

FY26 Operating Override (Natick)

Ongoing Catalogue of Questions

www.natickma.gov/override

DATES: 12/20/24 - 2/15/25



This document serves as an ongoing catalogue of all submitted questions to Town & NPS staff (by the public).
Please see www.natickma.gov/override for all Town/NPS staff-provided responses.

TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER																																								
1 12/20/2024 19:50:59	Was zero-based budgeting done? If not, what is needed to do this exercise in the next few weeks?	<p>TOWN: Zero-Based Budgeting was not completed for FY25. While this is a north star for budgeting, true, zero-based budgeting (whereby every expense is reviewed from the ground up) is extremely challenging to do in a municipal setting, due, in part, to how our form of government is structured, union/employment contracts, limited resources, state laws for generating revenue (i.e. Proposition 2 1/2) and other factors. We would need significantly more resources (staff and financial) in order to complete a true Zero-Based budgeting process in the coming weeks.</p> <p>NPS: The FY26 budget is due on February 1, 2025. A portion of the budget will be developed using a zero-based budgeting approach, with the following categories built from the ground up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation (80 % of total expenses) • Transportation (5% of total expenses) • Tuitions (5% of total expenses) • Instructional Service & Materials(2.5% of total expenses) • Facilities and Utilities (3% of total exp) • Technology Services & Materials (1%) • Admin Services & Materials (1%) • Athletics & Health Service (1%) <p>Additional expenses categorized under Instructional Services and Materials (1.5% of total expenses) will not follow a zero-based budgeting approach and will instead be carried forward with a 10% reduction from the FY25 appropriation.</p> <p>In 2023, Natick Public Schools earned the prestigious Meritorious Budget Award (MBA) from the Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO), recognizing the district's strengths in financial budgeting and excellence in budget presentation. NPS remain committed to building on these strengths, continuously striving to enhance our financial practices and maintain the highest standards of transparency and accountability.</p>																																								
2 12/20/2024 19:53:06	How do we ensure we will NOT need another override in 2027-30?	Town & NPS Administration are committed to conservative budgeting processes, keeping to the expected revenues generated and assumptions outlined in our modeling in order to ensure the services expected by the community are provided.																																								
3 12/20/2024 19:54:42	What is the YOY breakdown of School non-teaching versus teaching positions from 2019 - 2024?	<p>Please see the below chart (use link for better readability):</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #0056b3; color: white;"> <th>DESE Staff Report</th> <th>FY19</th> <th>FY20</th> <th>FY21</th> <th>FY22</th> <th>FY23</th> <th>FY24</th> <th>FY25</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Teaching</td> <td>477.6</td> <td>483.4</td> <td>478.7</td> <td>484.9</td> <td>493.2</td> <td>508.5</td> <td>494.5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Nurses</td> <td>13.9</td> <td>14.9</td> <td>15.4</td> <td>12.3</td> <td>13.1</td> <td>12.7</td> <td>13.7</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non Teaching</td> <td>269.9</td> <td>287.4</td> <td>285.4</td> <td>314.7</td> <td>334.3</td> <td>362.6</td> <td>349.5</td> </tr> <tr style="font-weight: bold;"> <td>Grand Total</td> <td>761.4</td> <td>785.7</td> <td>779.4</td> <td>811.8</td> <td>840.6</td> <td>883.8</td> <td>857.7</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Chart of teaching v. non-teaching positions ('19 - '25)</p>	DESE Staff Report	FY19	FY20	FY21	FY22	FY23	FY24	FY25	Teaching	477.6	483.4	478.7	484.9	493.2	508.5	494.5	Nurses	13.9	14.9	15.4	12.3	13.1	12.7	13.7	Non Teaching	269.9	287.4	285.4	314.7	334.3	362.6	349.5	Grand Total	761.4	785.7	779.4	811.8	840.6	883.8	857.7
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4 12/20/2024 19:57:47	What specific 'digital resources' and 'decreased tech support' would be cut if no override?	<p>NPS: Reductions related to digital resources will be made regardless of an override and are included as part of the \$1MM in planned reductions for FY26.</p> <p>Cuts will include a subscription to Paper Tutoring (\$130K) which was a response to the pandemic that is no longer the best way to service our needs.</p> <p>Reductions in this area may or may not involve changes to staffing levels. In order to minimize disruption for students and staff, the Superintendent will make precise determinations in the Spring related to reductions in headcount.</p>																																								
5 12/20/2024 20:06:17	Can School reduce student impact with MORE tech? Eg, can more tech help manage a larger class size?	<p>NPS: Technology can support larger classes by providing tools for personalized learning, immediate feedback, and additional practice tailored to student needs. However, technology is not a substitute for teachers. Its purpose is to enhance the classroom experience, allowing teachers to better focus on individual and small-group instruction, even in larger settings. Teachers remain the most critical factor in student success.</p>																																								
6 12/20/2024 20:09:59	How can the School adopt models that leverage platforms like KhanAcademy to support large class size	<p>NPS: Platforms like Khan Academy are used to supplement teaching, not replace it. They provide personalized practice and resources, allowing teachers to focus on direct instruction and small-group work. Teachers remain at the heart of our classrooms, with technology serving as a tool to enhance learning and address diverse student needs.</p>																																								
7 12/21/2024 7:37:33	What is needed to run the schools meeting DESE NSS requirements? What is NPS providing beyond that?	<p>NPS: The DESE spending requirements are designed to be a minimum level of spending by the town and state. In FY24, the minimum NSS requirement was \$65.23 Million; Natick's total spending was \$100.82 Million, \$35.59 above the minimum NSS requirement. If we theoretically cut the spending and services by \$35 Million, class size would probably be about 30 students instead of approximately 20 students.</p>																																								

8	12/24/2024 13:11:55	Provide annual lawsuit-related expenses, last 10yrs, by category. eg. misconduct, pers. injury, etc	<p>Town: Below is the 10-year spending on legal services for Town-specific items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY25 Budget - \$675,000 • FY24 Actual - \$631,780 • FY23 Actual - \$474,663 • FY22 Actual - \$351,099 • FY21 Actual - \$647,197 • FY20 Actual - \$317,287 • FY19 Actual - \$335,648 • FY18 Actual - \$312,921 • FY17 Actual - \$302,985 • FY16 Actual - \$223,063 • FY15 Actual - \$281,190 <p>NPS: Below is the 10-year spending on NPS legal services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FY25 Budget - \$142,000 (labor contracts negotiation yr) • FY24 Actual - \$105,730 • FY23 Actual - \$61,683 • FY22 Actual - \$99,032 • FY21 Actual - \$51,749 (partial return from COVID) • FY20 Actual - \$57,956 • FY19 Actual - \$191,508 • FY18 Actual - \$287,497 • FY17 Actual - \$161,433 • FY16 Actual - \$94,266 • FY15 Actual - \$123,954 <p>** Providing detailed lawsuit-related expenses by category over the past decade is not possible as this information is not available in this manner. **</p>
9	12/24/2024 13:15:12	Tied to lawsuits, detail related staff trainings in the past 10 yrs (town and schools). eg. NPD sexual misconduct training post Quilty lawsuit	<p>Town: Town staff complete regular trainings to ensure high quality services to the Natick community. In addition to all new hires being provided/trained on HR policies and procedures, there are many trainings that are department/job specific that happen throughout the organization on a regular basis. A few examples include Laborers in the DPW department completing Commercial Drivers License (CDL) or other heavy equipment trainings, Custodians completing trainings on how to safely use building maintenance equipment and materials, Health/Building Inspectors being trained on the latest building and health code regulations, and public safety officials completing regular training for their specific services to the community. Many positions require trainings in order to complete and/or keep certifications, and many of our talented staff seek additional trainings to be leaders in their field. In short, throughout the organization, there are all types of trainings - some job/department specific, some across all staff, but all intended for the benefit of the community.</p> <p>NPS: All employees of Natick Public Schools are required to complete annual mandatory training to ensure compliance with state and federal regulations, as well as district policies. This training covers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title IX: Sex-based Harassment • Bullying Prevention and Intervention • Section 504 & IDEA: Special Education laws • Restraint Training • Mandated Reporter: Reporting suspected child abuse/neglect • McKinney-Vento/Homeless Assistance • Anti-Discrimination Training • Anaphylaxis and Food Allergies Awareness • Universal Precautions/Bloodborne Pathogens • Student Records (FERPA): Confidentiality and access • Suicide Awareness • School District Content and Policies: • NPS Handbook • Safety Initiatives and Procedures • Building Intervention and Prevention Policies • Responsible Use Policy • Social Media Training • Student Data Privacy and Confidentiality Agreements • Crisis Prevention and Intervention Procedures • Conflict of Interest (Massachusetts) <p>Additionally, onboarding requirements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CORI Check: Every 3 years • Fingerprinting: Valid within the last 7 years • I-9 Documentation • Completion of all mandatory training modules <p>These trainings and checks are critical for maintaining a safe, compliant, and inclusive environment for students and staff.</p>
10	12/26/2024 9:07:18	What about reduction in spending and looking for waste instead of raising taxes? (letting the lawns grow a bit & letting wildflowers seed).	<p>Town: For the past several years, Town staff have been asked to provide more services with fewer resources to the Natick community. To accommodate these requests, staff have implemented numerous revenue generating and/or cost saving measures to make government operate more efficiently for the Natick community. Some of these are highlighted in the Override Presentation from December 16 - See slide #13.</p> <p>NPS: The school reduced \$1,050,000 in FY25 and plans to reduce an additional \$1,000,000 in FY26. See details on slides 3 and 8 from a presentation to the School Committee on 12.2.24.</p>
11	1/1/2025 10:34:28	Why are we in need of an override if our Dept. heads aren't held to be accountable ?	<p>An override is necessary when expenses exceed revenues. Our department heads do an excellent job at ensuring the Natick community is provided with high quality high value services, and are expected to ensure services are provided efficiently and effectively to the Natick community.</p>

12	1/3/2025 8:49:27	When residents are struggling to make ends meet officials at the town of Natick fail to sharpen their pencils...	Thank you for this feedback - we appreciate and do not take lightly the concern raised about how this will impact Natick residents. Asking for additional funding is no simple request - and one that is only being done out of need.
13	1/3/2025 8:57:21	Please provide Town/NPS COLA increase for the past ~5 years. across: non-union and handful of larger unions (3-4). Increasing \$\$ too much or little	<p>Town: COLA is a term often used in Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs) for annual salary adjustments that apply to all members of the union regardless of job title, performance, experience, etc. In the past 5 years, these have ranged from 1% to 2.5% for non-school CBAs (Library, Police, Fire, DPW, Custodian). For non-union personnel, there is no COLA. There is an Annual Compensation Adjustment (ACA) which is similar and has averaged 2% annually for the past 5 years.</p> <p>NPS: In the past 5 years, all COLA increase across all NPS staff agreements have ranged between 0-3% range.</p> <p>Links to current Union Agreements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town • NPS
14	1/3/2025 14:06:03		[blank submission]
15	1/4/2025 16:14:26	How much budget do we spend on aides for ESL students?	[NPS staff is working to deliver this response as part of Batch #2]
16	1/4/2025 17:34:33	Yffce	[appears to be an error in submission]
17	1/4/2025 16:14:26 (carryover from batch #1)	How much budget do we spend on aides for ESL students?	<p>In Natick, licensed ESL teachers provide direct services to English Language Learners (ELLs), with additional support from two ESL paraprofessionals who work collaboratively with the teachers. A detailed staffing breakdown by building is available on slide 16 of the January 6, 2025, presentation to the School Committee.</p> <p>FY25 ESL Staffing and Expenditures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 16.5 licensed ESL teachers • 2 ESL paraprofessionals • Total Est. Expenditure: \$1,540,926 • As of November 11, 2024, Natick serves 265 ELLs.
18	1/6/2025 7:08:53	Does the town have a plan to assist low income home owners who are not elderly/disabled/veteran and unable to afford this additional tax increase?	<p>Town/NPS staff is unaware of any city/town that could provide such programs without violating state laws (privacy, etc). In Massachusetts, there are income, sales, and real estate taxes. Local governments are primarily reliant on real estate taxes. By definition, real estate taxes are an "ad valorem" tax or "of value." The tax must be based on the value of the property and issues like an owner's individual financial situation are legally not allowed to be taken into account. So, all property owners are taxed equally based on property value unless they qualify for one of the available exemptions (low income/asset senior, blind, disabled veteran, surviving spouse, minor child, elderly/disabled-donation fund).</p> <p>Note: properties that are deed restricted as low or moderate income are valued and thus taxed on their restricted value- not full market value.</p>
19	1/6/2025 7:10:55	Does the town have data to determine the % of low income home owners will be affected by this tax increase?	The Town does not have it's own data source for this statistic - we do not have access to individual tax returns, other than those provided by the individual for income/asset based exemptions. Such data may be available through US Census figures .
20	1/6/2025 7:48:10	Please indicate which permanent positions have been funded with one-time money, and the plan for continuing to fund these jobs. Thanks!	<p>TOWN Currently, there is one position being funded with ARPA funding - the Director of Equity Inclusion and Outreach. Future funding for this position is to be determined beyond the use of ARPA funding.</p> <p>NPS Refer to slides 3 and 5 of the December 2, 2024, presentation to the School Committee for details on the positions added using ESSER funds (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief) and their impact on the ongoing budget .</p> <p>ESSER-Funded staffing supported 23.1 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, which were integrated into the school operating budget to address ongoing student needs. Cost reductions in other areas (\$1,050,000 in FY25 and \$1,000,000 in FY26) have not only offset the ongoing expenses from these positions but have surpassed the amount of retained ESSER funding.</p>
21	1/6/2025 12:00:05	Do other towns and municipalities split budgets into 3 categories, Schools, Town and Shared Services, or is this just the way that Natick does it?	Every town does budgeting slightly differently - some towns use a similar approach to Natick, some do not. Nearly all Town's separate out school expenses from all other expenses due, in part, to state law which obligates all school spending to be a bottom line (single number) budget under the oversight and responsibility of the School Committee/School Department (rather than the Select Board/Town Administration or other entity).
22	1/6/2025 12:03:53	Under Shared Services is it possible to assign health insurance and OPEB to the employees based on where they work or (for OPEB) where they worked?	This is possible, but given resources, is not a request that can be accommodated at this time. In general, Health Insurance is approximately 70% for School staff and 30% for Town staff. OPEB is similar.
23	1/6/2025 12:05:08	If any debt service is entirely related to the Natick Public School buildings, is it included in Shared Services or NPS budget?	All Debt Service, including those related to School Building projects, is included in the Shared Services budget. The NPS Budget includes no funding for Debt Service nor large scale capital projects on school buildings/property.

24	1/6/2025 12:06:41	When Natick measures its costs per student, does it include those costs from the Shared Services category which are associated with the NPS system?	Yes, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education per-pupil cost calculation includes the shared service expenses provided by the town to the School Department, as reported in the annual End-of-Year Report (EOYR) .																								
25	1/6/2025 12:08:20	With a Shared Services expenditure category, are the Natick costs per student when compared to other towns an apples-to-apples comparison?	"Yes" - this is an apples-to-apples comparison. Both DESE and school districts statewide use the per-pupil expenditure as a standard metric for comparison. All school districts are required to report expenditures, including town-funded expenses for schools outside of the school's appropriation, using the categories prescribed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) in the End-of-Year Report (EOYR). The state department requires this report and it is submitted to them by every school district on a yearly basis.																								
26	1/7/2025 9:09:57	What percentage increase to the FY'26 budget would \$8M be? Approximately.	An \$8 Million Override represents approximately 4% of an anticipated \$200 Million FY26 operating budget. See slide #30 , Select Board/School Committee joint meeting December 16, 2024. As noted in the presentation, this represents an approximate 5.35% tax increase for the typical residential property.																								
27	1/9/2025 14:38:13	Can you expand the number of characters for the questions, I cannot get enough detail in my question to get a good answer?	Town/NPS staff is of the opinion that this 150-character limit strikes a balance that ensures joint responsibility of carefully crafted questions (residents) and complete answers (staff). The goal of this tool is radical transparency and 100% availability to all questions (from all residents), with the reality of finite Town/NPS staff resources during a fast-paced ~4-month window of time (+ concerns that longer questions can often "creep" towards multiple/multi-layered questions within a single question). Town/NPS staff sees this Q&A Tool as a high-value, equitable process that aims at transparency to residents + accountability from staff. It's believed that the approach (24/7 availability & ~1-2-week response time) makes Natick one of the few, if not the sole, municipality utilizing this sort of public engagement tool during a potential override. Town/NPS staff does "not" plan to increase the character limit during this process. For any nuanced, long-form questions, Town/NPS staff encourages residents to attend one of the 3x upcoming public forums (see www.natickma.gov/override for dates & meeting details).																								
28	1/9/2025 14:56:38	Please list all positions and depts created by one time Covid funding. Are we going through these and potentially cutting any of them?	See item #20 (running total)																								
29	1/9/2025 14:58:04	In the last 5 years, how many School Administration positions have been added or removed? What is the student population growth in the last 5 years?	<p><u>Student enrollment:</u></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Oct 1 Yr</th> <th>FY</th> <th>Total Enrollment</th> <th>Year-over-year change (YOY)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2020</td> <td>2021</td> <td>5,251</td> <td>--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021</td> <td>2022</td> <td>5,308</td> <td>1.1%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022</td> <td>2023</td> <td>5,346</td> <td>0.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023</td> <td>FY24</td> <td>5,311</td> <td>-0.7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2024</td> <td>FY25</td> <td>5,303</td> <td>-0.2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Increased enrollment in subgroups: * The Special Education population grew by 130 students from FY20 to FY24 * The Natick ELL population has grown by about 87 students over the last 5 years. * Please see slide 22 of the Override Budget Presentation from December 16, 2024.</p> <p>In FY21 there were 49.8 Administrator positions at NPS. In FY25, there are 55.7 Administrator positions.</p> <p>Reasons for 5.9 Increased Admin FTE: * Net added 2.6 FTE for Elementary School Assistant Principals * Net added 1.2 FTE to cover Special Education population growth. * We added 1.0 FTE to cover ELL population growth * Added 1.0 FTE for Asst Director of Technology Position as more learning, texts, tests and services shifted to online. * Added 0.1 FTE to Nurse leader for more medically challenged student population growth</p>	Oct 1 Yr	FY	Total Enrollment	Year-over-year change (YOY)	2020	2021	5,251	--	2021	2022	5,308	1.1%	2022	2023	5,346	0.7%	2023	FY24	5,311	-0.7%	2024	FY25	5,303	-0.2%
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30	1/9/2025 15:01:05	Why do we spend money on things like Air Conditioning in elementary schools in New England? In the last 10 years, how many heat related health issues?	Air conditioning creates an environment conducive to learning as rising spring temperatures increasingly impact New England. Extreme heat affects student focus, health, and school operations. Note: the most recent investment in a school building that includes a cooling component is for the BenHem Elementary School, largely paid for by non-town funding. In 2024, the Town's Sustainability Director applied for and the Town was awarded a federal grant from the Department of Energy for \$2M (leveraging \$600k+ local funding and in-kind support) to cover a comprehensive upgrade to the School's heating and cooling systems. Town Administration seeks any and all grant funding to support our infrastructure needs - helping to offset these needed capital investments with non-Town funding.																								
31	1/9/2025 16:37:07	How can teachers be empowered with platforms like KhanAcademy to handle larger class size? Good teachers would want to leverage tech to expand reach?	Platforms like Khan Academy are used to supplement teaching, not replace it. They provide personalized practice and resources, allowing teachers to focus on direct instruction and small-group work. Teachers remain at the heart of our classrooms, with technology serving as a tool to enhance learning and address diverse student needs.																								
32	1/9/2025 16:40:18	Assuming no override, what specific services will the Town and NPS recommend be reduced? Can a plan with specifics be made to help understand impact?	Please see slides 15 - 25 of the Override Budget Presentation from December 16, 2024. A comprehensive narrative and detailed plan highlighting reductions and their impact will be included in the FY26 budget book, scheduled for release on February 1, 2025.																								
33	1/9/2025 17:04:04	Based on response to Q3 (12/20/2024 19:54:42) in Batch 1, why did the non-teaching staff increase by 10%, 6%, 8% YoY in FY 22,23,24?	From FY22 to FY24, non-teaching positions as categorized in a report submitted to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) increased by 34.8 FTEs from 314.7 to 349.5 (11%). The non-teaching category on this report includes many student-facing positions. The drivers of the increase are as follows:																								

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34	1/9/2025 17:06:46	Based on response to Q3 (12/20/2024 19:54:42) Batch 1, why did the teaching staff increase by 1.3%, 1.7%, 3.1% YoY in FY 22,23,24? Pls give specifics.	<p>Teaching staff increased by 9.6 FTE from 485.0 to 494.5 (2%). The drivers of this increase are as follows:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Teaching Positions</th> <th>FTEs</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Instructional Coaches</td> <td>6.0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Occupational, Physical, Speech Therapists</td> <td>3.8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Classroom Teachers</td> <td>-0.2</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>9.6</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Teaching Positions	FTEs	Instructional Coaches	6.0	Occupational, Physical, Speech Therapists	3.8	Classroom Teachers	-0.2		9.6										
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35	1/9/2025 17:29:09	As a permanent override, our rates will be higher forever more. Why is it being called a 7 - 8 mil\$ override? Won't it be more over its lifetime?	As of the 12/16/24 presentation , the suggested override figure is \$8m. The \$7-8m number was noted in November when Town/School Administration was working through the details of the need for an override. Those needs have been identified in more detail and are outlined in the 12/16/25 presentation. Any Operational Override does increase the base tax.																				
36	1/9/2025 18:07:06	When the circuit breaker funds (\$2million) were spent on '25 school budget (slide17) the school should have made cuts then. TM didn't authorize it.	<p>This was openly and publicly discussed during School Committee meetings and with town officials. See Town of Natick Spring Annual Town Meeting 2024 and Special Town Meeting #1 Finance Committee Recommendation Book April 23, 2024 pg 26.</p> <p>The FY25 school budget, totaling \$86,795,299, was approved by the School Committee and Annual Town Meeting. This budget transparently allocated more expenses to the Circuit Breaker fund and reduced the reliance on the General Fund for tuition costs for SY25. The School Administration chose not to recommend \$2 million in service cuts, opting instead to use available cash reserves to carry over funding for an additional year.</p>																				
37	1/9/2025 20:28:18	DEI is proving to be a fad and many companies are abandoning or cutting back their efforts. Will Natick save \$ by doing so too?	Natick prides itself at ensuring we provide a work environment that hires, trains and retains talent of diverse backgrounds, experiences, opinions, cultures, etc. This work of establishing a welcoming work culture is critical to the success of any organization, and has been ongoing for many years in Natick. Regardless of the override, this work will continue well into the future to ensure we have the most qualified individuals serving the diverse Natick community.																				
38	1/9/2025 20:30:36	Why do we need an asst fire chief to manage overtime? To even admit that sounds embarrassing.	An assistant fire chief will do much more than simply "manage overtime" - the position will ensure this critical department to the Town's public safety and health is efficiently and effectively managed. We are currently working through a state process to ensure this position is non-civil service (requires state legislative action), after which a full job description will be reviewed by the Personnel Board and provided for public information.																				
39	1/10/2025 8:54:55	Before voting on the override, will Natick submit a new budget that includes cuts?	The FY26 Budget will be released in early February and will include a clear outline of the budget, inclusive of both override and no override details. This will provide full transparency to the public with regards to the impact of an override on FY 2026.																				
40	1/10/2025 8:57:02	Our free cash was verified at \$7.8 million. That's "our" money, yes? Can't that fill our budget gap without an override?	Unfortunately, our anticipated expenditures for FY26 exceed the certified free cash of \$7.8M by several million dollars. Further, free cash is considered a one-time funding source - meaning it is not guaranteed at any specific level year of year and the State (Department of Revenue) does not recommend use of Free Cash to cover operational expenses. For these reasons - and more - an override is necessary in order to limit impact on Natick's services - including schools, public safety and public works.																				
41	1/10/2025 10:20:50	If the student population is flat to down from 2018 till now, why has the compensation line for Admin, Principals & Unit "B" gone up ~42% since 2019?	<p>Overall Enrollment from 2020-2021 (omitting covid) is flat with an increase of 46 students (0.9%).</p> <p>Actual Admin, Principal and Unit B compensation is recorded in MUNIS and may be different from budgeted salaries in budget books. MUNIS data is only available going back to 2022. Prior years are archived and NPS does not have access to the archives.</p> <p>From 2022 to 2024 Admin, Principal and Unit B compensation has increased from \$3,618,437 to \$4,216,407, essentially \$598K or 17%. There are several drivers of this increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + 4.3 FTEs • COLAs (see question from batch #1 where COLAs are outlined) • Staff turnover • Lane changes 																				
42	1/11/2025 8:40:19	Given the answer to Q#1(12/20/2024 19:50:59), Batch#1, until the Town provides a zero-based budget, can the override have an end date of one year?	Town and School Administration does not recommend an "end date" to an override. The needed additional revenues are ongoing, so an end date would essentially mean the budget shortfall be shifted to a future year.																				
43	1/11/2025 8:45:00	Why is the override not with an automatic end date on it (say 2 years)? The Select Board should keep Town and NPS accountable to manage within means.	Per state law, operational overrides do not have "end dates". The Town would need to vote an "override" to adjust the tax levy capacity downward.																				

44	1/11/2025 9:16:04	It's claimed that Natick could save \$ if dam removal was stopped and they just fix it comply with dam safety. What are projected expenses & grants?	The Town of Natick would actually save money and liability by removing the Dam, both in capital and ongoing maintenance costs. The costs to remove the Dam are actually less than the cost to repair, and by removing the Dam there are no longer the required annual reporting, maintenance, and liability costs. For more information, please visit the Town's website regarding this project .
45	1/11/2025 9:17:53	Why is the St. Pat's project assessed at \$750K? What will it's projected assessed value be when the project is completed?	The project is currently under construction, so the current assessed values is not reflective of an assessed value once a project is complete. It is extremely challenging to speculate on what a project will be assessed at once completed, especially for a project as complex as the St Pats site, which includes for sale residential units, rental residential units, and commercial space.
46	1/11/2025 14:15:56	When the school system accepts a grant, how can that money be used WITHOUT an expectation that the town will supply that amount going forward?	Most grants are awarded on an annual basis, and most grants have a 1 year period, or two year period to expend the grant award. Past history and grant type (Federal Entitlement, METCO, Circuit Breaker) have historically been funded at relatively reliable revenues for the better part of the last 10+ years. NPS typically does not plan to receive competitive grant awards on a consistent enough basis to grow staff.
47	1/11/2025 14:17:02	Explain more about the Circuit Breaker funds. Are they ever to be used? How so? How much is reserved or is it all "reserve."	Please see this comprehensive memo on Circuit Breaker which was written on 12.18.24 and which is posted on the NPS website.
48	1/11/2025 14:20:54	We have been adding spending and "building capacity" which seems to mean, growing the budget by accepting and spending funds from outside.	Thank you for your comment.
49	1/11/2025 14:22:52	Supt. Wong said 11/23 that the MTSS tier structure requires the most staff and is the most expensive style of school structure, can we cut back?	The current NPS Administration does not evaluate our planned approaches to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) with a lens toward the amount of staff required to deliver MTSS. MTSS is recommended by the Massachusetts Department of Education's to ensure that every student receives a high-quality educational experience. We don't possess a document that specifically references NPS staffing required for MTSS implementation. MTSS is an organizing framework school districts can use in building a system of supports/practices for students. Sometimes, this can be resource-intensive, especially when more intensive interventions are required. However, NPS is really at the very early stages of adopting an MTSS framework which at this point is primarily offering PDs and mapping our current resources. At this time, there has been no additions in cost or staffing to support this process. In many instances, an MTSS approach includes creatively and flexibly restructuring our current resources to meet the needs of students rather than adding new ones.
50	1/11/2025 14:24:25	Can the school move expenses for medical, mental health, and psych services out of the school department and to parents private/Masshealth insurance?	"No" - many of these services are needed during the school day as required by an Individual Education Plan or student circumstance. Nearly all of these services are educationally related. Keeping students in school for services helps reduce lost time on learning by traveling to appointments outside of NPS. Schools have a legal obligations to provide certain medical and mental health services under federal and state law, particularly for students with disabilities under IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. These laws require schools to provide necessary services at no cost to the parents. Not offering these services will be in violation of legal obligations and leaves us out of compliance with the law. In addition, not all families have private insurance and some may have inadequate coverage for specific services. Shifting costs to parents will also inadvertently create disparities, where lower-income families or families without sufficient insurance would not have access to the services their children need.
51	1/11/2025 14:25:31	It looks like 80 non teaching positions have been added above. Can some of this be outsourced to remove Shared benefits expenses?	See an analysis of increase in non-teaching positions above (item #33). Many of these positions are hourly wage earners and some are part-time positions. IF NPS outsourced these positions, we would likely still have to pay the overhead and benefits from staffing companies at a higher price than what hits the school's budget and town's shared expenses. Note: there are not many companies specializing in school classroom support services, most public and private school systems hire their own staff.
52	1/11/2025 15:41:47	We received \$10 million in ARPA \$. What was it spent on? How many FTEs were hired using those funds only. What funding will replace ARPA for these?	The town needs an override, in part, to replace the one-time use of the ARPA funds over the past several years. Much of the ARPA funding when towards revenue replacement - the Town lost significant revenue in the form of local option taxes due to the pandemic. A budget gap that was plugged with ARPA funding. One FTE is currently funded with ARPA funding - the Director of Equity Inclusion and Outreach - a position that is designed, in part, to engage with and support populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - both internal to the organization and within the Natick community.
53	1/11/2025 15:45:00	Stonegate's project at St. Pats site is assessed at \$750K. When completed, what will its assessed value likely be?	See item #45 (running total)
54	1/11/2025 15:51:31	A resident said the town should repair, not remove the S Natick Dam to save \$. What's been spent so far and what's the future funding look like?	See item #44 (running total)
55	1/11/2025 17:01:23	Numerous times, since 2019 the town/schools have added employees without calculating the future increase in Shared \$. We should see this cost.	Thank you for your feedback. The costs of any position added is located within the budget books provided to Town Meeting by Town and School Administrations. All such positions are voted on by Town Meeting. Find the Town Administrator's budget books dating back to 2011.
56	1/11/2025 17:37:10	I watched the 12.16 meeting on Pegasus. Why levy taxes and then say it cannot be used to run our town? Its a lot of money/cash that "can't" be used.	Thank you for the question. The proposed override funding will be used to support town services. Without an override, town services will need to be cut significantly.
57	1/12/2025 10:05:05	What are other possible large capital expenses that may increase our taxes in the next 5 to 7 years such as the Memorial School project - Tax impact?	In addition to the Memorial School, which is very early in it's planning phase, the Town will need to address the continued deterioration of the Cole Center in the coming years. Please also refer to the Town's 5 Year CIP for more information on other ongoing capital needs/costs.

58	1/12/2025 10:12:53	Does the town and NPS conduct routine audits? If yes, can you provide the summary of the findings of these audits?	Please see the documents available on the Financial Statements & Audit Related Documents webpage. Each audit has a summary within the report.
59	1/12/2025 10:33:57	The town is always talking about its AAA bond rating from two rating services. Can you provide a link to their reports on the town's finances?	Financial Statements are available here Credit Rating reports are available here Additional Finance Department information is available here
60	1/12/2025 15:28:23	I would like to see an increase in funding for the Public Health Dept.	Thank you for the comment.
61	1/12/2025 15:29:04	I think 8% is too high in this economy for elderly and large families. 4%-6% I could vote for.	This override represents just 4% of the Town's operating expenses, and a tax amount increase of approximately 5.35% for the average tax payer - see slide 29 of the Budget Override Presentation for more information.
62	1/13/2025 8:52:04	What does the Dir. of Equity/Inclusion/Outreach do & why can't that position be combined with the Dir. of Clinical Services/Counseling/SEL/Equity?	The Director of Equity Inclusion and Outreach is a position that is designed, in part, to engage with and support populations disproportionately impacted by the pandemic - both internal to the organization and within the Natick community. This is distinct and separate from the demands and needs of the school-aged population. For Natick Public Schools, responsibility for equity is within the Superintendent's role and is encompassed within the roles of several other members of the NPS Cabinet. NPS does not have a position that is exclusively dedicated to equity within our schools.
63	1/13/2025 8:52:06	Please provide a recent pay plan report of Natick top positions (grades 3-6), v. comparable communities (town + NPS)	TOWN Please review the personnel pay plan to understand salaries across all non-union pa grades. For union positions & available compensation figures, please review the details in respective collective bargaining agreements (CBA) . While Town Administration consistently reviews compensation levels to ensure we are competitive in the marketplace, we do not have a single document that provides a comparison across comparable communities. NPS Please reference the school district's collective bargaining and non-representative (exempt) pay schedules via NPS's Transparency Center . The schools conduct a comprehensive review of comparable salaries as part of union contract negotiations.
64	1/13/2025 18:12:36		Blank submission.
65	1/13/2025 18:14:09	Why would the town sell Elliot School for \$100? The property taxes on 10 million+ dollar homes would have been much more than low-income apartments.	The Elliot School decision by the Select Board supports the creation of much needed affordable housing. Because of the financing approach needed to construct affordable housing, the project will be assessed and taxed adding to the overall revenue for the Town. As the project is still under permit review and not constructed at this time, it is challenging to accurately estimate potential tax benefits from the project.
66	1/14/2025 21:08:52	How much property tax was collected by town of Natick from the mall in the last 2 fiscal years? And how much is expected to be collected going forward	Please see FY25 Tax Classification Hearing Presentation (slide 16) and the 2024 Tax Classification Hearing Presentation (slide 21).
67	1/14/2025 21:10:06	Similar to Natick Mall, what other large business establishment property taxes are being raised and by how much?	Please see item #66 (running total)
68	1/14/2025 23:18:51	We can't the 7.8 million in free cash be used to avoid an override in March 2025 if we only need an 8 million dollar OR now?	Using free cash - a one time funding source - to support operations is not a sustainable nor recommended practice by the Department of Revenue (state). For FY26, should the entire amount of free cash be used to support operations, significant cuts would still be needed in order to support existing services (including schools), and the entire capital program (which supports the maintenance of existing facilities and vehicles) would be unfunded, leading to more significant cost increases in future years.
69	1/15/2025 7:08:56	Please explain the consensus thinking from SB members voting "yes" to MW Collab 5 Aub. sale. Addressing \$100 v. \$2M bid. \$100 v. \$4M+ assessed value.	The consensus thinking of the SB is to support the construction of much needed affordable housing - housing that will be available to individuals and families working on our schools, public works, public safety, and many other other departments and industries in Natick, supporting economic development and the vitality of the community.
70	1/15/2025 11:37:35		Blank submission.
71	1/15/2025 12:39:08	Will anything about this budget impact decision making around the Johnson School building and property?	No.
72	1/15/2025 13:01:36	What change in costs are driving the NPS budget (~6.3% increase w/o override and ~9.5% w/ override over FY25)?	The finalized budget, due on 2/1/25, will detail all variances from the prior year with an updated, more granular, and transparent budget book that includes narratives for clarity.
73	1/15/2025 15:02:04	Why are the savings from the newly built Kennedy School override project still available for the Memorial school study and not paid back?	The reallocation of funds from the Kennedy Building Project (or any capital project) is the decision for Town Meeting, and can be utilized to support the Memorial School or other similar capital projects.
74	1/15/2025 20:05:43	Why doesn't the town shut down the golf course in an effort to reduce expenses? This is a niche amenity that is not utilized by all town residents.	The Golf Course is funded through an "enterprise fund", in which user fees (i.e. people paying to play golf) fully supports the operations of the course. No general operating funds (i.e. funds generated by tax dollars or other revenue sources) are used to support the golf course. The golf course actually generates a modest profit, which goes to support capital upgrades at the golf course.
75	1/16/2025 8:21:12	Please itemize how the budget override funds will be used and let the public evaluate if they are all necessary.	This information will be available with the release of the FY26 Budget in early February.
76	1/16/2025 12:00:41	Does Natick have a Sinking Fund?	Natick does not have a "sinking fund" - a fund set aside specifically for the purpose of paying off debt.

77	1/16/2025 15:58:57	What is the total budget (e.g.tuition, transportation) for NPS students placed in out of district placements?	<p>Actual FY24 Tuition: \$8,777,767 Transportation \$2,598,123 #Students 59</p> <p>Budget FY25 Tuition: \$8,340,834 Transportation: \$2,583,932 #Students 57</p>
78	1/17/2025 12:29:59	What school ranking source does NPS consider to be the most accurate/confident? ie. globe, bostonmag, niche, usnews, or other	<p>Natick Public Schools compiles its own data and also complies with federal and state regulations which require regular submissions of required annual data and reporting.</p> <p>We have not polled our readers to see which outside source that they feel they trust the most for school comparisons. As you note in this question, the Boston Globe, Boston Magazine, U.S. News & World Report and the education-focused website Niche (often watched by real estate agents) all use different algorithms to supply their rankings. These outlets do include measures that NPS does report annually, such as graduation status. NPS does not have an opinion on which source its community members should consider.</p> <p>NPS Administration keeps a watchful eye on larger trends among these publication rankings but believes that small swings up and down these rankings never explain the full story of the meaningful impact of our talented educators and the achievement of our students. We advise you to watch our website (www.natickps.org) for our biweekly district newsletters as well as any other news stories we publish.</p> <p>Aside from visiting our websites, folks who are seeking descriptive narratives about NPS' performance and our student achievement or who desire comparison data showing differences between Natick and other districts often consult a variety of additional sources, such as direct parent feedback; the Department of Secondary and Elementary Education District Analysis and Review Tools and reports; presentations and agenda items provided during School Committee meetings for this school year and historically; NPS Budget Books; as well as the Town of Natick's Annual Report.</p> <p>Please use this Q&A tool or contact communications@natickps.org if you would like specific information about Natick Public Schools that you are unable to obtain from any of the above (or similar) sources and we will do our best to assist you with your request.</p>
79	1/17/2025 13:34:50	What impact might a No vote on the override have on the planned park renovation at the South Natick dam?	<p>Town Administration is working diligently to financially support the South Natick Dam removal project through grants and/or other existing funds. The override should have minimal to no impact on the advancement of the Dam removal project.</p> <p>The South Natick Park Improvements project will likely be impacted by the Override. A no override vote will impact the ability for the Town to complete capital projects, like the South Natick Parks project (along with annual roadway improvements, maintenance to existing facilities, and supporting the Town's vehicle fleet utilized by DPW, Public Safety, etc.)</p>
80	1/17/2025 13:36:57	Any way for Natick to go back on decision to give away 5 Auburn for \$100 rather than opt for proposals that could have scored the town \$1M or more?	No - the Select Board entered into a Development Agreement with a developer for the site. The project is progressing as planned.
81	1/17/2025 13:41:59	Has Natick taken a look at what could be considered the disproportionate # of police/fire employees making \$100K+ vs other employees?	<p>Town Administration is consistently reviewing compensation of all town staff, including the police department personnel to ensure we are competitive in the marketplace, and can attract and retain high quality employees to support the community.</p> <p>In addition to base salary compensation, many police department officials (per the union contracts) are offered to work additional hours in overtime and/or details to earn additional compensation. In some cases, due to staffing mandates, staffing levels, etc, staff are required to work overtime for the safety of the community. This is true for many town personnel, including DPW, Fire, Clerical and others.</p>
82	1/17/2025 16:48:35	Why not cut senior citizens property taxes so they can stay in their homes, family with kids will move in and put a bigger tax burden on the schools	The Town provides a number of programs for the financial benefit of our senior population. For more information about the Town's senior tax deferral and/or assistance programs, please visit the Tax Assistance and Deferral Programs webpage.
83	1/17/2025 18:10:23	As a senior on a fixed income, I worry about the financial impact of an override. Has Natick ever considered a tax break for senior homeowners?	<p>For more information about the Town's tax deferral and/or assistance programs, please visit the Tax Assistance and Deferral Programs webpage.</p> <p>Also, please see item #19 (running total)</p>
84	1/18/2025 7:39:54	When will the Memorial Elementary School feasibility study be completed?	The timeline for the Memorial Elementary School feasibility study is outlined in the deck shared on 1/6/25 regarding the eligibility phase of the MSBA project. The eligibility phase begins on 2/3/25 and concludes on 10/31/25. Link to presentation deck.
85	1/18/2025 7:40:55	Will an additional override be proposed to cover the building of the Memorial School?	While the details of any project that would include the Memorial School are still to be determined and several years away, based on Natick's historical approach to supporting such building projects, it is likely that a Debt Exclusion Override will be proposed to support a Memorial School project.
86	1/18/2025 7:42:02	Why hasn't the potential cost of building a new school and other major capital projects included in the override materials?	Please review the 5-Year Capital Improvement Program . In brief, an override is necessary in order to support, not only the operations of the Town/Schools, but also the capital program as proposed. As noted in the Capital Plan, the Memorial School project is currently proposed to be supported through a debt exclusion override, the vote of which would take place in a future year.
87	1/18/2025 7:43:15	Why additional significant capital projects are anticipated over the next 5 years in addition to building a new elementary school?	As noted in the Capital Improvement Plan, the program is a living document, filled with projects that have been identified as necessary to maintain the hundreds of millions of dollars of Town assets for the Natick community, including parks, open space, roadways, buildings, equipment, and vehicles, to support operations. Should the Town not fund capital, these investments and Town assets will fall into disrepair, impacting services, schools, and infrastructure, and leading to more expensive projects and financial impacts in the future.

88	1/18/2025 14:24:09	Why have non-teaching positions increased by 30% between FY19 and FY25 while teaching positions have increased by only 4% over the same period?	Please see items #82 & #83 (running total)
89	1/18/2025 18:20:20	Given the number of knockdown and high value rebuilds happening here, has the town considered a graduated property tax approach?	Such an approach is not possible under current Massachusetts General Laws.
90	1/18/2025 20:44:04	If previous years' tax increases are limited to 2.5%, how is it that my taxes are up 50% over the last 7 years. How does that reconcile with the 2.5%?	Natick residential property values have increase significantly over the past 10+ years. Proposition 2 1/2 applies a tax increase to the overall taxable values of a community, not just an individual property. As such, when values of a particular type of property (i.e. residential) increase at more significant rates, the individual property tax increase tends to be higher than 2 1/2%. For more information about Proposition 2 1/2, please review the materials presented at the Public Forum on 1/21 (available on the Town's Override webpage) and materials available on the State's website, which includes: https://www.mass.gov/info-details/proposition-2-12-and-tax-rate-process https://www.mass.gov/doc/levy-limits-a-primer-on-proposition-2-12-0/download https://www.mass.gov/info-details/proposition-2-12-overrides-exclusions

Please scroll below to Q&A item #91 (and beyond)

FY26 Operating Override (Natick)

Published Weekly Updates (Town/NPS staff responses to questions)

www.natickma.gov/override



This document includes all submitted questions (by the general public) and responses composed by Town & NPS staff. Please see www.natickma.gov/override for additional materials related to the FY26 Budget Override.

TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER
91 1/19/2025 15:41:59	If it was known the town budget would be short this year, who made the decision and what was the cost to replace all the street signs in Natick?	The Town did not replace all the street signs in Natick. Street sign replacements occurs gradually over the years, as the useful life of a street sign is met. These costs are part of the overall operating budget of the Town (most costs are part of the DPW budget). On occasion, street sign replacement costs are absorbed in a roadway improvement project, which was the case on the North Main Street improvement project (which was funded through State and Federal resources).
92 1/20/2025 18:25:58	Free cash has consistently come in much higher than expected (\$7.8 MM this year v \$4.5-\$5 expected) so why are we still discussing an \$8 MM override?	Free Cash is not considered a reliable, recurring revenue source, which is why it fluctuates so greatly from year to year - it is unpredictable. Further, Free Cash is not recommended for supporting recurring operational costs due to its unpredictable nature. Free Cash is recommended for use to support one-time costs, such as capital investments, and supporting stabilization accounts (rainy day funds). Unfortunately, Natick has relied heavily on using Free Cash to support recurring operational costs, impacting the Town's ability to use Free Cash to support one-time costs.
93 1/20/2025 21:20:54	Regarding question 3, why has the non-teaching staff increased by approx. 29.5% between FY2019 and FY2025 while teaching increased by only 3.5 %?	See item #17 (batch #2)
94 1/20/2025 21:22:32	How much of Shared Services is accountable to Natick Public Schools (i.e. benefits, medical, etc.)?	The amount of Shared services that can be attributed to support the Natick Public Schools fluctuates annually based on a number of factors - health care costs, needed investments in facilities (i.e. school and town buildings/properties) - on average, 65-70% of shared services costs support Natick Public Schools.
95 1/20/2025 21:23:23	How much of debt services is for school facilities and capital projects?	All of Debt Service is for facilities and capital projects - these include roadway improvements, vehicle purchases, parks/open space, and facilities (including schools and town buildings). This information is also available in the Town's budget book - which for FY26 will be published on Monday, Feb 3.
96 1/21/2025 1:14:07	Is there a single place that lists hired positions and salaries over the past 5 years?	No - however, all positions with salaries are available for viewing in the Annual Town Reports , which includes a listing of all positions and salaries (Town and NPS).
97 1/21/2025 1:17:37	Is there a place that lists all individual 3rd party paid services and cost by fiscal year? (Example 3rd parties that issue surveys to students at NPS?)	No, neither the Town nor NPS has a full list of all third party paid services.
98 1/21/2025 8:31:15	How does inflation in Natick municipal expenses compare to the national inflation rate over the past 10 years?	Please see the financial indicators reports provided to the Select Board annually (slide #10 of FY24 report).
99 1/21/2025 10:41:42	Why are the override discussions at the Library only in person and not Zoom too. This will limit the number of attendees especially with the snow.	Thank you for the feedback - there are technology limitations when working in certain spaces in Natick - working to accommodate larger crowds in a physical space, while also ensure Pegasus is able to record/broadcast, and including a remote participation is a technology challenge. We are looking into ways to make the next two public forums inclusive of a remote participation component. All are encouraged to provide feedback through the multiple feedback loops available - the website, attending a regularly scheduled meeting of the Select Board or School Committee, and/or sending an email to board members. Ahead of Public Forum #2 (Tuesday 2/11, 7:00 - 8:30 PM @ Community Senior Center) - please use this form to submit pre-meeting & in-meeting questions (ie. tool for the remote audience questions) via this Google Form: https://forms.gle/3UfVA6J4vpP6LhYt5
100 1/21/2025 17:19:28	Why can't the Johnson School property be sold to bring in some funds?	The Johnson School property can be sold. However, any revenue received from the sale of Town property cannot be used for operational purposes, per Mass General Law. Such revenue can be used for similar purposes such as for building maintenance or other capital (one time) expenses.
101 1/21/2025 21:21:40	b	This appears to be a submission error.
102 1/22/2025 8:17:57	Please breakdown the proposed budget into 3 buckets (percentages are fine) - 1)Administration , 2) Program (instructional Component) & 3) Capital.	The finalized budget, to be released on Monday 2/3/25, will detail all cost centers including administration, instruction, and capital.
103 1/22/2025 8:20:18	Which roles at the schools are currently projected to be impacted if the budget override doesn't pass?	See slides 4-9 on the 1/21/25 NPS presentation deck from the first public forum on the override which was held on January 21, 2025. The finalized budget, to be released 2/3/25, will also outline all reductions in the event the override does not pass.



This document includes all submitted questions (by the general public) and responses composed by Town & NPS staff. Please see www.natickma.gov/override for additional materials related to the FY26 Budget Override.

104	1/23/2025 8:32:14	Why would reducing 12 class teachers increase class sizes from 20 to 25? I get 22-23. What is the process for making sure the numbers are right?	<p>The impact of reducing 12 classroom teachers depends on where those reductions occur, and the assumption that this would result in all elementary class sizes increasing from 20 to 25 may not fully account for how these decisions are made.</p> <p>Rather than applying reductions evenly across all elementary schools, the district will strategically determine where adjustments can be made across elementary, middle, and high schools. At the elementary level, class size guidelines are an important factor, but teacher reductions will be considered with a long-term perspective and an eye on available space in each school. When a reduction occurs at a particular school, students from the affected class will be redistributed across other classes at that grade level thereby increasing class sizes up to 25 within that building and grade. Distributing students across all grades would require changes to our redistricting procedures and would have a greater effect on transportation.</p> <p>Such an analysis would be conducted if necessitated by an override that does not pass, ensuring that any decisions are made with the most current enrollment data and a careful review of the impact on students and schools.</p>																																							
105	1/23/2025 9:00:59	Health Insurance. 1: For our consortium, both Town and NPS? 2: In the last 10 years, how many times has the consortium done an open bid/RFP process?	<p>In 2024 the consortium (West Suburban Health Group - WSHG) issued an RFP for a comprehensive operational analysis. The analysis identified areas of opportunity including consolidation of carriers, alternative model considerations, RX strategies, and a market analysis. Several items identified in the analysis are either being implemented or under consideration for implementation. In 2025 it is projected that the WSHG will have a significantly lower premium increase compared to projected increases by both the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Agency (MIIA) - two benchmarks for municipalities. WSHG continues to be a strong option for Natick when looking at plan design, premium contributions and plan offerings.</p>																																							
106	1/23/2025 16:11:42	I noticed that we received a good chunk of revenue from building permits. Would up zoning help the budget? Has the town looked at potential impact?	<p>Yes - updates to the zoning bylaw that supports the redevelopment of under utilized properties not only supports increase building permit revenue, but also supports new tax growth once a project is complete. Over the past several years, Town Meeting has enacted new zoning to support the redevelopment of many areas of town - mostly in Natick Center and in the Golden Triangle area of town (by the Natick Mall) - which is leading to an increase in building permit and tax revenues. The next areas of focus for potential rezoning includes the parcels proximate to the West Natick commuter rail station and continued work in the Golden Triangle.</p>																																							
107	1/23/2025 16:14:48	There is growth in the number of special needs students. Do we have any future projections on that number? Does NPS number grow faster than other town	<p>Over the past 11 fiscal years, Natick's special education percentage has generally increased, mirroring but staying below the state average. From FY14 to FY19, it remained stable (14–15%) as the state's percentage gradually rose. Since FY20, both Natick and Massachusetts saw increases, driven by COVID-19 disruptions and greater identification of student needs. Natick's percentage rose from 15.4% in FY20 to 18.4% in FY24, while the state reached 20.2%.</p> <p>For FY26, Natick's special education population is expected to remain steady. With 90 special education students graduating and an estimated 100 new identifications, the projected net increase of 10 students is unlikely to significantly impact overall enrollment.</p> <p>STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES STATE AND DISTRICT % AGE</p> <table border="1"> <caption>STUDENT WITH DISABILITIES STATE AND DISTRICT % AGE</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>Natick (%)</th> <th>State (%)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>FY14</td><td>14.40%</td><td>17.00%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY15</td><td>14.90%</td><td>17.10%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY16</td><td>15.00%</td><td>17.20%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY17</td><td>14.70%</td><td>17.40%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY18</td><td>14.20%</td><td>17.70%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY19</td><td>14.20%</td><td>18.10%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY20</td><td>15.40%</td><td>18.40%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY21</td><td>14.80%</td><td>18.70%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY22</td><td>16.50%</td><td>18.90%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY23</td><td>17.10%</td><td>19.40%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY24</td><td>18.40%</td><td>20.20%</td></tr> <tr><td>FY25</td><td>18.30%</td><td>20.60%</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	Natick (%)	State (%)	FY14	14.40%	17.00%	FY15	14.90%	17.10%	FY16	15.00%	17.20%	FY17	14.70%	17.40%	FY18	14.20%	17.70%	FY19	14.20%	18.10%	FY20	15.40%	18.40%	FY21	14.80%	18.70%	FY22	16.50%	18.90%	FY23	17.10%	19.40%	FY24	18.40%	20.20%	FY25	18.30%	20.60%
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Please scroll below to Q&A item #108 (and beyond)



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TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER
108 1/26/2025 11:12:29	How does the FY26 preliminary cherry sheet estimates impact town and school budget planning? What are cherry sheets?	The preliminary cherry sheets are expected to be in line with budget projections. Cherry sheets are the totals for all the various State aid provided to communities less all the items the Town has to pay back to the Commonwealth.
109 1/27/2025 9:45:27	With 2.8M cuts, what will happen to the RTI in Natick? Assuming it will be greatly impacted, how will we meet the needs of our youngest learners?	<p>NPS: With \$2.8M in cuts, RTI in Natick would be significantly impacted, reducing the ability to provide Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention for elementary students. Tier 1 instruction, provided by classroom teachers, would remain, but students requiring additional support would have limited access to intervention services due to the elimination of most interventionists.</p> <p>The 32.6 FTE reduction includes all interventionists—two at the middle schools and the remainder across the elementary schools—affecting 43 individuals. These interventionists serve general education students by providing small-group instruction during intervention blocks as part of Natick’s RTI programming. Currently, students are placed in intervention groups based on Renaissance benchmark assessments given three times a year along with classroom performance data. Those below benchmark are prioritized for small-group instruction with interventionists, while others receive support through their classroom teacher, IEP services, or enrichment if a specialist is available during the WIN block.</p> <p>Without interventionists, classroom teachers would have more students and fewer support staff for small-group instruction, making it more difficult to meet the needs of general education students who require additional support but do not qualify for special education services. This reduction would directly impact the district’s ability to provide intervention-based instruction, limiting access to targeted academic support for Natick’s youngest learners.</p>
110 1/27/2025 15:11:34	What additional streams of revenue were researched to offset or reduce the need for a taxpayer override?	<p>Municipalities in Massachusetts have few revenue sources over which the Town has the local control. These include local option taxes (hotels, meals, and cannabis), which are already at the maximums allowed by State law; fee adjustments (the Select Board adjusted building permit fees in 2023 and ambulance fees were adjusted the same year leading to over \$2M in additional revenue (see slide 13 from the Dec 16th presentation); and new growth due to investments in property (new development, redevelopment, etc), which has been strong in Natick for many years. Even with the improvements in these areas over the past several years, Natick expenses have outpaced revenues, due (in part) to Proposition 2 1/2 which limits the ability for the Town to increase local taxes without a vote of the voters (i.e. an override).</p> <p>NPS The School Administration has considered increasing various user fees to offset expense increases in the General Fund Budget that gets approved by Town Meeting. The School Committee is responsible for setting the user fee amounts. Types of fees considered that could offset the General Fund Appropriation request with the intent fewer reductions in overall services are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Transportation Fees * Athletic Fees * Aftercare Fees * Pre-K Tuition * Bldg Rental Revolving <p>The remaining user fee based funds have very few participants or are functioning largely as intended for the fund’s purpose and fee.</p>
111 1/27/2025 15:15:55	If by 2030, we may be beyond the need for an override by having our retirement pension liability largely funded, can we put terms on this override?	The ballot question taken to the voters must follow specific verbiage per Mass General Laws. This language does not allow for an override to have "terms". However, it is possible for the Select Board and/or School Committee to support or commit to essential financial priorities and/or principles thereby maximizing the benefits of additional revenue for the community.
112 1/29/2025 19:10:35	1: what are the School & Town goals? 2: how does each side track goal achievement? I'd hope more than annual reports. Thanks for responding.	<p>Town Please see the FY 2026 Town's Budget Book.</p> <p>NPS Each school develops three measurable School Improvement Goals annually, grounded in data and supported by clear action steps and benchmarks for success. These goals are presented to the school committee in the fall, with a year-end report on progress. Details on each school's improvement plan can be found on page 124 of the FY26 budget book. The School Improvement Plans are also available on the NPS website at the following link. Link to FY26 NPS Budget Book. Link to School Improvement Plans on NPS website.</p>
113 1/29/2025 19:14:00	How do the Schools & Town rate resident's satisfaction? Is the School Department via school district rankings? And what for the Town?	<p>Town There are no "rating" or "ranking" publications for determining residential satisfaction for municipalities.</p> <p>NPS Please refer to item #78</p>
114 1/31/2025 8:45:15	This request comes after years of historic home price appreciation. How will you manage the deficit in a recession / if the housing market declines?	Under Mass General Laws, communities have the ability to raise taxes above a prior year's amount by up to 2 1/2 percent, regardless of what occurs with home values. Whether home values appreciate or depreciate, taxes will be raised and collected above prior year's amount.
115 1/31/2025 10:36:10	Were the positions transferred from WMS to KMS in FY25 a reduction in staff or a transfer? How many total positions were reduced in FY25?	<p>NPS Before the school year started, 3 Unit A educators were transferred from Wilson to Kennedy. After the school year was underway, 2 open positions at Wilson eliminated to create one sped position at KMS. Twenty-six (26) total positions were reduced from FY24 to FY25; a majority were voted in the budget and others were made via attrition between budget adoption, closing of Johnson, and the opening of school.</p>
116 2/1/2025 6:04:00		Blank submission.
117 2/1/2025 6:06:11	Will the citizens of Natick be allowed to vote on the over-ride or is will the OR be determined by the town gov. employees?	All overrides (whether operational or for building projects) are voted on by the voters of the community. This proposed override will be voted on at the upcoming Town Election on March 25. Learn more about voting and registering to vote.



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TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER
118 2/3/2025 17:05:26	NPS is eliminating positions in the schools that directly effect students. What about administration? The school department appears very top heavy.	<p>Natick Public Schools has already made significant reductions to administrative positions. In the FY25 budget, four central office positions were eliminated, including the Deputy Superintendent, Director of Safety, Assistant Business Manager, and a Financial Analyst for Special Education.</p> <p>For FY26, additional central office reductions are planned. This includes eliminating the Director of Digital Learning position and implementing a budget-neutral reorganization that reduces five Personalized Learning Coach positions while adding four administrative roles (Director of Multilingual Learners, School Business Analyst, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, and Coordinator of Data & Student Success). This results in a net reduction of one central office position.</p> <p>In the no-override scenario, six central office positions will be eliminated in FY26—the Director of Digital Learning and five Personalized Learning Coaches—while two new positions (School Business Analyst and Director of Curriculum & Instruction) will be added. This results in a net decrease of four central office administrators.</p> <p>Many school-based administrators, such as assistant principals, vice principals, and deans, play a direct role in supporting students, staff, and families. They are not solely responsible for paperwork; rather, they set strategy, lead instructional initiatives, and provide hands-on support to ensure schools remain safe, well-run, and responsive to student needs. Their work is critical in maintaining academic and behavioral supports that directly impact student success.</p> <p>Compared to DESE-assigned DART (District Analysis and Review Tool) comparison districts, Natick operates with a leaner administrative team. The district has made targeted reductions to administrative roles while maintaining the capacity to oversee essential functions such as curriculum development, student services, multilingual learner support, and financial management—functions that directly support teachers and students.</p>
119 2/4/2025 16:15:26	Regarding the NPS Bus Subsidy Funding voted by TM article, how were such funded each year since FY2021? EG Free Cash, Tax Levy, NPS Budget?	<p>The Bus subsidy has historically been funded as a separate warrant article outside of the NPS budget.</p> <p>FY21 - Tax levy FY22 - Tax levy FY23 - Tax levy FY24 - No Subsidy FY25 - Tax levy</p>
120 2/5/2025 10:04:37	RE: "the Town will need to address the continued deterioration of the Cole Center in the coming years"... Can CPA funds potentially be used?	<p>CPA funds are not likely a source of funding for the Cole Center reconstruction/redevelopment. CPA funds might be a usable source of funds to support open space portions of a project at that site. CPA funds can only be used for Open Space/Rec (not buildings), Affordable Housing, and/or Historic Preservation. Though the Cole Center is older, it is not likely to be considered historic and may not be worth renovating (all this is still to be determined), so CPA funds are not likely a viable source of funds.</p>
121 2/5/2025 16:04:42	What is the cost including debt service of the proposed \$2.2 million dollar turf field in FY '27 of the most recent 5 Year Capital Plan?	<p>NPS Loan Estimate and Analysis Below</p> <p>Latest interest rate 2.9% for 10-year municipal bond, Google Search 2-11-25</p> <p>Conservative Est. Interest rate: 3.5%, Loan Term: 10 years Repayment Structure: Level Principal Payments, declining payment schedule.</p> <p>Level Payment : \$264,531 and total cost of \$2,645,310 Level Principal: total cost \$2,554,200 or 23% less interest than level payment method.</p> <p>Note: Transfer from unspent warrant articles or balances from completed projects is also an option to reduce borrowing.</p> <p>Please find a detailed table the illustrates the above financials.</p>
122 2/5/2025 17:57:50	If the interventionists are non-union, carry no benefits and work only part time, why are they the ones to be cut from the budget?	<p>The decision to reduce interventionist positions was not based on benefit expenses but on the overall impact on students. If the override does not pass, reductions will be necessary across multiple school departments and schools, with \$2.1 million of the cuts affecting FTEs. This follows previous reductions of \$650,000 in FY25 and \$1.4 million in FY26, which primarily targeted non-student-facing expenses. At this stage, unfortunately, further cuts must impact student-facing positions. Reducing interventionist positions allows the district to preserve core instructional staffing and avoid additional classroom teacher reductions.</p>

Please scroll below to Q&A item #123 (and beyond)



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123	2/5/2025 17:59:45	Can you explain why a district data position is needed above and beyond the data work that the math and literacy coaches do at the individual schools?	<p>The math and literacy specialists/coaches focus on data analysis within their specific content areas and school buildings, using that information to support classroom teachers, interventionists, and targeted student interventions. While this work is essential at the school level, it does not provide a district-wide, cross-content analysis needed to drive broader instructional and curricular improvements.</p> <p>A dedicated district data position is necessary to analyze trends across all content areas, grade levels, and departments, ensuring a cohesive approach to data-driven decision-making. This role would also support teams in running more effective data meetings, provide professional development on data literacy, and identify curriculum and instructional areas for improvement. Additionally, this position would assist the Teaching, Learning, and Innovation (TLI) office in analyzing and presenting data to the Superintendent and School Committee to guide curricular and professional development planning.</p> <p>Research supports the need for centralized data leadership. Studies have shown that districts leveraging system-wide data analysis and coaching structures see improved student outcomes. According to Wayman & Jimerson (2014), district-wide data leaders help schools use data more effectively by providing structured systems for analysis and ensuring that data-informed decisions are made at all levels of instruction. Similarly, Marsh, Pane, & Hamilton (2006) found that district-level data leadership strengthens professional learning communities and improves instructional coherence across schools.</p> <p>Without a district data lead, schools may operate in silos, limiting the ability to identify systemic gaps and ensure that resources are strategically allocated based on comprehensive analysis.</p>
124	2/6/2025 11:08:45	Cut 32 Intrvntnists(k-12)/replace w/19 Para(k-1) l's=PT tutor HUNDREDS w/custom goals; collect 1000's hrs data.Paras=FT, NO tutor or assess.Logic?	<p>The decision to reduce interventionists while adding instructional paraprofessionals is based on the need to prioritize classroom teachers and maintain support for our youngest learners. While interventionists provide targeted, data-driven support, if reductions are necessary, our focus must remain on sustaining direct classroom instruction.</p> <p>Instructional paraprofessionals—who are distinct from 1:1 and special education paraprofessionals—will help support students in kindergarten and first grade by maintaining teacher-to-student ratios and assisting students as they transition into the school environment. While they do not serve the same function as interventionists in providing individualized academic intervention and data collection, they can support early learning and small-group instruction under the guidance of classroom teachers.</p> <p>Interventionists are primarily at the elementary level, with only a few at the middle school level and none at the high school level. Balancing available resources while ensuring strong core classroom instruction is the key consideration behind these decisions.</p>
125	2/6/2025 11:35:46	5 PLC positions elim, but 4 stay in system=net gain 1sal/bnfts. Claim to "evolve" positions to 4 new Admins= 4 NEW Admin sal/bnfts. Logic pls?	<p>The decision to transition five Personalized Learning Coach (central office) positions into four new administrative roles is driven by the need for a more cohesive and strategic district-wide approach to curriculum implementation, data-driven instruction, multilingual learner support, and financial operations. While Personalized Learning Coaches have been providing support in pockets, this restructuring allows for a more consistent alignment with district priorities and ensures that resources are used effectively to support student success.</p> <p>As student needs evolve—particularly with the increase in multilingual learners now exceeding 5%—we must adapt our instructional leadership to provide targeted support for both students and staff. Additionally, we have identified gaps in meeting the needs of marginalized populations, which these new roles will help address. Our finance department is also understaffed relative to the demands of a district our size, and this adjustment allows for improved financial oversight without increasing the overall budget.</p> <p>By allocating these positions rather than adding new ones, we are shifting resources to better align with district priorities while maintaining budget neutrality. This approach strengthens instructional cohesion, supports equity across the district, and ensures that strategic investments continue to benefit students, families, and staff.</p>
126	2/6/2025 20:06:40	Do our Union Contracts (for Teachers, etc.) have mandatory COLA in them while we are asking the town for an Override?	<p>Our union contracts include a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) within the salary tables for each year of the contract. These COLA amounts are established through collective bargaining agreements. Currently, all NPS units are in negotiations, along with Town Police, Fire, and Custodian unions, and any future COLA adjustments will be determined as part of that process.</p>
127	2/6/2025 20:22:48	Why NPS budget 2026 not have specific impact if no override, like no Italian, Rugby, Cooking club, AP Anatomy to make clear to Town what will be lost	<p>The specific impact of a no-override budget on individual programs and courses for FY26 has not yet been determined because those decisions will depend on multiple factors, including student demand and teacher schedules. Once the outcome of the override is clear, we will conduct a thorough review to assess enrollment patterns, staffing availability, and contractual obligations before making final determinations. This process ensures that any necessary reductions are made in a way that aligns with student needs and maintains core educational priorities.</p>
128	2/6/2025 20:54:01	Does Town NPS do 5-10 yr TCO for every employee to project if the budget can support the head count? Being proactive would avoid cliffs like Override?	<p>NPS does not perform a multi-year cost projection per employee. Recently, since returning from the pandemic, we have had in excess of 10% staff turnover each year and that tends to help with total salary increases as many replacements come in at lower salaries than those who left.</p> <p>The largest budget drivers for FY26, are \$2.0 Million of 1x Circuit Breaker funds not available and the reduction of approximately \$430,000 in the Town Meeting warrant article for school transportation. That \$2.4 million is approximately 2.8% of the FY26 requested increase.</p>



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129	2/8/2025 8:40:49	What is the total annual cost of the school department including employee benefits and bonding currently shown in shared services?	<p><u>Health Insurance cost breakdown</u> FY26 Total Projected \$12,621,656 Total FY26 School - \$7,099,440 NPS is 56.2% of total health insurance costs Town Budget Book, page 190</p> <p><u>Debt Cost Share</u> FY26 Total Debt Payments = \$14,200,000 FY26 Total Debt for NPS Projects= \$7,237,163 (51% of Debt) Town Budget Book, pages 203 & 204</p>
130	2/8/2025 16:51:27	What was the actual new growth for FY22, FY23 and FY24?	<p>FY22 - \$1,858,472 FY23 - \$1,841,203 FY24 - \$2,121,472 FY25 - \$1,684,404</p>
131	2/8/2025 17:23:48	What are the differences in duties between the Assistant Fire Chief and the Administrative Dupty Chief? Is there effeciency to be found there?	<p>The Administrative Deputy Chief oversees the EMS operation and covers the shift deputy during the day shifts to help lower OT. They also work the entire summer on shift and are not available for their primary role. The Assistant Fire Chief will help to provide constant administrative help for the Chief and Department.</p>

Please scroll below to Q&A item #132 (and beyond)

FY26 Operating Override (Natick)

Published Weekly Updates (Town/NPS staff responses to questions)

www.natickma.gov/override



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TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER
132 2/11/2025 9:48:45	Is there a line by line of how the school side spent their monies in 2022,2023,2024?	The FY26 budget book includes detailed line-item information by department and school for the actual expenditures in FY22, FY23, and FY24, as well as the FY25 appropriation and the FY26 recommended budget. This provides a comprehensive view of how funds have been allocated and spent over time. If you're looking for specific details, the budget book serves as the best resource for reviewing past and projected expenditures. Link to FY26 NPS Budget Book.
133 2/11/2025 20:02:44	Why did the town wait so long to worry about increased costs and why did cost cutting NOT start years ago when it first started to happen?	The Town has been exploring the need for an override for the past several years - the Select Board was planning to place the question on a ballot in 2020, but delayed this due to the Pandemic. Cost cutting, revenue generating, and other measures are continuously ongoing throughout this time. Due to MGL Proposition 2 1/2, the Town can only generate a limited amount of new revenue each year, which typically does not meet the cost increases to providing level service to the community. Under MGL proposition 2 1/2, in order raise additional revenue, a vote of the voters is required, which is this process of the override.
134 2/11/2025 20:24:36	Can you add the web link to senior citizen work off programs and financial assistance to the override web page?	Yes (added).
135 2/11/2025 20:29:28	Can you put a link on the web site that assists taxpayers to calculate multiple year tax after they prop 2 1/2 override?	There is no website nor program that provides multi-year tax calculations for individual property owners. Such an exercise is highly individualized and would be extremely challenging to calculate accurately, given the number of assumptions (about property valuation, new growth assumptions, etc) that would need to be taken into account. The Town's Override webpage provides estimates for FY26 as well as a link to a tool that provides similar information on the DLS website .
136 2/14/2025 6:29:30	With SB voting for a \$7M Override versus \$8M, will the budget and budget books be revised with the additional \$1M in spend reduction and the specifics	Yes, the budget book will be revised, however there will be no impact on the operational budgets for Town, School, or Shared Services. The impact will be limited to capital and the amount of Free Cash needed to support the budget.
137 2/14/2025 15:37:08	What is the town doing to diversify tax revenue streams? Why not give a marginal tax increase of 1-2% to corporations like Mathworks?	Due to state law, the Town is limited in its ability to create new tax revenue streams. For example, Towns in Massachusetts do not have the ability per state law to add a marginal tax on anyone. Our only ability to tax is limited to property taxes and some local option taxes on meals, hotels, and cannabis, for which the Town has maximized these taxes.
138 2/14/2025 15:47:19	Page 30 FY26 Town Budget shows "Employee Fringe Benefits" with healthcare as the only example. What else falls into the "Fringe Benefits" line item?	As noted on pages 189 and 190 of the Budget Book , Fringe Benefits also include unemployment insurance, public-safety medical, long-term disability, workers compensation, and many other benefits/costs.
139 2/14/2025 16:00:29	Why do the town administrative offices need so many executive and administrative assistants?	Town Administration and the Select Board share 2 positions - one is an executive (higher-level) assistant, and one is an entry level administrative assistant. These positions are necessary to coordinate the work of the Town, respond to constituent questions, manage the work of the Select Board (including licenses, policies, minutes, agendas, approvals, contracts, etc), support Town Meeting (warrants, scheduling, etc), and support the work of Town Administration, among many other tasks.
140 2/14/2025 16:16:44	What is "Retirement Assessment" in the Shared Services section of the prelim budget?	Retirement Assessment is the assessment the Town is required to pay to cover costs related to the retirement of employees (past and present) who are part of the Town's retirement pension program/system, which is a state mandated program and cost (MGL C 32). More details are provided on pages 193 and 194 of the budget book .
141 2/14/2025 17:51:10	My home value and taxes are up 41% over the past 5 years. What is the average increase in residential valuations over 5 years vs. commercial ones?	Please find this table of Residential & Commercial growth (FY21 - FY25)

Please scroll below to Q&A item #142 (and beyond)



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TIMESTAMP	QUESTION	ANSWER
142 2/16/2025 14:22:41	Why does the town not ticket/tow overnight and storm parked cars and ticket houses who don't clear the sidewalks? This would add revenue and safety.	There is no requirement for sidewalks to be cleared, so therefore no ability for the Town to "fine" or "ticket" property owners for not shoveling their sidewalk. Such a bylaw would need to be reviewed/approved by Town Meeting. Regarding overnight parking, the Town does tow vehicles during a parking ban on publicly accepted streets that violate a parking ban. We do try to first have any vehicle moved from the street, if possible, by the property owner.
143 2/16/2025 17:04:02	The rate per 1000 has fallen over a dollar since 2022. Why was it allowed to fall by so much and create the need for an override for 66 cents?	In Massachusetts per state law, the tax rate is a ratio between assessed values of all property in town vs. the maximum tax levy (the amount the Town can tax), which can only increase annually by 2 1/2 percent (plus new growth) each year (i.e. Proposition 2 1/2). If values increase more rapidly than 2 1/2 percent, which they have these past several years, the tax rate goes down (though taxes still go up because values are going up). If values increase by less than 2 1/2 percent, the tax rate will go up (and taxes will also go up). For more details, please see the tax rate hearing presentation provided to the Select Board each November, including this past November 2024.
144 2/17/2025 14:17:27	Is there an itemized budget that depicts what would be cut if the override doesn't pass?	NPS Starting on Page 22 in the online FY26 Budget Book , you'll see NPS override and no-override scenarios. The NPS FY26 Budget request remained unchanged with the proposed override now at \$7M. Town In the Town Administrators Budget Book on page 30 is an itemized list of proposed cuts - more details are also available throughout the budget book in each department section.
145 2/24/2025 20:18:37	What's the reasoning for cutting the Personalized Learning Coaches jobs (student-facing) while hiring 4 people at central office (non-student facing)?	The decision to transition five central office Personalized Learning Coach positions into four administrative roles aligns district resources with evolving student needs while maintaining budget neutrality. Natick Public Schools has already reduced central office positions, eliminating four roles in FY25 and planning further cuts in FY26, including the Director of Digital Learning. The restructuring shifts Personalized Learning Coach roles—which are not student-facing but support educators—into four district-wide positions: Director of Multilingual Learners, School Business Analyst, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, and Coordinator of Data & Student Success. These roles address critical gaps in multilingual learner support, curriculum alignment, data-driven instruction, and financial oversight. With multilingual learners now exceeding 5% and a need for more equitable resource distribution, these new positions provide targeted, district-wide support. While Personalized Learning Coaches have offered valuable but decentralized assistance to educators, this reorganization ensures a more cohesive, strategic approach to instructional leadership. In a no-override scenario, central office reductions are even greater, with a net decrease of four positions. Compared to similar districts, Natick operates with a lean team, and these adjustments strengthen instructional leadership while maintaining financial stability.
146 2/24/2025 20:18:47	The previous questions seems contradictory to the NPS' budget statement of "preserving student-facing positions."	Natick Public Schools remains committed to preserving student-facing positions. Personalized Learning Coaches are central office staff who support educators, not students directly. This restructuring shifts five non-student-facing Personalized Learning Coach roles into four district-wide positions—Director of Multilingual Learners, School Business Analyst, Director of Curriculum & Instruction, and Coordinator of Data & Student Success. These roles address critical gaps in multilingual learner services, curriculum alignment, data-driven instruction, and financial oversight, ensuring more strategic and cohesive support for students and staff. This change does not increase the budget but realigns resources to better meet student needs, particularly with multilingual learners now exceeding 5%. Natick has already reduced central office staff, cutting four positions in FY25 and planning further reductions in FY26, including eliminating the Director of Digital Learning. In a no-override scenario, the district will see a net decrease of four central office positions. Compared to similar districts, Natick operates with a lean administrative team. These adjustments strengthen instructional leadership while keeping resources focused on students.
147 2/26/2025 12:54:12	How many management/supervisor/admin will be eliminated if the override fails? What is the mgr/employee ratio?	A full list of the 41 positions that will be eliminated if the override fails is on pages 31-40 of the FY26 Budget Book . These cuts do not include managerial positions, as \$2M in reductions across the FY25 and FY26 budgets already eliminated six management, supervisor, and administrative roles. We prioritized non-student-facing cuts until no further reductions were possible, leading to a greater impact on student-facing positions. In FY25, administrative staff made up 6.5% of total staff, up from 6.2% in FY22. Next year, with the reduction of one administrator and nine other staff members, administration is projected to stay flat at 6.5% of total staff.
148 2/26/2025 13:09:11	If Override passes, will the town finish paving Lincoln St Ext? It stopped at Unit 59, leaving the rest full of potholes and poor pavement	Thank you for the note about Lincoln Street Extension. The completion of this project is unrelated to the override. The Town did repave the portions of Lincoln Street Extension that are owned by the Town (i.e. accepted roadway). The remainder of Lincoln Street Extension that remains unimproved is privately owned (unaccepted roadway), over which the Town cannot pave per state law.
149 2/27/2025 13:19:33	What does this override mean for potential layoffs across town? Would we see this across all town departments potentially?	With no override, the Town will cut a minimum of 7 positions, spread out across the organization.

FY26 Operating Override (Natick)

Published Weekly Updates (Town/NPS staff responses to questions)

www.natickma.gov/override



This document includes all submitted questions (by the general public) and responses composed by Town & NPS staff. Please see www.natickma.gov/override for additional materials related to the FY26 Budget Override.

150	2/27/2025 14:54:48	What does this override mean for potential layoffs across town? Would we see this across all town departments potentially?	With no override, the Town will cut a minimum of 7 positions, spread out across the organization.
151	2/27/2025 18:16:31	All u do is stuff in apt complexes, having diminished our quality of life r u surprised u still can't cover expenses even w/ all that new tax revenue?	Thank you for the question - while the new multi-family communities do tend to have a net positive tax benefit for the Town, costs have continued to increase more quickly than tax revenue is legally able to increase due to Proposition 2 1/2. As such, an override is necessary to increase revenue.
152	3/2/2025 11:49:24	What are annual pension costs for the past ten years? How many people in each department are receiving pensions (ie, police, fire, admin) & how much?	Over the past 10 years, the Town has been playing catch up on pension liabilities. The annual costs of this catch up has been approximately \$10m-\$15m annually. According to the most recent report from the Retirement Board (page 194 of the FY2026 Budget Book), there are 414 retired members. Of the total liability, approximately 50% is for public safety and 50% all others.
153	3/2/2025 13:42:32	Are Town vehicles leased or purchased?	Most Town vehicles are purchased. The motorcycles used by the Police Department are leased.
154	3/2/2025 13:43:15	What is the average # of yrs that a Town vehicle is in service?	Much depends on the vehicle and its use. For example, police vehicles, which are typically used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, are in service for much shorter periods (typically 3-5 years) than vehicles used by inspectional services (replaced every 10+ years), which are used during the day, during the week. Further, heavy use vehicles, such as trash trucks or other DPW vehicles are replaced fairly frequently - every 5-10 years depending on extent of use.
155	3/3/2025 9:04:59	For how many years will the 2.5% cap on Real Estate tax be taken away? Indefinitely?	Proposition 2 1/2 is a state law adopted in the 1980s. The law is not likely to be changed by the State Legislature any time soon. The override as proposed is a permanent increase establishing a new base tax levy on which 2 1/2 percent is applied moving forward.
156	3/4/2025 10:43:49	How many overrides are we still paying for and do they expire?	Operational overrides, such as the one proposed, do not expire. The last operational override the Town voted was in 2008 for FY2009. There are 5 Debt Exclusion debts currently being paid (page 203 of the FY2026 Budget Book), including: - Community Senior Center - concluding in 2032 - West Natick Fire Station - concluding in 2040 - Natick High School (2) - concluding in 2032 and 2034 - Kennedy Middle School - concluding in 2040
157	3/4/2025 13:35:08	Let's try cutting costs by getting rid of the non essential employees who sit around town hall all day and stop buying \$150,000 electric pickup trucks	Thank you for the comment. The Town operates with a lean staff of dedicated employees, and employees in Town Hall have critical functions to the operations supporting the community. With regards to electric vehicles, the most recently purchased all-electric purchases were either fully funded by grants (so no cost to the Town), or were purchased using rebates and other incentives making them less expensive than the same/equivalent gas-powered vehicle!
158	3/4/2025 20:37:11	Why are there no signs around Natick about when the election is?	This question was submitted 3/4/25 -- and "yes" many early-stage communications relied on digital channels (including: website, social media, newsletters, etc.). Additional Town/NPS communications include: - Direct mailer / postcard sent to all residential addresses (hitting mailboxes 2/28/25 - 3/4/25) - Traffic signboards (general info & 3/12 forum: 3/8 - 3/12/25; general vote 3/19 - 3/25/25) - Reverse911 communications (set for Monday 3/24/25, as a reminder) - Main St. "hanging banner" (set for Wed 3/19 - Tues 3/25/25) - Signs & flyers posted at Town buildings
159	3/5/2025 8:36:15	It looks like the tax rate used to be reliably in the \$13 range. Why did the tax rate fall over the past 3 years and create the need for an override?	This is due to the way tax rates are set in Massachusetts, which is, essentially, a ratio between the tax levy (i.e. amount a community can raise in taxes, which is capped at 2.5% higher than the prior year's levy plus new growth) and assessed property values. If assessed property values increase at rate greater than 2.5%, which they have for residential values these past several years, the tax rate goes down. The tax rate will increase if assessed property values increase at less than 2.5% or go down.
160	3/11/2025 10:48:01	How many staff did Natick schools employ in 2015 and how many students were there in 2015? Could we get the corresponding counts for 2024-2025.	2015 Students 5,434 2015 Staff 668.11 2025 Students 5,297 2025 Staff 857.7
161	3/11/2025 10:51:05	How many employees not school related did the town employ on 2014 and how many were employed in 2024?	2014: Accurate information not available 2024: 453 (not including seasonal)



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162	3/12/2025 8:34:11	We've had a 12.6% increase in staff in five years. Is there any statistic where our children's education increase in this timeframe by 12.6% or more?	<p>Natick Public Schools maintains a strong academic foundation, consistently performing above state averages in Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) accountability measures. These measures assess school and district performance based on student achievement, growth, graduation rates, and progress toward closing achievement gaps. DESE assigns an accountability percentage to each school, indicating how well it is meeting state expectations compared to other schools statewide. A higher percentage reflects stronger overall performance.</p> <p>Please see page #6 of the Superintendent's Report of Early Findings, as this illustrates the accountability percentage by school, highlighting how each of Natick's schools is progressing in key performance areas.</p> <p>The district's broad range of Advanced Placement (AP) courses, dual enrollment opportunities, and career-connected learning programs provide students with rigorous, high-quality educational experiences. Over a third of Natick High School students enroll in AP coursework, and students routinely outperform state and national SAT averages.</p> <p>Beyond traditional coursework, Natick offers hands-on, specialized learning experiences, including Green Engineering, Documentary Filmmaking, and Modern Middle Eastern History. Programs like the hydroponics lab, industry-recognized certifications, and STEM initiatives further enhance student preparation for college and careers.</p>
163	3/12/2025 16:26:10	Why do we need this when enforcing driving and parking infractions could bring in significant revenue for the town. Violations are rampant in downtown	Parking ticket revenue is not a reliable revenue source, nor one that will generate enough revenue to offset the financial need.
164	3/12/2025 18:32:31	2)Select Board Budget is \$0.5M higher than last year – what does this consist of?	The increase is due to anticipated collective bargaining agreement (CBA) settlements. The Town is obligated per state law to budget for these while negotiations are ongoing. There are currently 5 CBAs under negotiation - 2 Fire Dept, 2 Police, and 1 Custodian.
165	3/12/2025 19:02:25	Why cant i get to the meeting via Pegasys?	While Town/NPS staff can't fully comment on each resident's experience, Town/NPS staff did "not" receive reports of widespread concerns. Here's a link to the 3/12/25 Public Forum #3
166	3/12/2025 19:04:18	Why cant i get into the meeting via Pegasys?	While Town/NPS staff can't fully comment on each resident's experience, Town/NPS staff did "not" receive reports of widespread concerns. Here's a link to the 3/12/25 Public Forum #3
167	3/12/2025 19:12:50	Why is an override needed with all the new condos and apartment buildings in town and the revenue from those property taxes that should be coming in?	New Growth revenue has been healthy these past several years and is expected to continue to be healthy. Unfortunately, even with new growth revenues, the Town is still needing to increase revenue to keep level service.
168	3/12/2025 19:28:21	Does being over budget have anything to do with the town of Natick providing extra services to illegal immigrants?	The Town does not provide extra services to "illegal immigrants".
169	3/12/2025 19:29:02	Why are we over budget and where has the money been spent?	The Town is required to present and approve a balanced budget annually. In order to provide level services to the community, additional revenue is needed heading into FY2026, which is provided via the proposed override. Should the override fail, positions, services, capital investments, and costs will be cut to ensure a balanced budget is provided for FY2026.
170	3/13/2025 21:27:05	Will trash bags be discontinued with override?	Unrelated to the override, the Town is examining the trash and recycling program, along with the recycle center. The current program was set up well over 10 years ago, and is due for a review and potential updating. This may include examining the use of the current trash bag system.
171	3/14/2025 13:42:33	if the override is passed, will any property reassessment be put on hold? and if yes, for how long. If not, why?	Reassessments of property occur annually per state law, with a comprehensive reassessment every 5 years.
172	3/14/2025 13:46:38	With all the new building going on around town new condo's, aptmts, etc), shouldn't the revenue from those property taxes help prevent an override?	New Growth revenue has been healthy these past several years and is expected to continue to be healthy. Unfortunately, even with new growth revenues, the Town is still needing to increase revenue to keep level service.
173	3/14/2025 13:57:51	is there a report on line that we can review regarding to what Covid funds Natick received and where those funds were spent?	<p>NPS received \$279,511 that was expended on chromebooks and PPE as part of ESSER 1, The Town of Natick may have paid for air purifiers, plexiglass, and any changes to HVAC via other federal grants related to the pandemic, NPS will defer to the town for those expenditures.</p> <p>The Town received approximately \$3.1M in initial COVID funding, which primarily paid for all of the HVAC and systems improvements in Town/school buildings, including plexiglass in classrooms, air purifiers, filters, and other retrofits, as well as PPE (personal protective equipment) for emergency response personnel. In addition, the Town is seeking approx \$1.8M in FEMA reimbursements (still pending) for similar costs. The Town also received \$10.6M in ARPA funding, which primarily offset lost revenues (local receipts - approx \$7-8M), invested in supporting the public water supply (\$1.7M), building system retrofits (\$325k), and the remainder for other pandemic related costs.</p>



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174	(adhoc submission via resident)	<p>Could you please tell me what percentage of Natick Public School classrooms have interventionists, and how many classrooms, if any, have more than one interventionist?</p>	<p>Natick Public Schools has 32.6 FTE interventionists, representing 43 individuals. Of these, 28.6 serve elementary schools and 4 serve middle schools. Interventionists are not assigned to specific classrooms; instead, they support struggling students across all classrooms through the data-driven Response to Intervention (RTI) process, which operates in 6-8 week cycles.</p> <p>Interventionists primarily pull students from their classrooms to a separate location for small-group academic support. However, they may also push into classrooms to assist specific students as needed.</p> <p>In this role, interventionists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide small-group academic support to general education students who need extra help. - Work with students below grade-level benchmarks to strengthen math and literacy skills. - Use assessment data and classroom performance to identify and support struggling learners. - Interventionists are non-represented employees, with about two-thirds working full-time and one-third part-time.
175	(adhoc submission via resident)	<p>How much the schools have spent in recent years on new curriculums and how often they changed. This is a significant source of spending, and often done with little input from teachers.</p>	<p>The process for selecting curriculum in Natick follows the DESE Implement MA framework, ensuring that we prioritize student needs, analyze data, and review high-quality instructional materials vetted by CURATE and EdReports. Teachers play a key role in this process—piloting materials, participating in feedback sessions, and ultimately voting on the final curriculum selection.</p> <p>In terms of recent spending, from 2021-2023, we adopted new K-4 math curriculum (Illustrative Mathematics) and new Algebra and Geometry curricula at Natick High. The initial K-4 investment, covering teacher materials, digital resources, manipulatives, professional development, and student workbooks, was \$215,000. Annual costs include student workbooks (\$40,000 for grades 2-4, as selected by teachers) and digital licenses (\$34,000). At the high school, the six-year contract for digital access and teacher materials was \$116,000, with no additional spending required until renewal.</p> <p>Currently, we are in the first year of reviewing the literacy curriculum for PK-12. We are also approaching a renewal for middle school math licenses. Beyond core curriculum materials, we maintain science manipulatives (\$2,000/year), math manipulatives (\$12,000), and library collections (\$35,000/year) to ensure students have access to diverse, high-quality learning materials.</p> <p>Given budget constraints, we have made reductions in FY26, including eliminating the Paper tutoring program and scaling back digital tool purchases, focusing on the most impactful resources. Our goal is to sustain rigorous, high-quality instruction while being responsible stewards of funding.</p>

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