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Selectmen back single-option override

By **Katie Liesener**/ Daily News Staff
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WAYLAND -- The Board of Selectmen voted 4-1 last week to adopt the Finance Committee's recommendation to place a \$2.1 million single-question override on the ballot for voters in April.

Selectman Alan Reiss voted against the motion, advocating a menu or pyramid ballot question instead, which would place optional override amounts before voters. He said residents were suffering fatigue from the 47 percent tax increase in Wayland over the last six years and needed more choices.

"If there is divisiveness in town, it is fully embraced by an all-or-nothing vote," he said.

But Reiss' fellow selectmen said the recommended override already represented the maximum number of reasonable cuts.

"I am one of those Wayland taxpayers who struggles to get by," said Selectman Joe Nolan, who said he lives in a household whose members range in age from 81 years to 11 months. He said he could not rationalize additional cuts, such as closing the second fire station.

Chairman Michael Tichnor said further cuts "would hurt those very people we're trying to help."

Among the cuts the Finance Committee had considered and rejected in formulating their recommendation were the elimination of school librarians, school extracurricular activities, traffic guards, two police officers, two firefighter/EMT positions and an emergency dispatcher.

Instead, the board adopted \$1.7 million in savings, other cuts and additional revenue to arrive at the \$2.1 million override amount. The increase is largely driven by rising health insurance and pension costs, which Chairman Chris Riley called "the big back breaker."

At their meeting, selectmen also unanimously voted to adopt the Finance Committee's recommendation for a \$1.665 million debt-exclusion override to fund Happy Hollow roof repairs, library roof repairs, Town Building roof repairs, and a new fire truck.

"We have no choice to support it if we literally want roofs over our heads," Tichnor said.

The debt-exclusion override would not result in an increase in tax bills because it replaces retiring exempt debt.

Although he voted in favor of the debt-exclusion override, Selectman Doug Leard said he would eventually stop voting for capital repairs unless the town put together a capital project planning committee.

The other selectmen agreed that the committee should be formed sometime after Town Meeting.

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