

# Town of Westford



## **Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Update**

Kristen Las, Town Manager  
Dr. Christopher Chew, School Superintendent  
January 24, 2024

# Presentation Overview

**Dec 2022** Some major contracts to be renewed for FY25 indicate cost jumps of 10-40%

**Jan 2023** Select Board, School Committee and Finance Committee meet to highlight potential challenges

**May 2023** Challenges come into clearer focus, Budget Task Force Appointed

**Oct 2023** Budget Task Force Report Presented

**Oct 2023** Select Board and School Committee request preparation of two budgets, one that meets needs but would require override, one with significant cuts that would meet Prop 2 ½ limit

**Dec 2023** Initial Budgets presented to Select Board and School Committee

**Jan & Feb 2024** Finance Committee leads detailed review of both budgets in a series of budget hearings

**Mar 2024** Budgets finalized for presentation to Annual Town Meeting

**May 2024** Town Elections

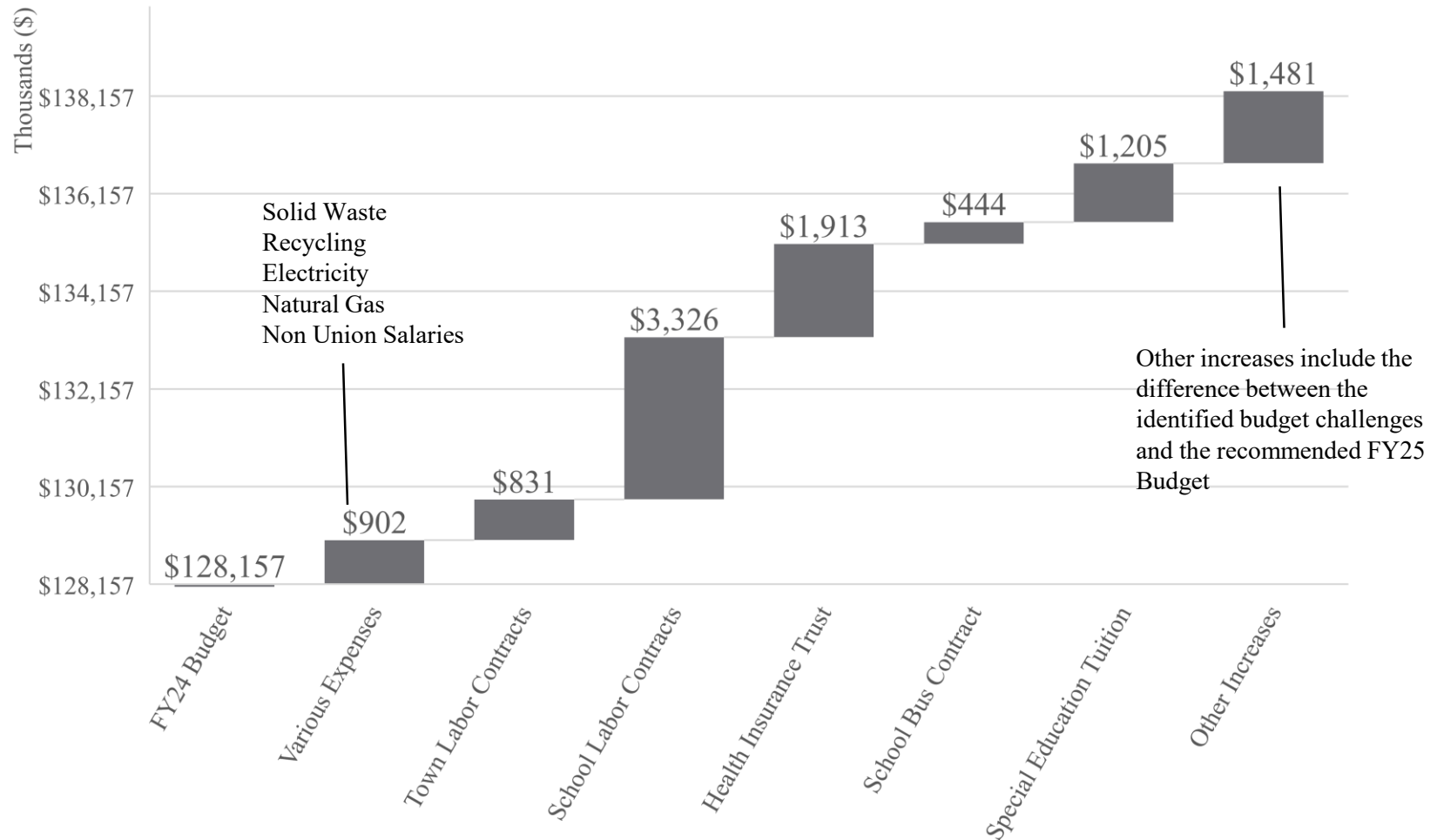
# FY25-FY27 Budget Challenges

## Issues identified by the Budget Task Force

- Inflation at a generational high following a period of low inflation
- Large energy, service and labor contracts are increasing
- Need to maintain commitment to competitive pay
  - Rigorous benchmarking of comparable communities and targeting the average level within the benchmark group
- Rapidly growing health insurance expenses
- New revenue opportunities are limited and will take some time
  - MBTA multifamily zoning has significant new growth potential
  - FY24/25 Contracting with Economic Development consultant
- Prop 2 ½ presents real constraints that will drive deep service cuts

For more information, please see the [Budget Task Force Final Report](#)

## FY25 Budget Providing Equivalent Services to FY24



With no new personnel, no new services and careful pursuit of efficiencies, our baseline budget is \$10,103,339 higher in FY25 than FY24

# FY25 Town/School Budget Efficiencies / Revenue

---

Fleet fueling at DPW Garage

Centralized fleet maintenance opportunities

Comparing fee structures to our market

- Health Department just adjusted fees
- Ambulance Enterprise raised rates to market in Oct 2023

Composting to reduce solid waste tonnage

- Residential services available December 1, 2023

MBTA Zoning/Economic Development (FY26 and beyond)

Technology integration

# FY25 School Budget Efficiencies / Revenue

---

Shared service agreements both internal and external

Continue to monitor and examine health insurance opportunities

School staffing adjustments based on enrollment

- Reduction of elem/middle teachers (6 in FY25, 6 in FY24, 4 in FY23)
- Reduction of 11 sections at WA (2.2 FTE)

Outsource in-district special education transportation for lower cost

# Budget Variables

---

- State and Federal aid
- New growth
- Solid waste and recycling
- Infrastructure/facilities
- Public Safety needs
- Energy costs – Impact from Ameresco Energy Contracts
- Clean Energy & Sustainability recommendations
- 12 North Main Street redevelopment
- Hotel/Meals excise
- Snow and ice deficit
- Fair Share Apportionment
- Override vs. Non-Override Budget

# Next Steps

## **Future Meetings**

- January 11 to February 1, 7PM – Finance Committee Budget Hearings – Town Hall and Zoom
- January 26, 12PM – Cameron Senior Center – In Person
- January 30, 7PM – WEPTO - Zoom Meeting
- February 1, 4:30PM – Friends of the Library - Zoom
- TBD – Westford SEPAC
- February 13, 7PM – Select Board sets the order of warrant articles
- February 15, 5:30PM – Westford Rotary - Location TBD
- March 4, 7PM Open Forum- Location TBD
- March 23, 9AM – Annual Town Meeting - WA
- May 7 – Annual Town Election



# How the Public Can Stay Involved

Attend the virtual Finance Committee Budget Hearings from January 11 to February 1, 2024.

- Sign up for agendas at: <https://www.westfordma.gov/list.aspx>

Monitor [www.westfordma.gov](http://www.westfordma.gov) and visit the “[Budget](#)” page for information regarding the budget process and supporting material

Email the Town Manager and/or Select Board with questions or concerns: [klas@westfordma.gov](mailto:klas@westfordma.gov)

View a variety of [educational videos](#) that discuss the budget challenges we are facing and how we are responding

Attend [Town Meeting](#) on March 23, 2024 at 9 AM at the Westford Academy Gymnasium

# Real Estate Tax Exemptions and Tax Deferral Options

Visit the [Board of Assessors Website](#) for Information on Tax Exemptions and Tax Deferrals or call 978-692-5504

Examples of Real Estate Exemptions Includes:

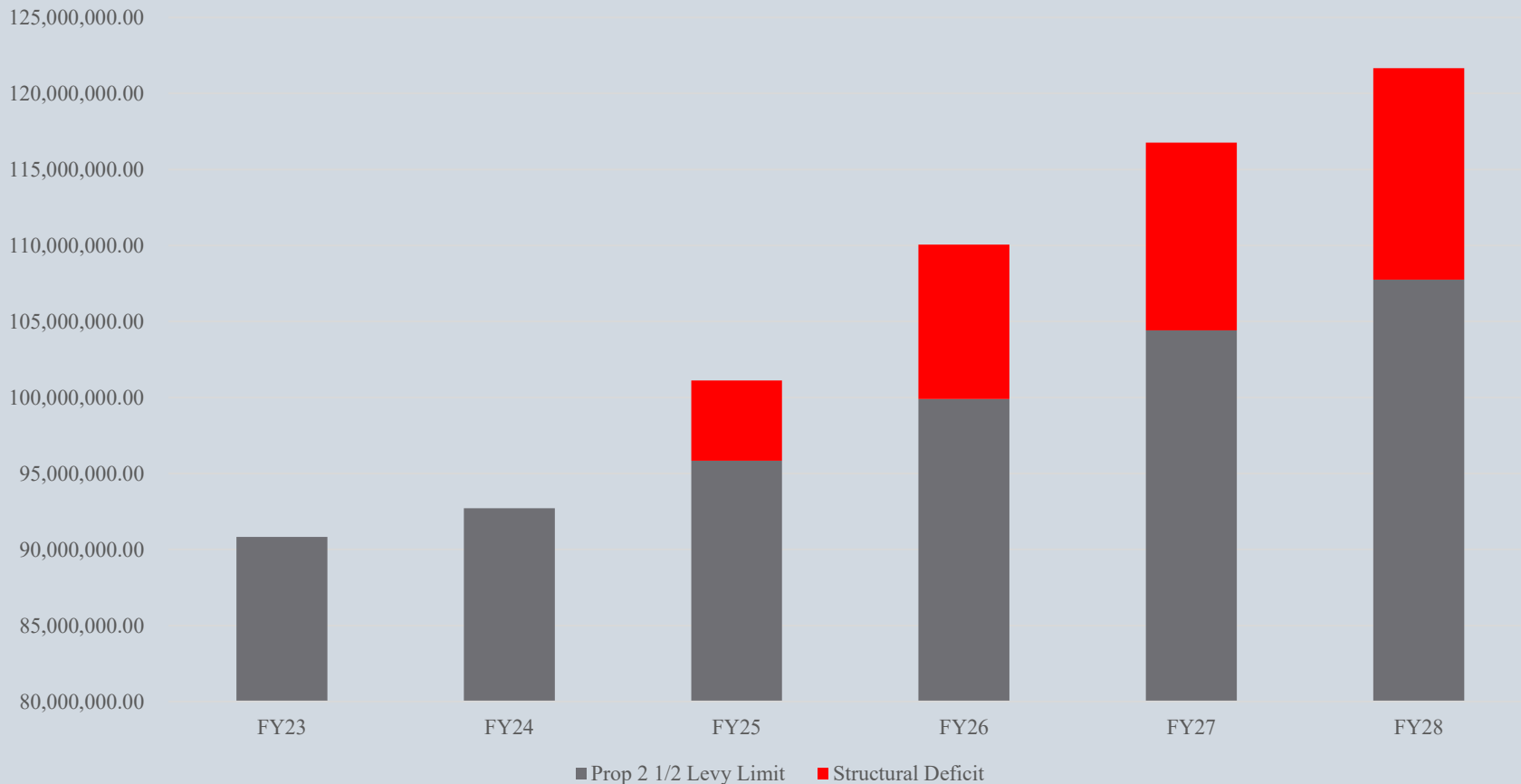
- Senior Means Tested Exemption - Goal is to have eligible seniors pay no more than 10% of their income to real estate taxes
- Community Preservation Act – Age and Income based
- There are other statutory exemptions that pertain to the following categories:
  - Veterans
  - Elderly
  - Surviving Spouse
  - Disabled

The Tax Deferral program allows qualifying seniors to defer a portion or all of their property tax until the resident no longer owns the property.

# End of Presentation – Back Up Slides to Follow

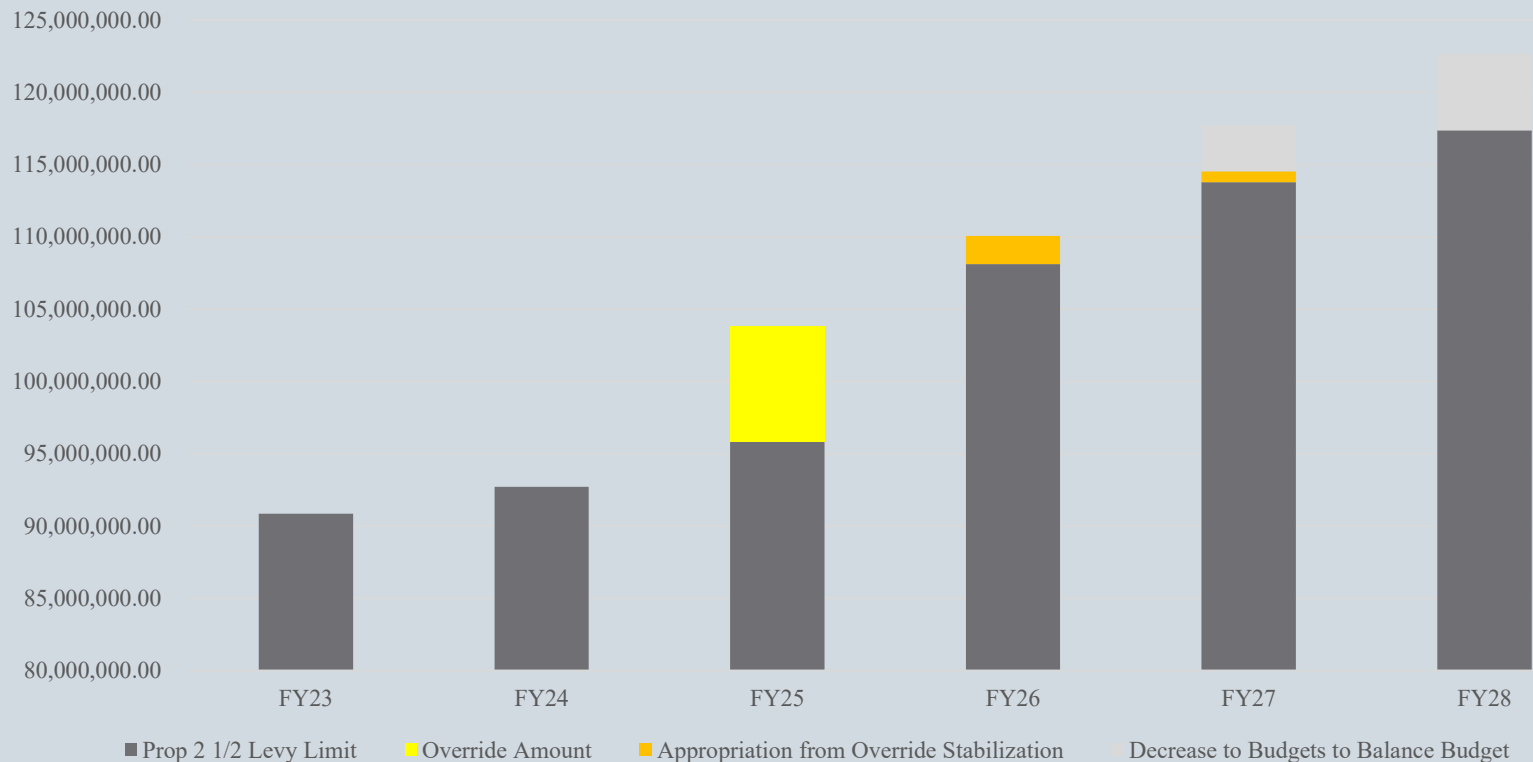
# FY25 Reduced Services Budget

**Prop 2 1/2 Revenue Forecast with Budget Task Force Cost Increases (FY23-28)**



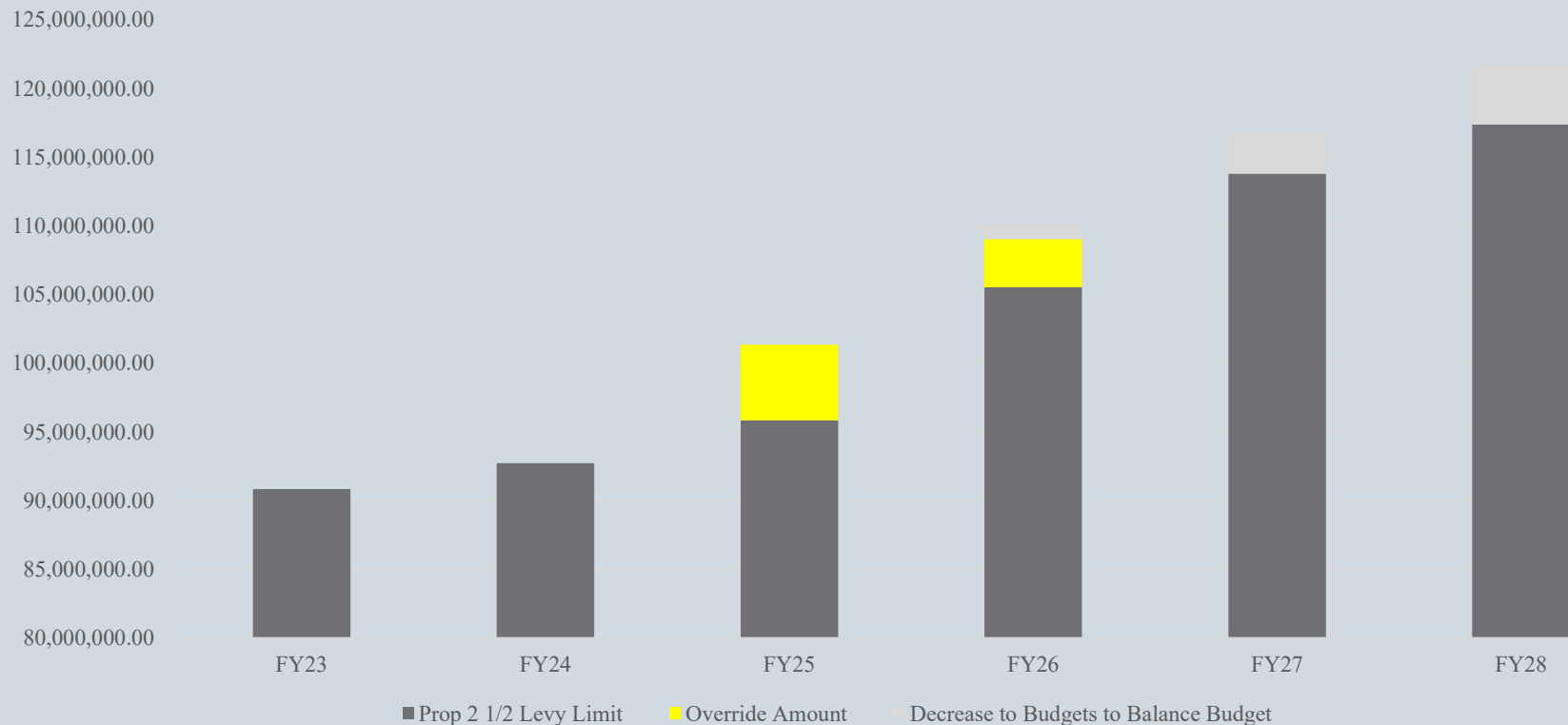
# FY 25 2 Year Override with Proposition 2 ½ Stabilization Fund

**Prop 2 1/2 Revenue Forecast with Budget Task Force Cost Increases (FY23-28) - \$8.0m Override in FY25 - \$2.7m to Override Stabilization Fund**



# FY 25 Level Services Budget with Step In Proposition 2 ½ Override

**Prop 2 1/2 Revenue Forecast with Budget Task Force Cost Increases (FY23-28) - \$5.5m  
Override in FY25 & \$3.5m in FY26**



# Total School FY25 FTE Adjustments

<b>Override</b>	<b>Reduction</b>	<b>FTE-Count</b>	<b>Addition</b>	<b>FTE-Count</b>	<b>Net b/w Reduct&amp;Add</b>
	2.0 FTE-Middle School	-2.0	Post-graduate program	3.4	
	2.2 FTE-WA	-2.2	1.0 FTE-ESL Teacher	1.0	
	4.0 FTE-Elementary	-4.0			
	1.0 FTE-Data Specialist	-1.0			
	Eliminate in-district Transportation	-18.0			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>-27.2</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>-22.8</b>
<b>No-Override</b>	<b>Reduction</b>	<b>FTE-Count</b>	<b>Addition</b>	<b>FTE-Count</b>	<b>Net b/w Reduct&amp;Add</b>
	3.0 FTE-Literacy Specialist	-3.0	Academic Coaches (Adjust Intervention Model)	6.0	
	3.0 FTE DW-Admin	-3.0			
	Adjust Intervention model	-30.0			
	2.0 FTE-Reading Teachers-MS	-2.0			
	11.4 FTE-WA Teachers	-11.4			
	4 FTE-Elementary	-4.0			
	<b>Total</b>	<b>-53.4</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>6.0</b>	<b>-47.4</b>

		<b>FTE-Count</b>
<b>Override</b>	Initial district wide FTE reductions	-27.2
	Initial FTE additions	4.4
<b>No-Override</b>	Additional FTE reductions	-53.4
	Additional FTE increase-Unit G	6.0
	Academic Coach	
	<b>Potential FY25 Net FTE Reductions</b>	<b>-70.2</b>