



OVERRIDE?

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The town of Winchendon is facing a Prop 2½ override vote on Monday, May 5, 2025.

If the override vote does not pass, the Beals Library, the Old Murdock Senior Center, and the Parks Department will be forced to close their doors and all staff will be let go.

This brochure outlines the fact-based information you will need to make an informed decision when going to the polls on election day. Also enclosed are statements from the three town departments slated for closure if the override does not pass.

WHAT IS PROPOSITION 2½?

Proposition 2½ was enacted into law in 1980. It limits the amount of revenue that cities and towns in Massachusetts can raise annually from property and excise taxes to 2½ percent.

WHY IS AN OVERRIDE NECESSARY?

Town Manager, Bill McKinney reported at the joint Selectboard/Finance Committee meeting on Monday, March 24 that the override is necessary because of inflationary increases in the areas of the budget, listed below, that the town has no control over, and that have far out-paced the 2½ percent that the town can legally raise to reach a balanced budget.

- School transportation (\$129,780 or a 12% increase)
- Debt service obligation* (\$327,400 or a 38.2% increase)
- Retirement/pension (\$141,700 or a 6.1% increase)
- Unemployment insurance (\$50,000 or a 50% increase)
- Health/life insurance (\$444,700 or a 16.4% increase)

* *This debt obligation is primarily from the money borrowed for street paving, the repair of town buildings, the repair of the High School parking lot, and Fire Station design.*

HOW MUCH?

The Selectboard voted at the March 27 meeting to give voters a choice on how much the override will be.

- Option 1 is for an override of 1.9 million dollars to keep the town at its current level of service. This translates to a 12.6% increase over the \$11.75 per thousand you currently pay in the valuation of your home to \$13.25.
- Option 2 is for a 2.9 million dollar override that will allow the town to enhance its level of service. This translates to a 19% increase over the current \$11.75 per thousand you currently pay in the valuation of your home to \$13.99.

Please go to the calculator on the town's website to find out exactly what your property tax increase will be. www.townofwinchendon.com.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE INFO:

Residents seeking more detailed information about the positive effects that the Library, the Senior Center and the Parks & Rec Dept. have on the quality of life in Winchendon, can either visit these locations in person or go to the Town Manager's office on the 4th floor of the Winchendon Town Hall. These brochures will also be placed in many different business locations around town.

Information in a downloadable digital format (pdf) can be found on the Town's website at: www.townofwinchendon.com.

THE BEALS MEMORIAL LIBRARY

What happens if the Beals Library closes its doors?

- Once the Beals is shuttered, it immediately loses its state certification. This means that Winchendon residents will not only lose access to the collection of the Beals itself, but to the CWMARS interlibrary loan network that provides access to the physical and digital collections of hundreds of other libraries in Central and Western Massachusetts.
- The building will still need to be heated and maintained. The cost of up-keep will remain. With disuse and neglect the building will deteriorate. Existing exterior problems will worsen causing damage to the interior. The library's collection, furniture, equipment and artwork will be subject to future environmental damage and possible theft.

What will be lost?

- A thriving, full-service library that is a welcoming, and free to use community center where all residents can gather, find reliable fact-based information, engage in open civic conversations and participate in all of the programs and services that enhance the town's quality of life.
- The over two million dollars that the town's registered voters, the Robinson-Broadhurst Foundation, and the Beals Memorial Library (using nearly all its available trust funds), invested in bringing the Beals into the 21st Century by updating the building's infrastructure and making the building fully accessible for the first time in its 112 year history.
- Public computers, online resources, research assistance and tech help, as well as access to hotspots, and other "Library of Things" items.
- The meeting space that many organizations and individuals depend on.
- Our delivery service to homebound individuals.
- Curriculum support for Winchendon's teachers and homeschooling parents.
- Access to affordable printing, copying, and faxing services.

Putting it into perspective:

- It's been said that "Nobody uses to the library anymore", but in 2024 the Beals had 21,864 patron visits, 2,682 people came to our programs, we circulated 23,268 items, and 33% of Winchendon residents hold a Beals library card.
- The library represents less than three quarters of one percent of the total town budget. That averages out to an annual cost of \$38.07 to the typical homeowner, or the retail price of one new book if purchased at a bookstore.
- The Beals Library has been at the center of community life since 1913. Through all those years, both good times and bad, the library has never been forced to close its doors to the public. During the Great Depression of the 1930's, when the economy was at its worst, the library remained open and continued to serve the cultural and informational needs of the citizens of Winchendon. Even during the Covid shutdown in 2020, the library staff was still here to delivering books curbside to patrons.
- The value the library holds as a resource to the taxpayers of Winchendon is enormous, and a tremendous bang for the buck.

OLD MURDOCK SENIOR CENTER

What happens if the Winchendon Senior Center has to close?

The closure of the Senior Center will have severe consequences for senior services, including program closures, meal service disruptions, loss of transportation, and reduced social services. Without funding, Winchendon seniors will lose essential services that support their health, independence, and daily lives.

Below is an outline of the critical areas that will be impacted:

- Complete closure of the Senior Center building and elimination of the congregate meal programs and social services.

People impacted: up to 200 seniors per week

- Near elimination of transportation services. Dispatch, and MART bus drivers hours will be cut from 30 to 5 per week. COA driver positions and rides will be eliminated. Trips for seniors to engage in town events will not be possible.

People Impacted: 5,000 plus rides per year

- Loss of wellness enrichment programs. Without staff, COA services cannot be guaranteed. Music classes, art programs, wellness classes, support groups, exercise, and pickleball will be eliminated.

People impacted: 5,000 plus per year

- Elimination of Social Services for Seniors means SNAP, housing, health care, case management, advocacy, and emergency or resource assistance will be no longer be available.

People impacted: 520 residents per year

- Home meal delivery will continue, but only if volunteers are found to deliver them. Congregate lunches at Old Murdock will end.

People impacted: up to 500 seniors per week, 23,000 meals per year

- With the elimination of COA Director, Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator positions no grant funding efforts will be made. \$600,000 was secured in 2024.

People Impacted: Entire senior population and Center clientele

WINCHENDON COMMUNITY ACTION

If the override does not pass, the Winchendon CAC will face significant funding cuts that will directly impact its ability to provide essential services to the community. The town funding currently supports essential operational costs for our food pantry, social services and overall facility.

Without funding, the CAC will be forced to make these reductions:

- **Operating Hours:** The CAC may have to cut its hours by up **50%**, limiting access to critical resources for residents.
- **Teen Nights:** The loss of funding would mean **eliminating** teen nights, which provide a safe and supportive environment for local youth.
- **Senior Bowling:** The program that promotes social engagement and physical activity for seniors would be **discontinued**.
- **Staff Reductions:** A decrease in staffing levels would **impact services and grant-writing efforts**, reducing the CAC's ability to secure additional funding for future programs.

WINCHENDON PARKS & REC

What's at stake for the Winchendon Parks & Rec Department?

Winchendon's Parks & Recreation Department is more than events - it's a vital part of our community's identity, health, and future. Thanks to significant investments from the Robinson and Broadhurst Foundation, Winchendon has made great strides in building an inclusive, vibrant community through recreation. But all of that progress is now at risk.

What will our community lose?

- Many fewer events like concerts, festivals, seasonal celebrations, and family nights at the Winchendon Community Park Amphitheater will be held with only a volunteer committee to organize them.
- Over 8,000 residents and visitors attended park events last season alone, events that brought people together and boosted our economy.
- These events aren't just fun, they're a strategy to put Winchendon on the map as a regional destination, attracting visitors and building pride.
- Parks & Rec programming helps bridge social gaps, offering connection and access for residents who might otherwise be isolated.
- Through community-led planning, residents have a real voice in shaping what happens in town. This is more than recreation - it's community building and empowerment.
- Without staff to secure performers, write contracts, promote the park, oversee rentals, policies, permitting, ticketing, and maintenance, the town will lose revenue and sponsorships.
- Loss of collaboration with schools, nonprofits, and local organizations that expand programming and stretch every dollar.
- No grant applications, no new funding, and no one to coordinate shared efforts. Without grant funding to maintain the parks, costs will shift entirely to taxpayers.
- Fewer visitors to our community, generating less revenue for our local economy.
- Lower property values and diminished town appeal for families and future growth.

Why does this matter?

- Winchendon has already received major outside funding to develop its Parks & Recreation system. If this override fails and the department is dismantled, that progress will be lost, and the community will bear the long-term cost - financially, socially, and culturally.

This isn't just about preserving events - it's about:

- Protecting years of investment
- Supporting families and children
- Strengthening community ties
- Driving economic development
- Upholding community pride

IMPORTANT DATES

Please attend one or more of the public Override Information Meetings scheduled for the dates and places specified below. The meetings are your chance to ask questions and get real answers from the Town Manager and the town's department heads that are affected by the outcome of the override vote. *Please note that dates, times and locations may change.*

Date	Time	Meeting Location
Wednesday, April 2	6:00 PM	Winchendon Town Hall
Monday, April 7	6:00 PM	Beals Memorial Library
Tuesday, April 8	6:00 PM	Murdock High School
Thursday, April 10	11:00 AM	Old Murdock Senior Center
Wednesday, April 16	11:00 AM	Hyde Park Community Room
Thursday, April 17	2:00 PM	Glen Woods Park Community Room
Wednesday, April 23	3:00 PM	Winchendon CAC
Wednesday, April 23	6:00 PM	Pearl Drive Community Room
Thursday, May 1	2:30 PM	Ipswich Drive Community Room
TBA	6:00 PM	American Legion
TBA	2:00 PM	Goodrich Drive Community Room

OTHER IMPORTANT DATES:

Friday, April 25	Last day to register to vote		
Monday, May 5	8 AM to 8 PM	Town election	Senior Center
Monday, May 19	7:00 PM	Town Meeting	Murdock High School
Monday, Jun 30	Last day of operation for the Library, the Senior Center, and the Parks & Rec Department if the override fails		
Tuesday July 1	First day of Fiscal Year 2026		

THE BALLOT QUESTIONS:

QUESTION 1:

Shall the Town of Winchendon be allowed to assess an additional \$1,900,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding: Beals Memorial Library; Winchendon Senior Center (Council On Aging); Winchendon Parks and Recreation; Supplies for Winchendon Fire and Department of Public Works (DPW); School Athletics and funding the current staffing and programming at Winchendon Public Schools, and funding general operating budgets as needed for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025.

QUESTION 2:

Shall the Town of Winchendon be allowed to assess an additional \$2,900,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding Beals' Memorial Library; Winchendon Senior Center (Council On Aging); Winchendon Parks and Recreation; Supplies for Winchendon Fire and Department of Public Works (DPW); School Athletics and enhancing the current staffing and programming at Winchendon Public Schools; funding cost of living increases (COLA) for all Winchendon Public School Employees; and, funding general operating budgets as needed for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025.