Newton Election Commission

Kenneth R. Hartford, Chairman
Marjorie Ann Butler, John P. McDermott
Nancy M. Levine

Dear Newton Voters,

The City of Newton will hold a Special Election on Tuesday, March 12, 2013, to present one levy limit override ballot question and tow debt exclusion ballot questions.

The City Charter directs the Election Commission to mail the full text of the ballot to voters. Accordingly, you have received this mailing, which sets out the text of the ballot questions and presents arguments for and against. A copy of this mailing can also be viewed on the City website, www.newtonma.gov.

All polling locations will be open from 7:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

If you have any questions, please contact the Election Commission at 617-796-1350.

Yours truly,

Peter Koutoujian
Interim Executive Secretary

WARD	PRECINCT	POLLING LOCATION	ADDRESS
1	1	Lincoln Eliot School	191 Pearl Street
1	2	Fire Station #1	241 Church Street
1	3	Bigelow Middle School	42 Vernon Street
1	4	Pellegrini Playground Fieldhouse	11 Hawthorn Street
2	1	Horace Mann School	687 Watertown Street
2	2	Cabot School	229 Cabot Street
2	3	Newton Senior Center	345 Walnut Street
2	4	Newton Free Library	330 Homer Street
3	1	Newton Community Service Center	492 Waltham Street
3	2	Peirce School	170 Temple Street
3	3	Newton Community Service Center	492 Waltham Street
3	4	Franklin School	125 Derby Street
4	1	Burr School	171 Pine Street
4	2	Hamilton Community Center	545 Grove Street
4	3	Williams School	141 Grove Street
4	4	Burr School	171 Pine Street
5	1	Emerson Community Center	51 Pettee Street
5	2	Hyde Community Center	90 Lincoln Street
5	3	Zervas School	30 Beethoven Avenue
5	4	Zervas School	30 Beethoven Avenue
6	1	Bowen School	280 Cypress Street
6	2	Weeks House	7 Hereward Road
6	3	Hyde Community Center	90 Lincoln Street
6	4	Mason Rice School	149 Pleasant Street
7	1	Church of the Redeemer	379 Hammond Street
7	2	Bigelow Middle School	42 Vernon Street
7	3	Ward School	10 Dolphin Road
7	4	Ward School	10 Dolphin Road
8	1	Oak Hill Middle School	130 Wheeler Road
8	2	Memorial-Spaulding School	250 Brookline Street
8	3	Countryside School	191 Dedham Street
8	4	Shuman Community Center	675 Saw Mill Brook Pkwy

POLLING LOCATIONS ARE OPEN FROM 7 A.M. TO 8 P.M.

OFFICIAL BALLOT
SPECIAL MUNICIPAL ELECTION
CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS
TUESDAY, MARCH 12, 2013

Peter Koutoujian
Interim Executive Secretary

Kenneth R. Hartford, Chairman
Marjorie Ann Butler
John P. McDermott

NEWTON ELECTION COMMISSIONERS

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

To vote, fill in the oval ⬭ completely next to your choice(s), like this ⬬ .

QUESTION 1

LEVY LIMIT OVERRIDE BALLOT QUESTION

"Shall the City of Newton be allowed to assess an additional $8,400,000 in real estate and personal property taxes for the purpose of funding municipal and school operating and capital expenses to support increased student enrollment, fund street and sidewalk paving, fund public safety personnel, address the condition and capacity of Zervas Elementary School, fund the relocation of the Fire Department Wires Division, and fund the replacement of Fire Headquarters and Fire Station 3 in Newton Centre for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2013?"

YES ⬭
NO ⬭

QUESTION 2

DEBT EXCLUSION BALLOT QUESTION

"Shall the City of Newton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition 2 1/2, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to renovate or replace the A.E. Angier Elementary School?"

YES ⬭
NO ⬭

QUESTION 3

DEBT EXCLUSION BALLOT QUESTION

"Shall the City of Newton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition 2 1/2, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to renovate or replace the Cabot Elementary School?"

YES ⬭
NO ⬭

Sample Ballot

QUESTION 1

OVERRIDE SUMMARY

On March 12, 2013, Newton voters will be asked to vote on a Proposition 2 ½ levy limit override of $8,400,000. The purpose of the levy limit override is to fund operating and capital expenses for the public schools and the municipal government to support increased student enrollment, fund street and sidewalk paving, fund public safety personnel, address the condition and capacity of Zervas Elementary School, fund relocation of the Fire Department Wires Division, and fund the replacement of Fire Headquarters and Fire Station 3 in Newton Centre for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2013.

General Laws c. 59, sec. 21C ("Proposition 2 ½") limits the amount of revenue that a municipality may raise from local property taxes each year. This amount is known as the annual levy limit.

Proposition 2 ½ allows municipalities to increase tax revenues above the levy limit with voter approval through a levy limit override.

If approved by the voters, a levy limit override increases the amount of property tax revenue a municipality may raise in the year specified in the override question. An approved override also increases the base for calculating future years' levy limits by the amount of the approved override.

A "yes" vote would allow the property tax increase.

A "no" vote would prevent the property tax increase.

QUESTION 2

DEBT EXCLUSION SUMMARY – A.E. ANGIER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On March 12, 2013, Newton voters will be asked to vote on a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion for the renovation or replacement of the A.E. Angier Elementary School.

General Laws c. 59, sec. 21C ("Proposition 2 ½") limits the amount of revenue that a municipality may raise from local property taxes each year. This amount is known as the annual levy limit.

Proposition 2 ½ allows municipalities to increase tax revenues for a limited period of time with voter approval through a debt exclusion. The amount of the debt exclusion may be raised in addition to the annual levy limit.

If a capital project is being funded through debt (*i.e.*, the sale of bonds), a debt exclusion will allow a municipality to raise the amount of the annual debt service payment, including principal and interest, for that capital project each year until the debt is paid. The debt exclusion does not increase the levy limit nor become part of the base for calculating future years' levy limits.

A "yes" vote would allow a temporary property tax increase to pay for the A.E. Angier Elementary School capital project.

A "no" vote would prevent a temporary property tax increase to pay for the A.E.Angier Elementary School capital project.

QUESTION 3

DEBT EXCLUSION SUMMARY – CABOT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

On March 12, 2013, Newton voters will be asked to vote on a Proposition 2 ½ debt exclusion for the renovation or replacement of the Cabot Elementary School.

General Laws c. 59, sec. 21C ("Proposition 2 ½") limits the amount of revenue that a municipality may raise from local property taxes each year. This amount is known as the annual levy limit.

Proposition 2 ½ allows municipalities to increase tax revenues for a limited period of time with voter approval through a debt exclusion. The amount of the debt exclusion may be raised in addition to the annual levy limit.

If a capital project is being funded through debt (*i.e.*, the sale of bonds), a debt exclusion will allow a municipality to raise the amount of the annual debt service payment, including principal and interest, for that capital project each year until the debt is paid. The debt exclusion does not increase the levy limit nor become part of the base for calculating future years' levy limits.

A "yes" vote would allow a temporary property tax increase to pay for the Cabot Elementary School capital project.

A "no" vote would prevent a temporary property tax increase to pay for the Cabot Elementary School capital project.

Disclaimer Regarding Arguments For and Against the Override Ballot Questions
The City is required by law to include the arguments for and against the override and debt exclusion ballot questions as provided by citizen groups registered as proponents and opponents of these questions. The City is not responsible for the accuracy of the statements made in the arguments both for and against the ballot questions.

Arguments In Favor of Questions 1-3

Mayor Warren´s proposed Proposition 2-1/2 override package includes three inextricably linked questions that, together, tackle Newton´s biggest challenges: aging infrastructure and significant school enrollment growth. Three YES votes are critical to preserve our quality of life in Newton.

Three YES votes will enable the city to:

- Replace/renovate and expand the antiquated Angier and Cabot Elementary Schools.
- Repair and maintain crumbling roads and sidewalks.
- Provide teachers and staff to address the huge influx of new students systemwide.
- Provide critical short- and long-term space in our schools by allowing for modulars at four elementary schools and renovation/replacement and expansion of the severely overcrowded and centrally located Zervas Elementary School.
- Improve emergency response by renovating the outdated Newton Centre Fire Station and Fire Headquarters – the communications hub for emergency response.
- Reduce traffic-related accidents and burglaries with the addition of four police officers for traffic and community policing.

Since Mayor Warren took office the city has gotten its financial house in order. The Mayor and his administration have created more than $200 million in cost savings over the next five years by renegotiating employee contracts to keep salary and benefit increases in line with revenue growth; renegotiating utility contracts and improving energy efficiency; and identifying savings and efficiencies throughout all city and school departments. However, challenges remain.

Newton has experienced dramatic enrollment growth with 900+ students since 2005 and project an additional 850+ more expected over the next five years. The schools are bursting at the seams, with education specialists delivering services in hallways and re-purposed closets. Student enrollment already exceeds the buildings´ capacity and is projected to grow. Crumbling roads and sidewalks make for unsafe travel. Pedestrian and cycling accidents and burglaries are increasing. The outdated Newton Centre fire station and headquarters are in deplorable condition and are affecting safety services.

The Massachusetts School Building Authority has designated Angier and Cabot, Newton´s two oldest schools, among the 30 worst school buildings in the state. The dilapidated facilities, with their antiquated systems, cost the city thousands each year in maintenance, repairs and energy inefficiency. Newton hopes to receive approximately 30% reimbursement from the state for construction costs. This translates to over $10 million per school. The state´s role in the project and building design ensures that the project stays on scope and on budget. Delaying the projects would cost the city in lost state funding, additional money in continued repair, maintenance and utility costs, as well as increased construction costs in the future.

This override package will help preserve the fabric of our community and maintain our property values. Without it, our schools will continue to deteriorate, class size will grow, the quality of our roads and sidewalks will decrease further, and public safety services will erode.

We have the opportunity to keep Newton a vibrant, strong community by voting YES on all three ballot questions. Together we can build Newton´s future.

Submitted by
Building Newton's Future

Argument Against Question 1

A "No!" vote on Question 1 ensures that the base upon which your property taxes are assessed does *not* expand by $8.4 million in 2014 and remain expanded *forever*. If all three override proposals pass, owners of a median-priced home ($686,000) will see their 2014 taxes rise the typical amount permitted under Proposition 2 ½, and on top of that, they'll be charged an extra $343.

"That's only a dollar a day!" City officials say about the $343 override price tag. We question their use of the word "only."

If you invest that $343 in stocks and bonds offering a return rate between 4% and 12%, and leave them for 30 years (the payment period for the proposals under Questions 2 and 3), you will earn between $19,200 and $82,700. Many of us, paying for house repairs, tuition, or retirement, cannot afford to lose that money---especially when the City is flush with cash.

From 2002, when the last override passed, through 2012, Newton's general fund revenue increased 43.5%. Where did that money go? We know it didn't go to road repair.

The truth that override supporters hide is that the City spends extravagantly, and not just on Newton North. Consider salaries. A senior school custodian makes $104,000 annually and an assistant dog officer $99,000. And those aren't the worst examples of spending excess.

Submitted by
Moving Newton Forward

Argument Against Question 2

Eighty percent of Newton spending is for employee salary and benefits. Although salaries, like the Superintendent's annual $259,237, are high, the greatest drain on tax dollars is benefits.

Yearly, the City supplies Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB), which is primarily healthcare for retirees. Newton healthcare benefits are lavish. OPEB payments cumulatively grew 62%---to $16.6 million---from 2004 to 2012.

Pensions also hurt us. The City's pension contribution payments cumulatively grew an astonishing 141%---to $16.1 million---from 2002 to 2012. Such costs are unsustainable, which is why private industry stopped providing Newton-style pensions 15 years ago.

A "No!" vote on Question 2 will prod the Mayor to scale back healthcare benefits promised in union contracts (to be re-negotiated in summer 2014). "No!" votes will also encourage him to reform retirement benefits to cap costs in 2014.

Think of Newton's spending habit this way: if spending had grown only 2.5% annually during the past decade, the City would have had $36.6 million more in 2012. With those millions, we could repair sidewalks, roads, and fire stations, hire police and teachers, and renovate Zervas, Angier, and Cabot without financial fuss. No one would be proposing overrides.

Submitted by
Moving Newton Forward

Argument Against Question 3

A "No!" vote on Question 3 will focus school leaders on the basics---maximizing student performance while minimizing cost. Given that 18% of Newton students attend private schools, our public schools are rich. Education consumes 57% of the most recently proposed City budget.

Newton public school enrollment rose 8% from 2003 to 2012, yet school spending rose 39% during that time. The school budget is bloated enough to accommodate new students easily if spending priorities shift. Why not outsource custodial services, for example, as the Mayor did cafeteria services?

What if every high school student took at least one online course before graduating? Such courses improve student test scores *and* reduce spending.

What if schools saved $2 million through naming rights? And what if we were fully reimbursed for the nearly 500 non-resident students attending our public schools? Annually, those non-residents cost Newton more than $7 million.

We want excellence in Newton: public safety, sound infrastructure, and quality education (even for non-resident children). Through fiscal reforms, our capable Mayor and his talented team can deliver these goods for *less* than they spend now.

Meanwhile, our state and local per capita tax burden is already the 4th highest in the nation. And that's *without* the Governor's proposed $1.9 billion tax hike and Newton's proposed $11.4 million overrides.

Vote ***"No!"*** three times. Tell Newton officials, who are eager for overrides now and later: "Act more like Newton families! Live within your means."

Submitted by
Moving Newton Forward