LUNENBURG SCHOOL COMMITTEE OVERRIDE STATEMENT

There is a Proposition 2 ½ override proposal on the Warrant for consideration at Town Meeting on May 4 and for the town wide election on May 18. The School Committee voted unanimously to propose this override. It is also supported by the Select Board and Finance Committee. This document explains ESSER (Covid) funds, increased costs, the override amount and what the override would fund.

Budget Planning with ESSER Funds

When Covid hit, federal ESSER funds for local schools were approved to mitigate the learning loss and mental health difficulties which impacted our students. These funds were spent very effectively to support academic and social/emotional support positions, building-related/technology costs, and Covid related costs. Plans were put in place for those costs when the ESSER funds expired. Some expenditures would be absorbed by other funding sources, some would be incorporated into existing budget lines, but the majority would be used and then ended. These funds did as they were supposed to...they helped our students recover from the pandemic. Because of careful planning, the School Committee was prepared to handle the expiration of these ESSER Funds in the 2024-2025 budget.

Increase Costs

Unfortunately, a series of additional cost increases have resulted in a budget shortfall that was significantly larger than anticipated for the 24-25 school year. These include healthcare costs, utilities, transportation, building maintenance, out-of-district special education tuitions, and unfunded state mandates such as an E911 phone system upgrade. In total, these cost increases were projected to nearly double the impact of the expiring ESSER funding.

Override Amount

Initially the town indicated that our budget would be no more than 2.94%. This would result in catastrophic cuts to the district, including 27.1 positions. In the end, after working with the Town Manager, the School Committee obtained funding for a "needs based" budget of 4.47% with ARPA funds being used to fund one time expenditures and some Chromebooks. Despite that, the 4.47% budget includes cutting 19 full time positions and 7 part time positions. It would not address our needs for student achievement, and seriously risks the positive momentum we have established. In order to make up the gap between the 4.47% budget and what the budget would be excluding the Covid Funds, the School Committee proposed an override amount of $948,136.

What the Override Funds

The override provides level services to our children, excluding the ESSER funds. It does not address broader town needs and doesn't address school needs beyond the FY25 budget. We would retain 10 of the full time positions eliminated in the 4.47% budget and all of the part time positions. Further, without the override, expense lines would be drastically cut, affecting classroom supplies, equipment and a myriad of educational instructional tools.

Cuts without Override
Humanities Teacher LHS
Intervention Teacher LHS
Classroom Teacher LMS
Counselor LMS
Classroom Teacher THES
Wilson Reading Teacher THES
PE Teacher PS/THES
Social Worker PS
Instructional Coach Districtwide
Math Teacher LHS
Science Teacher LHS
Counselor LHS/LMS
Paraprofessional (3) LHS
*Secretary (Athletics) LHS **
*Secretary/Clerk THES**
Special Education Teacher THES
Classroom Teacher PS
*Secretary/Clerk PS**
Paraprofessional PS
Maintenance Districtwide
*Student Summer Custodians Districtwide**
*Title I Coordinator Districtwide**
Expense lines including supplies, instructional tools etc

Cuts with Override
Humanities Teacher LHS
Intervention Teacher LHS
Classroom Teacher LMS
Counselor LMS
Classroom Teacher THES
Wilson Reading Teacher THES
PE Teacher PS/THES
Social Worker PS
Instructional Coach Districtwide

**Denotes part-time positions*

Town Meeting Saturday, May 4th at 9 AM at LMHS

Town Election Saturday, May 18th 7:00 AM-5:00 PM at the TC Passios Building