

Question 4 - Viewpoint
Write-In Comments

Above statements a bit unclear. It does not give a direct option to say support all existing services level Plus add and improve. Which is what I support.
After looking at question 7 I might support something on a menu override
After reviewing information, \$200K would support level services for the most part. Minimal loss also level services can be maintained for a lot less than \$448K
An override is immoral. The town's budget should be arrived at honestly and overtly. It is decided by including the effect of an override as income even before the public votes on the budget (or the override). This is deception and the people are gulled.
At this point I am undecided, but find it difficult to support an override which includes additional or improved services. I do not trust the school committee to make wise choices, nor do I trust the superintendent to make prudent choices. I find it difficult to pass any override knowing the superintendent's raise is attached to an override. I do not support the teacher's getting health benefits at 80% and resent that I need to pass a \$200,000 override just to cover those contractual costs.
Choice in terms of funding options -- i.e., a menu approach -- is important to me, albeit difficult to arrange. I object to bundling the "good" (from my perspective) with the "bad".
Dr Jefferson should have used the additional money he received from educating the Devens HS students to minimize the needs for overrides. The characterization that "these" monies are for a level services budget are disingenuous. All dollars are fungible.
Especially budgets from schools.
I believe we should not use overrides for ongoing operating budgets. These budgets must be funded through other revenue streams. Overrides should only be used for one-time expenses, ordinarily capital items.
I cannot in good faith support any over ride until the situation at the school is addressed. I cannot support any override until the school committee acts more responsibly - and the current superintendent is fired.
I do not support an override. The 2-1/2% was designed to cut expenses and keep taxes down. Some of the warrants should be voted on separately - not lumped together. We look like the federal government.
I don't support the concept of "level service". I believe all services should be reconsidered every year, dropping or lowering those not needed or not effective, adding those that may be newly needed.
I don't understand why we are continually being asked to support overrides. I am not confident the budget is being managed properly since this seems to be an ongoing issue. If I mismanaged my budget in work I'd be fired. Not all of us in Harvard are even close to the mean income cited in the press. Some of us in Harvard are actually struggling to get by believe it or not. We are a one income family with 2 small children and cannot bear the extra expense. I support the schools and need to provide services, etc. but, with all due respect, enough is enough already.
I feel that a 2.5% increase per year allowed without an override is more than adequate considering that incomes often don't increase that fast. Overrides stress those on fixed incomes even more.
I feel there are too many administrative/managerial positions in the school system.
I generally do support overrides but after receiving this year's tax bill I don't feel I can.
I get an error when attempting to access the FY09 Omnibus budget, so I am unable to offer an informed viewpoint.
I may support a smaller override if it is fully justified and not dominated by school expenditures.
I MAY support an override for level services.
I may support an override, and prefer to have it presented to me with choices on services.
I might accept an override only for the \$200,000 in labor costs that were paid last year through free cash, but not if the existence of the override triggers the clause in the superintendent's contract that gives him more money if there is an override.
I might support an override if the finance committee and school committee gave me the definitions of outputs they are using to maintain a "level service" budget rather than just the costs which are inputs.
I need more information about the override and wasn't at the Town Meeting to get the information.
I voted for the current budget which I found minimal at best for the kind of town and school system we want.

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I will only consider supporting potential overrides not associated with increasing any school funding - not even "level service".
I will support an override of \$200,000. only
I would consider an override that does NOT give the town fathers excess spending authority- i.e. removes the \$240k additional state aid.
I would consider supporting an override but not when scare tactics are used such as threatening teacher layoffs to convince voters that one is necessary.
I would like to see a "level funded" budget which explained what changes had to be made in operations of the school/town to live with this funding - then overrides which specified which changes could be made with each level of override. I would probably support some level of override which was more specific than "maintain all services at existing levels".
I would like to see the School committee go to a zero-based budgeting approach and rethink the entire way they are funding the schools. The incremental approach, where what is there now is assumed to be better than anything additional, is not getting us where we want to be.
I would need to see how much the override would be
I would not support an override until I believed that there was a serious effort to cut costs, as I have to do in my household when money is tight.
I would not support an override until we do zero based budgeting.
I would not support an override that provides any additional funding of the Harvard schools
I would not support an override to maintain all services at existing levels. The town has shown the voters that there is waste in the existing levels of budget.
I would not support an override to maintain certain services such as the school. There is a gross bleeding fiscal mismanagement in this town and it must stop.
I would not support an override to the extent it was for increased personnel expense or additional new services.
I would not support an override until the source of its need is acknowledged (Devens population based historic local aid cost base versus current "aggregate wealth based local aid) and services levels are quantified such that alternative methods of achieving the same or additional services can be evaluated. Current "level service" budget is actually "level staffing" budget with no apparent consideration of productivity improvement.
I would prefer no override but need to see what affect this would have. I would consider a small override depending on the cuts necessary to avoid one.
I would rather let the voters pick which services to LEEVL fund, rather than the school dominating every budget
I would support a level services override, AND, I would support an override to add or improve some services but prefer to have choices
I would support a modest override where every effort has been made to reduce the need for that override, by reducing the level of existing services and by avoiding the need for improved or added services.
I would support almost any override that is transparent in voice.
I would support an override as long as personnel cost increases were limited to 2.5%
I would support an override for critical services if everything possible had been done to reduce all other
I would support an override for new and improved services, if town officials provide sufficient justification and support for it, which they've done a poor job of in the past.
I would support an override if all capital expenses and large variances in recurring expenses would be detailed in separate line items to be discussed and voted on - not hidden in a large omnibus budget.
I would support an override if I felt our town administrators were managing in a thoughtful and responsible way (this means making the town prioritize choices). I feel our current administration is somewhat dysfunctional and ineffective.
I would support an override if it were for services that are essential to the town.
I would support an override if required to provide "adequate services." I would like the opportunity to provide input on different parts of the budget. I believe some parts of the budget should be increased (public safety, DPW) and other parts (primarily the schools) could probably be decreased significantly.

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I would support an over-ride only if the dept receiving it could show me an honest review of possible cost cuts and a more conservative approach to their spending
I would support an override that adds or improves some services, but also looked at what services should be eliminated.
I would support an override to add or improve services; I would prefer to have choices.
I would support an override to add or improve some services if I were persuaded that current services had been thoroughly inspected for possible economies which would ensure a pared-down budget. I would also need to feel that town officials had investigated and lobbied for all possible state aid. I do not feel that that has been done when I compare Harvard's finances with those of nearby towns (see Acton).
I would support an override to add or improve some services; I would prefer to have a choice.
I would support an override to maintain some services at existing levels; I would prefer to have choices
I would support an override to maintain, add or improve services
I'd support an override if each line item were broken down and justified as being ABSOLUTELY necessary.
If all the town of Harvad munisable contracts were negosated properly in the best interest of the town there would be hardly any need for a override
If the town is able to demonstrate over the next couple of years that it is spending wisely and better managing its town assets, I would consider voting for an override for select items only.
In these hard financial times, it is prudent for the town to cut back, just like everyone else.
It is important to have choices. I certainly do not support paying for "baby-sitters" for the schooll age children.
It is very important not to bundle override requests. As a senior citizen volunteer in the HES library, I know that the climate control issues at HES are serious. Getting fans for \$25K should be a no-brainer....On the othter hand, using 700 gallons of fuel every 2 weeks to heat the DPW garages..What are they thinking???.or coating the floor for \$45K?
It will probably take more than a couple of years of seeing significant changes in the way town government manages its priorities, and assets before I would be likely to vote for an override. Concrete steps must be taken to re-establish a more realistic baseline of expenditures and that includes schools.
Level services with COLA's
Many town residents who want to remain in Harvard indefinitely can not support overrides. Continual overrides have a compounding effect over time.
My monthly income is well under \$2,000, so I may not reflect the attitude of the town.
Need to see a stronger effort to cut back on overhead (administration) at schools.
No fat but dreadful waste in budget.
No longer will support any override unless detailed information is given first.Definitely money has been not managed properly by town officials and the school board.A business run like the town has been would be bankrupt by now.
NO MORE TAXES ENOUGH
Our elected officials are out of touch with reality. I would only support an override IF each line item in the budget including the school budget was justified and explained to the voters
Override items pertaining to the schools need to be separated out from all the other overrides and not lumped/bundled together w/ other override questions.
Overrides must come to an end.
Past school committees have done an exceeding abysmal job of providing information to the taxpayers. We only know how much Dr. Jefferson and the school committee want us to input into the schools. We have no idea how outputs will be measured and no idea of the processes which will be employed to achieve those outputs. In short, our schools are using 1950s management techniques despite the fact that private enterprises using those techniquet today are on the endangered species list. Modern management techniques (and they aren't all that new) are process-based and measure outcomes. Dr. Jefferson appears unable to grasp those concepts. The new school committee should tell him upfront that if he returns to them next February using 1950s management concepts, he will be terminated.

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Prop 2 1/2 is law for a reason: it defines the level of spending that is affordable. We must learn to live within our means. Our school must do with fewer administrators, classes with fewer than 10 students, etc., and now that our teachers are well paid, they must join the rest of us in having to be satisfied with raises (if any) that allow us to keep ahead of inflation.
School Department needs to spend money more wisely
The closest response is "I would not support an override for any reason". However, I might support an override under very restricted circumstances. I would prefer to have choices so I could support a restricted override. I believe that maintaining/adding/improving necessary services should be feasible without an override.
The leadership has not demonstrated the actions required to hold the line on tax increases. All earlier projections have proved to be incorrect. There is no credibility in the leadership. Why should the current forecasts for the override be trusted. This override will lead to more overrides.
The margin of no to yes was very small, one could say the voters were about evenly divided. Be that as it may: (1) Harvard passed a milestone - the first time in memory voters refused an override. Perhaps a portent of the future. (2) Reasons given for rejecting the override are rather petty - to cast away months of consensus budget work by rejecting an override representing a mere 4.5% of the overall budget. (3) Exposes the illogic of those who seek to "preserve Harvard" on one hand while rejecting the budget override which would at least maintain level service. Do they think town service is not coupled to what they want to preserve?
The override failed to pass. If the presidential elections followed Harvard's logic by surveying the public again and again, we would be still be voting to see if Al Gore could possibly be elected. Question... if the override passed by 100 votes, would anyone accept an initiative to recast the vote? Of course not !. No means no. Accept the vote. Harvard needs to live within its budget. Zuk from Littleton Rd expressed it best in an editorial - in such a small town, to have a superintendent and 3 school principals layered by secretaries earning \$80K for 8 mo/yr work and a full pension etc., etc... all at a salary cost of \$1.2MM - if just 50% of this administrative waste was eliminated, there would be no need for an override.
The town already voted down an override. If one passes do we get a second chance to vote it down? The failed override is the best thing that has happened to Harvard's budget process since we move here. It is the ONLY way to FORCE a hard look at how we spend our money. Absent setting a limit on spending by freezing taxes, the town's budget will continue to increase faster than our ability to fund it.
The town wide vote determined that should be no override, why are we now being asked again if there should be another override?
There is clearly money being carelessly spent. Why did the town hire another assessor? Why are we paying for preschool for special education? The special education budget is over 35% of the school budget. Are you going to let it become 50% of the budget one day? Why is the school leaving windows open in the winter?; at least close off the vents to overheated rooms. The downturn in the economy is real and to expect to have overrides every year is impossible to sustain.
Until there is some fiscal restraint in regards to the budget and the services now available see no reason to support additional services for the few people who want them
We need to learn to balance the budget. A thorough review of how to cut costs may be the best strategy.
We need to think outside the box in this economy.
When the Tri-Boards seriously start cutting the fat the voters would probably get on board and support them in their effort.
While the above statement does indeed reflect my viewpoint, I am also not convinced that current money (level service) is being spent wisely, and would like choice and detail on some of that, as well.
Would not support override for schools as long as current Superintendent remains
Yes, trusting the superintendent of schools would have made a difference in my vote the first time. I also completely RESENT that the superintendent gets a bonus with a town override.