

**INFORMATION FOR
VOTERS
TOWN OF GROTON**



**2019 BALLOT QUESTIONS
TOWN ELECTION
MAY 21, 2019**

**Published by:
Michael F. Bouchard
Town Clerk of the Town of Groton**

Town of Groton (MA)
2019 Annual Town Election
Voting Information

- **Annual Town Election**
 - Groton is holding its Annual Town Election on **Tuesday, May 21, 2019**
 - Polls will be open from 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM
 - Polling Locations:
 - Precinct 1: Groton Town Hall, 173 Main Street
 - Precinct 2: Groton Country Club, 94 Lovers Lane (opposite Post Office)
 - Precinct 3: Groton Country Club, 94 Lovers Lane (opposite Post Office)

- **Purpose of the Annual Town Election**
 - Vote for all Town Offices.
 - Vote for two Proposition 2 ½ override debt exclusion questions.
 - These Questions are explained in this brochure.

- **Absentee Ballots**
 - Absentee ballots are available.
 - The last day and hour to request an absentee ballot is Monday, May 20 at 12:00 Noon.
 - Please allow time for mailing or be prepared to vote in the Town Clerk's office.

- **Voter information**
 - If you would like to check on your voter registration, polling location or have another voting related question, please contact the Town Clerk's office
 - Office: 978-448-1100
 - Email: townclerk@townofgroton.org
 - Web: www.townofgroton.org

- **Annual Town Election Information**
 - Please visit our web site at www.grotonma.gov
 - Under the Government tab, select Election Information and then Town Elections.

BALLOT QUESTION INFORMATION
For May 21, 2019 ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
Proposition 2 ½ Override Questions

As authorized by Chapter 53, section 18B of the General Laws

WHY ARE YOU RECEIVING THIS INFORMATION?

In towns that accept the provisions of section 18B, as Groton did by vote of the 2015 Spring Town Meeting, the Select Board is required to print and mail to each household where a registered voter resides information relating to each question that will appear on the town election ballot. The information must include (1) the full text of each question; (2) a fair and concise summary of each question, including a one sentence statement describing the effect of a yes or no vote, prepared by the town counsel; and (3) arguments for and against each question, which may not exceed 150 words. When a voter question will appear on the ballot, the statute provides for a request by the town counsel for “written arguments from the principal proponents and opponents of the question,” with a notice period of at least 7 days. The statute also provides that the principal proponents and principal opponents shall be the persons determined by the town counsel to be best able to present the arguments for and against the question. If no argument is received from a proponent or opponent, an argument must be prepared by the town counsel. Please note that pursuant to Select Board policy, a number of Town residents were provided this booklet in advance for their input and proposed edits to ensure that the information contained herein is better understood by the general public.

Ballot Question #1:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to renovate and reconstruct the Department of Public Works Facilities located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road, Groton, MA?

Yes _____ No _____

Summary of Question #1:

This question relates to the ability of the Town to pay the annual debt service required for the bonds issued to construct new Public Works Facilities outside of the limits of Proposition 2½, so-called. The appropriation of funds for this project is on the Warrant for the 2019 Spring Town Meeting. Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, the local appropriating authority may, by two-thirds vote, seek voter approval at a regular or special election to assess taxes for debt service of a particular project in excess of the amount allowed annually under Proposition 2½. The maximum amount a city or town may levy in a given year is generally referred to as the **levy limit**. However, under the law, the voters may vote to allow the amount required for annual debt service on projects approved at Town Meeting to exceed the Proposition 2½ limits. This question is for a so-called “debt exclusion,” to exclude the debt service payments from the Proposition 2 ½ limits annually for the life of the debt service, which is expected to be 20 years. This question is being presented to the voters in order to authorize the Town to raise by taxation, outside of the limits imposed by Proposition 2 ½, the annual debt service to pay for construction of new Highway Garage Facilities.

The low bid to renovate and construct the DPW Facilities is \$4,620,250, so this is the amount of money for which an appropriation was voted at Groton Spring annual town meeting on April 29, 2019. While the actual bonding costs and results are subject to timing and a variety of market events and therefore are specifically unknown at this time, the town's financial officers advise voters that such an appropriation might then translate into a potential annual debt service possibly estimated at approximately in the \$335,000 range. These financial officers further advise voters that the impact to the tax rate could then be estimated in the approximate range of \$.19 per thousand valuation and that such a tax rate number could theoretically amount to an estimated \$87.21 per year on the average tax bill (a home valued at \$459,000) for an approximate estimated total cost of \$1,744 to the average tax bill over twenty years.

Effect of a Yes or No Vote:

A YES VOTE will allow the Town to issue bonds and pay the annual debt service required by the bonds to renovate and reconstruct the Department of Public Works Facilities located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road in Groton outside of the limits of the Proposition 2½ levy limit. Property taxes will be increased to pay the annual debt service for the life of the bonds (expected to be 20 years).

A NO VOTE will not allow the Town to borrow the funds necessary to construct renovate and reconstruct the Department of Public Works Facilities

Arguments In Favor And Against Question #1:

IN FAVOR: A yes vote will bring our current facility into health, safety, regulatory compliance as well as expanding the facility, which was outgrown the day it was occupied, to serve the community for the future. The upgrades will improve towards the goal of a proper and safe work environment for employees in the DPW garage as well as in the DPW office. The main DPW garage and offices will have improvements in lighting, heat, ventilation as well as other regulatory mandates. The facility will provide the infrastructure for the equipment used for all the operations of the DPW from road maintenance to mowing the parks and commons. This covers the size increase, since the current facility was constructed in 1988, of the growing Town including new ball field complexes, 28 miles of new roads over 3000 new residents as well as the support for ALL the other Town departments.

Please vote "Yes" on Question 1.

AGAINST: A "no" vote will help constrain the cost of government in Groton. Estimates for this project were recently received. The Impact of this project on future capital needs has not been determined. All options should be considered before funds are borrowed, incurring debt for 20 years and significantly impacting the average tax bill.

Please vote "No" on Question 1.

Arguments In Favor And Against Question #2:

Ballot Question #2:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition two and one-half, so-called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to install a new roof on the Groton Public Library located at 99 Main Street, Groton, MA?

Yes _____ No _____

Summary of Question #2:

This question relates to the ability of the Town to pay the annual debt service required for the bonds issued to repair the roof at the Groton Public Library outside of the limits of Proposition 2½, so-called. The appropriation of funds for this project is on the warrant for the 2019 Spring Town Meeting. Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 59, Section 21C, the local appropriating authority may, by two-thirds vote, seek voter approval at a regular or special election to assess taxes for debt service of a particular project in excess of the amount allowed annually under Proposition 2½. The maximum amount a city or town may levy in a given year is generally referred to as the **levy limit**. However, under the law, the voters may vote to allow the amount required for annual debt service on projects approved at Town Meeting to exceed the Proposition 2½ limits. This question is for a so-called “debt exclusion,” to exclude the debt service payments from the Proposition 2 ½ limits annually for the life of the debt service, which is expected to be 20 years. This question is being presented to the voters in order to authorize the Town to raise by taxation, outside of the limits imposed by Proposition 2 ½, the annual debt service to pay for the repair of the roof of the Groton Public Library.

The low bid to install the new roof after applying a CPC Grant is \$1,131,041, so this is the amount of money for which an appropriation was voted at Groton Spring annual town meeting on May 6, 2019. While the actual bonding costs and results are subject to timing and a variety of market events and therefore are specifically unknown at this time, the town's financial officers advise voters that such an appropriation might then translate into a potential annual debt service estimated in the \$82,000 range. These financial officers further advise voters that the possible impact to the tax rate could then be estimated in the approximate range of \$.05 per thousand valuation and that such a tax rate number could theoretically amount to an estimated \$22.95 per year on the average tax bill for an approximate estimated total cost of \$459 to the average tax bill (a home valued at \$459,000) over twenty years.

Effect of a Yes or No Vote:

A YES VOTE will allow the Town to issue bonds and pay the annual debt service required by the bonds to install a new roof on the Groton Public Library located at 99 Main Street in Groton outside of the limits of the Proposition 2½ levy limit. Property taxes will be increased to pay the annual debt service for the life of the bonds (expected to be 20 years).

A NO VOTE will not allow the Town to borrow the funds necessary to install a new roof on the Groton Public Library.

Arguments In Favor And Against Question #2:

IN FAVOR: A YES vote will support the funding to replace the failing roofing systems at the town library. The 1999 synthetic slate roof has failed and is allowing water into the building; the 1999 rubber roof is at the end of its useful life; and the 1893 slate roof is 126 years old and needs to be replaced with new snow and ice underlayments to protect against ice dams and the substantial interior damage they have caused. Engineers were hired to study the building envelope and their report extensively documents the critical need to replace the entire library roof. Voting YES supports funding a new roof at the town library.

Please vote “yes” on Question 2.

AGAINST: A “no” vote will help constrain the escalating cost of government in Groton. A “no” vote will prevent this project from going forward at this time. The needs of our community in coming years should be considered in sum before funds are borrowed and debt incurred for this project.

Please vote “No” on Question 2.

PROPOSITION 2 ½ DEBT EXCLUSION EXPLAINED

The Town of Groton has two Proposition 2 ½ Debt Exclusion questions on the May 21, 2019 town election ballot. The following is a brief explanation of the Proposition 2 ½ state law concerning Debt Exclusion.

What is a debt exclusion? A debt exclusion vote allows a town to raise tax revenue in addition to that generated under the usual Proposition 2 ½ levy. (The levy limit is the total amount any community is allowed to raise through taxation. Proposition 2 ½ limits the annual increase to 2.5% plus new growth plus increases in assessed value of property.) Additional tax revenues can be generated under a debt exclusion to pay for debt (principal and interest) borrowed for a specific purpose. In this way, a town can build a school or other building and fund it with additional revenue apart from its existing Proposition 2 ½ levy. In other words, a debt exclusion is a means of funding a particular project with a temporary increase in the levy limit. The debt is **excluded** from (that is, exempt from) the levy limitations of Proposition 2 ½.

How does a debt exclusion differ from a general override? Both are Proposition 2 ½ questions and, in municipal finance language, both are technically overrides. However, there are some basic differences. While both will increase your property taxes, a debt exclusion is a temporary increase while an operating override is a permanent increase in the town's tax levy limit. A debt exclusion finances a particular project and your taxes increase for a period of time - the life of the debt which finances the project. When the financing bond is paid off, your tax increase for that project goes away. Bonds for large municipal projects usually run for 10 or 20 years.

Why are there two votes – one at the polls and one at Town Meeting? This two-step process is required for all Proposition 2 ½ questions under state law. A debt exclusion is required to pass two thresholds: a two-thirds majority at Town Meeting and a simple majority at the ballot. The two questions on the May 21 ballot are for proposed projects that have passed the 2/3rds appropriation vote at Town Meeting.

What does voting “yes” on a debt exclusion question at the ballot mean? A “yes” vote allows the town to use excluded debt to fund the specific project. A “yes” vote does not mean approval of the project; that only happens at Town Meeting with the appropriation vote. There is no dollar amount shown in the ballot question. The Town Meeting vote approves a specific dollar amount to be borrowed for the project.

What does voting “no” on a debt exclusion question at the ballot mean? A “no” vote means the town cannot exclude (or exempt) debt from the levy. As the Town Meeting approved the project contingent upon passage of the debt exclusion ballot question, then the project cannot go forward.

What does the town's financial advisor or credit rating agencies think of debt exclusions? Generally, depending upon the town's financial condition, credit rating agencies state that large capital projects are better funded with debt exclusions (i.e. exempt debt). That does not imply support for any particular project, but rather a preference for that funding mechanism over other alternatives.



**ABSENTEE
OFFICIAL BALLOT
ANNUAL TOWN ELECTION
GROTON, MASSACHUSETTS
MAY 21, 2019**

Michael Bushnell
TOWN CLERK

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS

- A. TO VOTE, completely fill in the OVAL to the RIGHT of your choice(s) like this:
- B. Follow directions as to the number of candidates to be marked for each office.
- C. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write the person's name and address on the line provided and completely fill in the OVAL.

<p>BOARD OF ASSESSORS Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>DONALD R. BLACK 573 Longley Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>PARK COMMISSION Vote for NOT For Three Years More than TWO</p> <p>KENNETH J. BUSHNELL 481 Longley Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>TRUSTEES OF GROTON PUBLIC LIBRARY Vote for NOT For Three Years More than TWO</p> <p>MARK W. GERATH 45 West Street Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>NANCY FOLEY WILDER 33 Worthen Drive Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>BOARD OF HEALTH Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>ROBERT J. FLEISCHER 119 Nashua Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>PARK COMMISSION Vote for NOT For One Year More than ONE</p> <p>DONALD R. BLACK 573 Longley Road <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>GROTON WATER COMMISSION Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>GREG R. FISHBONE 95 Main Street Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>SELECT BOARD Vote for NOT For Three Years More than TWO</p> <p>JOSHUA DEGEN 409 Martins Pond Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>BROOKS T. LYMAN 328 Townsend Road <input type="radio"/></p> <p>JOHN G. PETROPOULOS 18 Kemp Street <input type="radio"/></p> <p>JOHN F. REILLY 50 Arrow Trail <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>PLANNING BOARD Vote for NOT For Three Years More than TWO</p> <p>GEORGE E. BARRINGER, JR. 50 Fox Run Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>GUS G. WIDMAYER 135 Skyfields Drive <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>GROTON - DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL COMMITTEE Vote for NOT For Three Years More than TWO</p> <p>MARLENA A. GILBERT 45 Arbor Way Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>ERICA M. McCONNELL 40 Tavern Road <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>COMMISSIONER OF TRUST FUNDS Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>RACHAEL E. MEAD 24 Britt Lane <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>PLANNING BOARD Vote for NOT For One Year More than ONE</p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>GROTON HOUSING AUTHORITY Vote for NOT For Five Years More than ONE</p> <p>BROOKS T. LYMAN 328 Townsend Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>
<p>GROTON ELECTRIC LIGHT COMMISSION Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>RODNEY R. HERSH 8 Bridge Street Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	<p>GROTON SEWER COMMISSION Vote for NOT For Three Years More than ONE</p> <p>JAMES L. GMEINER 366 Longley Road Candidate for Re-election <input type="radio"/></p> <p>(Write-in) <input type="radio"/></p>	

BALLOT QUESTIONS

QUESTION 1:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition two and one half, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to renovate and reconstruct the Department of Public Works Facilities located at 600 Cow Pond Brook Road, Groton, MA?

YES

NO

QUESTION 2:

Shall the Town of Groton be allowed to exempt from the provisions of Proposition two and one half, so called, the amounts required to pay for the bonds issued in order to install a new roof on the Groton Public Library located at 99 Main Street, Groton, MA?

YES

NO

Town of Groton
Select Board
173 Main Street
Groton, MA 01450

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