion, in my opinion. Finally, I have no confidence in the superintendent, and do not entrust him to make decisions on spending of our tax dollars.</p>
<p>The quality of our schools is directly related to the value of the houses in Harvard. We need to fund the schools properly. Let's not be short sited. I also think that the town should consider building or supporting an over 55 community to help our tax burden and 40B problem.</p>
<p>THE RATE OF TAX INCREASED OVER THE PAST 5, 10, 15 YEARS. PERCENTAGE OF THE BUDGET ALLOCATED TO SPED VS PERCENTAGE TO STUDENTS OVERALL. RIDICULOUS PERCENTAGE SPENT ON ADMINISTRATION.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

The school budget needs to be overhauled from the ground up. I can't understand why we need 65 +/- administrators to support 82 +/- teachers ! That's ridiculous ! This is an indication of poor management by Jefferson. Corporations would go out of business with this ratio. The voters need to be provided with in depth details of the entire school organization . . . names, position, salaries, responsibilities, no of classes & sizes, etc. The superintendent needs to justify each line item on the budget. The same applies to the DPW. Why do we need to purchase expensive equipment like the street sweeper when we could hire a subcontractor to perform this task twice a year ? Since we now own it, why not sell our services to other towns and generate some revenues ? I believe that an override, if absolutely necessary, should be broken down by line item and allow voters a choice of accepting or rejecting it. Bottom line . . . CUT SPENDING across the board ! Citizens of Harvard have to reduce their spending in difficult times . . why not our officials ?

The school budget needs to be overhauled from the ground up. I don't understand why we need 65 +/- administrators to support 82 +/- teachers ! That's ridiculous ! This is an indication of poor management by Jefferson. Corporations would go out of business with this ratio. The voters need to be provided with in depth details of the entire school organization . . . names, position, salaries, responsibilities, number of classes & sizes, etc. The superintendent needs to justify each line item on the budget. The same applies to the DPW. Why do we need to purchase expensive equipment like the street sweeper when we could hire a subcontractor to perform this task twice a year ? Since we now own it, why not sell our services to other towns and generate some revenues ? I believe that an override, if absolutely necessary, should be broken down by line item and allow voters a choice of accepting or rejecting it. We the citizens of Harvard are paying lots of money in taxes and we demand accountability at all levels of our local government. If those in office can't do that, then they need to resign and we'll replace them with people with business backgrounds who know how to run a business cost-effectively. We're fed up and we won't take it any longer ! ! !

The School Committee needs to look at the fact that a majority of the children are very unhappy in the present school system. It has become about a test score and honor students and not the children themselves. When your kids are unhappy you don't vote yes.

the schools

The schools are understaffed as it is, with 30+ kids in many classes. What would happen if we had even less funding for teachers?

The schools need to rethink the delivery of SPED services so they are not consuming so much of the budget. The same is true for the ballooning administration. We will vote for overrides that we perceive more directly benefit our children's education. The teachers seem a little "burnt out" and its discouraging to see. They go a long way toward creating the willingness to vote for overrides and should be more upbeat and enthusiastic.

The selectman and the school committee should have done a better job in getting info out about the warrant articles, especially the DPW requests, fire chief vehicle, and school fans. Perhaps if there was a way to do an email broadcast of each selectman meeting and fincom meeting agenda so that more people are in the loop prior to town meeting.

The special education budget appears quite large relative to the other portions of the HES and Bromfield budgets. If the funds budgeted are required, fine, but just want to make sure that there are not excesses or opportunities for appropriate reductions in that budget item.

The town has grown about 25% in population since I moved here 25 years ago. Town government complexity and level of services have grown much more and not surprisingly cost much more.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>The Town has overspent on consultants for decades. We saw this from the time we built our home when the town hired independent consultants (at the town's expense) to inspect our driveway repeatedly, each time requiring changes (at our expense) that turned out to be ill-advised and that we had to reverse. Since then we have observed litigation that should never have been necessary, endless studies for problem-solving that never resulted in action, and an obsession with schools and class sizes (a monumental red herring, which as a former educator I can state) all in the name of making Harvard one of the most desirable communities for real estate on the East Coast. These are not values I share - I came to Harvard looking for a quiet and simple place where I could live an environmentally conservative life. As a former active participant in another town's government in wastewater disposal management, and enthusiastic leader in several professional organizations, I have been appalled to see the rancor and bad performance of a vocal but select few in town government who are quick to criticize but offer no workable solutions. My view began with the way our house building permitting was handled - a process that cost us an entire year of labor for no good reason but grandstanding by two individuals and conflicting regulations. It soured me on any idea of trying to work on town committees; following meetings closely through the news has reinforced my view that a reasoned voice would not be tolerated. Consider one solution for seniors: forgive their taxes for some of the expensive consulting work the town contracts for. \$800 off a \$12,000 bill is insignificant, especially when the rate of pay can be bettered working as a clerk at a store. But doing professional work at close to the rate of some professional compensation would be an incentive to get people like me involved. It would benefit me and benefit the town.</p>
<p>The town has worked so hard to create an outstanding school system, I would hate to see all of that hard work go to waste.</p>
<p>The Town needs to seriously consider level-funded items which are clearly wasteful. Town Meeting became aware of high use of heating oil at the DPW and over-heated classrooms in the schools. This cannot be tolerated. An energy audit should be conducted immediately (if not sooner). I would consider supporting expenditures to reduce energy use in town, since energy is so expensive to the taxpayers and to the planet.</p>
<p>The town services are very weak. It barely maintains its sports fields/courts/playgrounds even with subsidies from private groups. It charges huge users' and bus fees. The transfer station and library are open short hours and overall depends on volunteers for many services and offices. I'd like to see MORE services, not less.</p>
<p>The town wastes my money. I don't want to hear that town trucks are kept in an uninsulated, heated garage, and we need to collect more money. It's ridiculous that we built a new library, with no plan for the use or sale of the old library to help pay the bill. The schools, the main reason we came to this town, are in a long term decline while the school committee members, year after year, are at each others throats. My street was not swept until half way through summer last year. Decades ago, in the much poorer town I grew up in, school sports were free to kids, while here there is a fee for absolutely everything. If money is going to be poorly managed, and services minimal, at least I want it as cheap as possible.</p>
<p>The trend in taxation is disturbing. It is chasing people out of town and making it difficult for us to have a heterogeneous populace.</p>
<p>There are plenty of residents who are sick and tired of the schools being the number one consideration for the bulk of our tax dollars. As a previous town employee for over ten years, I think other town departments and their employees are overlooked and treated unfairly compared to the employees of the schools, specifically the teachers. Also, please see statement w/ previous question.</p>
<p>There is a crisis in confidence in this town with school committee, and somewhat the bd of selectman. I believe the override failure to pass was largely due to that issue</p>
<p>There is continuing negative effect of the teacher work-to-rule situation last year.</p>
<p>There is too much waste in the Town's expenses. Such as heating of buildings, school administration, teacher's salaries.</p>
<p>There was a big override last year. This year the entire national economy is doing poorly. This year it is time to tighten the belt and make do with less.</p>
<p>They limit the value they place on the results of this survey if it doesn't proportionately reflect the town's demographics; i.e, age, employment, etc.</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>They need to recognize that over time budget increases have a way of leading to more budget increases. At the same time Harvard does not have an expanding revenue base to continue to support such increases. Businesses have learned they could still remain viable and competitive when they had to cut budgets beyond what they thought was viable. The town of Harvard would probably learn the same.</p>
<p>they should cut spending like everyone else</p>
<p>This is a golden opportunity for the three newly elected BOS to demonstrate their platform for CHANGE, via the town budget. There is waste in any organization and to watch the tri-boards last week to try to reach a consequence is an exercise in frustration. The BOS are on top of the food chain and need to make some decisions now, give guidance to the finance and school committees and follow thru with about 2 to 3 weeks of hands on tough work with the town departments to achieve a budget they think is acceptable without an over ride or a minimum over ride. If the 3 new BOS CHANGE advocates don't recognize the budget formulation as real change leverage then they will be never achieve any meaningful change.</p>
<p>This town has not demonstrated that they are willing to work within current economic constraints. Continuing to "add" services or budget for any reason when the remainder of the economy, and town voters have had to sacrifice and cut-back or make do with what they can afford is arrogant.</p>
<p>Tiered override</p>
<p>Time for the town to make expenses equal revenue without hitting the households of families to pay more and more. Cut down on administration costs at the school to save money.</p>
<p>Time to reconsider Devens. I plan to move out of Harvard</p>
<p>Times are tough. How about living within our means.</p>
<p>Times are tough. Not all residents, regardless of age have deep pockets in this town. A menu or tiered system is the way to go. Most of my peers and neighbors do not agree with extra funding for the library monitors. Parents need to be more responsible for their children!!!! Yes, initially this may make more work for current staff, but didn't anyone consider this with a larger space?</p>
<p>Times are tough. Cuts really do need to be made. The schools are out of control. Maybe we need to look at cutting classes such as Spanish and other outdated subjects. All parents need to pay - some parents pay for school bus, others don't. If you use it, pay. Parents need to support the system maybe a bit more that other tax people!!! New tax rate for parents? Tax rebate for those who don't have children in the system?</p>
<p>To stop spending as if money grew in trees</p>
<p>Town Meeting showed that energy costs and energy related issues are extremely important. Harvard needs an educated plan as to purchasing and maintaining vehicles, HVAC and insulation systems in town buildings and long term plans for repair and upgrading current energy related systems.</p>
<p>Town officials salary increases should not be dependent on an override. This introduces a conflict of interest. There is no incentive to stay within the 2.5% Prop. 2 1/2 tax constraints if an official will get a higher salary if there is an override.</p>
<p>Town Operated Vehicle policy regarding personal use of town vehicles an fuel. This policy should be revisited and with the technological advantages now available in fuel conserving vehicles should be applied across the board. Even the fire and police chief vehicles should be hybrids as they proceed at the speed limit or even faster if neccessary. energy costs will only further to grow in the years to come and considering the town only purchases SUPER UNLEADED FUEL we all need to conserve our costs.</p>
<p>Try thinking about new ways to do things and not rely simply on tax overrides.</p>
<p>Try to consider reducing our Taxes</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Two points to make: 1. while i enjoy as much as anyone the diversity of having retired folks as part of our population and would like to keep them here, I find it hard to understand how many of them are willing to restrict spending (on our schools) to 2.5% and thereby increase class sizes and damage the kids' education. To me it seems simple -- if for any reason i could no longer afford to live here in Harvard, then I would leave...I wouldn't impinge on others' (especially kids') welfare to enable my staying here. 2. Town officials are not doing enough to provide clear, concise, information supporting our budget and articles. Too many questions go unanswered, too many town board meetings restrict resident questions and comments which are needed to increase understanding and support. Officials act as though they're above us and not subject to our questions. It leaves a strong impression that they are afraid of us, are hiding things, don't have the answers to our questions, think we're all stupid and lazy. I for one am willing and interested in doing more volunteering for the town, but have never been asked by any official until just recently by Marie (finance).

Using continual overrides as a means to a town's economic stability is not a solution, nor is it fair to it's citizens, especially those who are not financially well-off. Additionally, the superintendent needs to be fired and pay back the money he has taken from the town.

using last years budget rates as a base only encourages waste. Government should over time become more efficient as we do in our individual budgets, I don't feel we are encouragingthat.

Very suspicious that the \$240,000 state aid came after a rush to vote. Also, very wrong that the special education survey came in after the election and even then had no informative detailed information, vibrancy and future of the town center. pedestrian/bike friendly paths to connect areas of town.

Vote to reject override was in part a reflection of economic times (people worried about their jobs), in part a reflection of dissatisfaction with School Committee and Board of Selectmen leadership, in part a reaction to the feeling that money was not being carefully spent by the town (the heated DPW garage being the most egregious example, in part a means to register that there is a limit to continually raising taxes. Can the town expect another override request next year? Might be good to let folks know about that now. Are we really spending our tax dollars in the wisest way? Has the School Committee looked to other examples of how school budgets are structured to see if there's learning there? It would help to know that that kind of careful reflection is going on.

We are in a recession; town employees should join the majority of town residents who are facing the challenge of maintaining their living standard on lower income.

We are on a fixed income - I think this is given lip service but not take seriously by town officials. Somehow they feel they can continue to add to a budget and that the money source is endless. We in turn have to continuously face a diminishing of our assets - by town, state, federal and the economy.

We cannot accept that "future overrides are inevitable". We really need a level of strategic thinking to align expenses with revenue. Counting on the state to increase funding to a wealthy town like Harvard is not going to happen. Has the town ever explored partnering with another town to create a regional school system? What can be done to lure business to Harvard to generate additional tax revenue. And lastly, how does Devens enter into the equation. It doesnt work to get the commercial base if significant additional housing is in the plan (i.e. lots of new students to educate). If the current housing cap stays in place it could be good for Harvard. I would perform some due diligence to make sure what the status is of any "sweetheart" deals that are in place with the Devens's businesses (and the impact when they go away).

We don't have fat in the budget just a lot of waste. School Committee stop all the overhead and freeze Dr. J. increments until Ethics Board is satisfied. Reduce his new secretary's salary to the reasonable. Please prioritize better in a time of fiscal constraint. Check/balance school/town monies more closely.

We focus on making our school system among the top in the state - at 70% of Harvard's omnibus budget, perhaps we need to reduce our goal to something we can afford so we can give our Fire Chief a new vehicle and to upgrade our DPW building. Perhaps if the teachers felt the impact of their demands directly, future negotiations would be more reasonable.

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

<p>We need a long term solution. We need to look closely at admin staffing. Given our constraints, it may be time to look at eliminating one of the school Exec positions, superintendant, principal or asst principle. These are difficult times and as a 2 parent working family, living without pay increases and healthcare increases rising for our family, we simply can no longer afford endless overrides.</p>
<p>We need to maintain a well funded town and we are all faced with increased costs. Together we need to fund the town to maintain its heritage for the present and future. Underfunding hurts everyone.</p>
<p>We should have agreement from all town boards; no more minority opinions.</p>
<p>We think an astute citizens committe should be appointed to study staffing in our town government and the schools as the basis for future zero based budgeting.</p>
<p>We voted no override. It should stay that way. Asking again and possibly again...in a different way is frustrating. It's like town officials just don't want to deal with the problem and intend to keep asking until they get the answer they want which will just make their lives easier...we'll all just keep giving more and more in taxes so they don't have to make any tough decisions.</p>
<p>when we are forced out of town due to high taxes, our home will go to a family with children and the taxes will go even higher</p>
<p>When we were looking to move here, we got a State wide Tax rate report for every community. Harvard was in the top 20. In the past five years, Harvard has moved into the top 5. Sooner or later, the Town must find other ways for revenue besides freely taxing and spending at the cost of the residents at every turn.</p>
<p>While we have wonderful dedicated individuals working for our town, we need an objective eye to search for cost-effective and cost-cutting measures.</p>
<p>Who makes decisions on how to spend large capital amounts on road repairs? I read in last week's Press that very large sums of money are going to be spent repaving - is there a capital improvement plan in place so that we can budget for improvements/repairs over a 5-10 year period? Some of the roads mentioned (Littleton Rd - was just recently paved and is not in what I would call need).</p>
<p>Why can't this town budget expenses like we all do at home? Did we really need to work on a new library before the new police station was paid off? Why doesn't anyone think of things like this?</p>
<p>With a population as low as what we have whay is that are schools are run like a major city with all the extra administration expenses. Isn't there a way to combine/share jobs to make it more economical. Running a town should be like a business and from what I can see a lot of these town workers aspecially in the schools are making a lot more than if they worked in the private sector. Why is that? The people in this town are the shareholders in a company called Harvard and we want the run on spending to stop.</p>
<p>work together - stop bickering!!</p>
<p>Would the selectmen, and boards consider using this type of survey tool to help guide their decision making?</p>
<p>Years ago we did an analysis that looked at whether the tax income from new homes out-weighed the additional costs created to the town. Then we should consider new zoning to control this.</p>
<p>Yes - please be civil, and please discourage vituperative letters to the editor and instead encourage people to encounter each other favce to face and recognize each other's humanity.</p>
<p>Yes throwing money at problems--do not solve them--increasing the budget every year--year doesn't solve the problem-without determining the cause-which may not be obvious. Businesses cut people, goods,and services when times are tough. There isn't a money pit to go back too. I.E. the taxpayer. WE MUST GET OUR COSTS AND SPENDING UNDER CONTROL!!!!!!</p>
<p>Yes, cutting the budget. Taking a zero-based budgeting approach, STARTING with school administration levels.</p>
<p>Yes, see question # 17.</p>
<p>Yes, they need to look to the future -- this town needs a plan that expands preferably the next 10 years, but at least the next 5</p>

Question 16 - Considerations for Town Officials

Yes, WAKE UP!! There are way too many people in positions that are overpaid and/or underqualified or with lack of concern for what is really going on. Teachers and Administrators should experience layoffs and job displacement. They have become so comfortable because Harvard consistently gives when there has been a need (justified or not). There are plenty of people out there that would be willing to work here for less money and provide just as superior service if not more than what we have today. Folks have become too comfortable and it has got to stop. They would not be able to survive in the real world. Although I was very disappointed that the override was approved at ATM, I'm extremely proud of those that showed up at the polls to vote it down. I think that demonstrates that townspeople have finally had enough. It's long overdue for town officials to start focusing and fixing the problem, not trying to cover it up with more and more overrides. Times are tough right now and only getting tougher. And, with regards to the schools (administration, school committee and teachers), I'm so tired of their attitude that they are the ones responsible for our children. Yes, they are there teaching them the basics of learning, but it's the family values and parents that help our children become successful. It's time the teachers stop taking credit for this! It's time the town officials focus on the bottom line and enforce budget cuts to get us back on track. Budget cuts will not cause our children to fail or get bad grades. The families will continue to raise their children to succeed.

Yes. Ginger Quarrels and others working at the Council on Aging are remarkable, exceedingly helpful to individuals, but failed to win financial support for more work hours at town meeting. // Funding for youth is lopsided. Town should not build a new boat house for crew. Town should not build a team house at McCurdy field for teams, UNLESS they consider seniors, and add a clean clean bathroom at such places. Plato said, more or less, that a community which acknowledges consideration throughout, is a goal to seek. REview Conservation Commission assignment on protecting VIEWS. We have lost three on this hilltop where a hearing had established that the orchardists would plant small trees to keep monadnock view. They did, then set tall trees in between. Also Pinnacle Rd., arborvitae were planted by orchardists, selectively, in front of each house on slope towards Oak Hill Rd., probably not as suggested, to block the spray.

Yes. The Bromfield School is grossly understaffed and its students underserved. IF there were a third level of educational opportunity (vocational, non-collegeprep or basic adult living courses, we wouldn't need to service so many kids who cannot access this curriculum and end up in special education or OUTPLACED due to emotional problems from not being able to access the curriculum. Then we'd have more money to spend on our schools in general.

You need to follow the will of the voters. Enough is enough. and stop the loser's game of counting the votes.