

**SELECT BOARD MEETING MINUTES
COMMUNITY BUDGET FORUM
GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025
APPROVED**

Select Board Members Present: Alison Manugian, Chair; Becky Pine, Vice Chair; Peter Cunningham, Clerk; John Reilly; Matt Pisani;

Also Present: Mark Haddad, Town Manager; Kara Cruikshank, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager; Dr. Geoff Bruno, Groton Dunstable Regional School District (GDRSD) Superintendent; Kristin DeFrancisco, GDRSD Assistant Superintendent; Abbie Dougherty, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent; Sherry Kersey, Director of Business and Finance; GDRSD Director of Business and Finance; Jason Silva, Dunstable Town Administrator; Patricia DuFresne, Assistant Director of Finance/Town Accountant;

Groton Finance Committee: Bud Robertson, Chair; Mary Linskey, Vice Chair; David Manugian; Scott Whitefield;

GDRSD School Committee Members: Fay Raynor; Lacey McCabe, Chair; Rohit Basin; Rosanna Cassavecchia;

Dunstable Advisory Committee Members: Jake Lewon, Chair; Leo Tometich; Tim Stewart; Matthew Naughton;

Dunstable Select Board Members: Leah Basbanes, Chair; Kieran Meehan.

Ms. McCabe called the Groton Dunstable Regional School District to order at 7:00 P.M.

Ms. Manugian called the Groton Select Board to order at 7:00 P.M.

Ms. Basbanes called the Dunstable Select Board to order at 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Robertson called the Groton Finance Committee to order at 7:00 P.M.

Mr. Lewon called the Dunstable Advisory Board to order at 7:00 P.M.

The Community Budget Forum was held to present the Proposed Operating Budgets for Fiscal Year 2026 for the Towns of Dunstable and Groton and the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District. The forum aimed to provide information to the public and answer questions.

Groton Town Manager Mr. Haddad presented the PowerPoint presentation for the Town of Groton's Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 (see included in these minutes).

Dunstable Town Administrator Mr. Silva presented the PowerPoint presentation for the Town of Dunstable's Proposed Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2026 (see included in these minutes).

Superintendent Dr. Geoff Bruno presented his Proposed Operating Budget for the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District for Fiscal Year 2026 (see included in these minutes).

Once the presentations concluded, the attendees were given the opportunity to express their opinions and ask questions. Representatives from the Towns of Groton and Dunstable and the Groton-Dunstable Regional School District addressed these inquiries. Groton Select Board Chair Manugian encouraged everyone to visit the websites of the towns and school district for additional information. She also announced that childcare would be provided during both Town Meetings and urged voters to participate in Early Voting. The Boards thanked community members for attending the forum and encouraged them to reach out with any questions they may have.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

COMMUNITY BUDGET FORUM

Town of Groton
Town of Dunstable
Groton Dunstable
Regional School District

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16, 2025

Groton Dunstable Regional High School





TOWN OF
GROTON
FISCAL YEAR
2026
PROPOSED
BUDGET

FISCAL YEAR 2026 GROTON BUDGET PROCESS



PROCESS

The proposed Budget reflects Groton's on-going commitment to transparency, fiscal responsibility and the well-being of Groton.

The defeat of the Proposition 2½ Override last year had a significant impact on the Groton Dunstable Regional School District which limited funding for essential programs, thereby impacting their ability to continue to provide the quality education Groton's and Dunstable's children deserve.

The Town needed to be more strategic and innovative in its approach to budgeting to ensure that it prioritized the needs of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District while remaining within Groton's financial constraints.

The Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Manager remain proud of the continued collaboration with the Groton Dunstable Regional School District and the Town of Dunstable.

PROCESS



The Town Manager shall limit Municipal Spending in Fiscal Year 2026 to a total increase of \$475,000. Based on an increase in Health Insurance (14.8%), the Finance Committee revised this Guidance to \$518,204.



Any remaining new revenues in Fiscal Year 2026 shall be used to cover the Proposed FY 2026 Operating Assessment of the Groton Dunstable Regional School District. \$1,365,564 is available in the Balanced Budget for the School District.



FY 2026 TOTAL TAX LEVY CALCULATION

- FY 2026 LEVY LIMIT \$ 39,317,497
- DEBT EXCLUSION – TOWN \$ 5,148,723
- FY 2026 DEBT ADJUSTMENT \$ (1,062)
- DEBT EXCLUSION – GDRSD \$ 110,389
- SUB-TOTAL – EXCLUSIONS \$ 5,258,050
- TOTAL TAX LEVY \$ 44,575,547

REVENUE PROJECTIONS

OTHER ESTIMATED REVENUES

• State Aid	\$1,192,703
• Motor Vehicle Excise Taxes	\$1,860,000
• General Revenues	\$3,708,327
• Free Cash	\$ 603,855
• Other Available Funds	<u>\$ 480,000</u>
TOTAL	\$7,844,885





New Revenues

<u>Revenue Source</u>	<u>Budgeted FY 2025</u>	<u>Proposed FY 2026</u>	<u>Dollar Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Property Tax*	\$ 38,052,807	\$ 39,317,497	\$ 1,264,690	3.32%
State Aid	\$ 1,152,082	\$ 1,192,703	\$ 40,621	3.53%
Local Receipts - Excluding Country Club	\$ 4,902,133	\$ 4,693,327	\$ (208,806)	-4.26%
Country Club Revenue	\$ 750,000	\$ 875,000	\$ 125,000	16.67%
Other Available Funds	\$ 350,000	\$ 480,000	\$ 130,000	37.14%
TOTAL	\$ 45,207,022	\$ 46,558,527	\$ 1,351,505	2.99%

*Includes 2½ percent increase allowed by law and estimated \$15 million in new growth.



Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Municipal Budget

General Government	\$ 2,565,835
Land Use	\$ 549,503
Protection of Persons	\$ 4,864,896
DPW	\$ 2,475,216
Library Citizen Services	\$ 2,439,509
Employee Benefits	\$ 4,922,406
Total	\$17,817,365

PROPOSED MUNICIPAL BUDGET



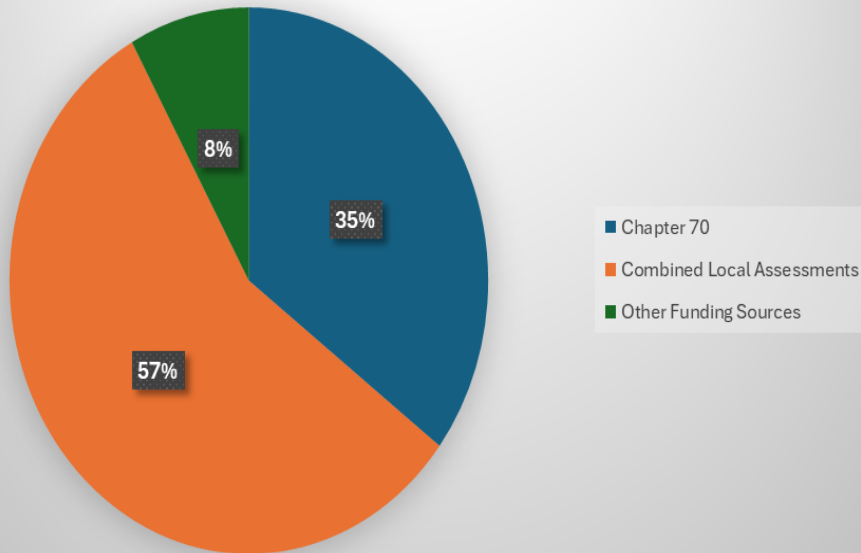
GDRSD BUDGET

- The lack of support from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts continues to adversely impact the Groton Dunstable Regional School District.
- Since 2008, the Assessments to both Groton and Dunstable have increased disproportionately to the funding received from the Commonwealth in terms of Chapter 70 Aid. The taxpayers of Groton and Dunstable are now paying a larger percentage of the overall Budget as shown on the following Chart:

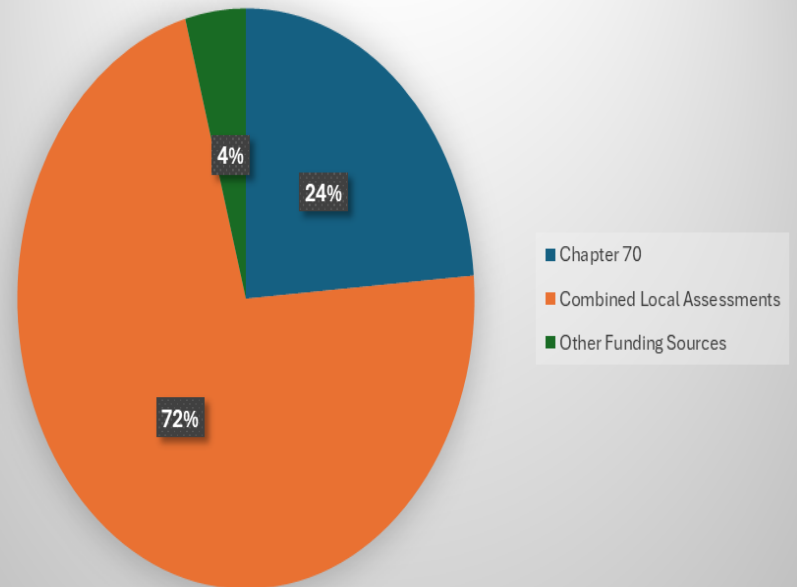
GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



FISCAL YEAR 2008



FISCAL YEAR 2025



GROTON DUNSTABLE REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

- The FY 25 Budget increased by only 0.91%
- The District has eliminated 30 positions over the last two Fiscal Years
- State Aid accounts for only 24% of the District's Total Revenues
- Groton Taxpayers contribute 55.3% of the total revenues, demonstrating the important role Groton plays in supporting the education mission of the District



GDRSD ASSESSMENT

The Finance Committee approved a \$518,204 increase in the Municipal Budget, leaving \$1,365,564 for the Groton Dunstable Regional School District within the current levy, or an increase in the Assessment of 5.2%.



This increase is included in the Balanced Budget and is not enough to meet the needs of the District in Fiscal Year 2026.



The approved Groton Dunstable Regional School District Committee Budget calls for a 5.98% increase, which requires an increase in Groton's Assessment of \$2,038,814, a shortfall of \$673,250.

**Proposed
Override of
Proposition
2½ to cover
the
Assessment
from the
Groton
Dunstable
Regional
School
District**

- The Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Manager are in unanimous support of an Override of Proposition 2½ in Fiscal Year 2026 for the School District in the amount of \$673,250.
- This will allow the District to continue to provide a quality education for the children of Groton and provide the District another year to complete its various studies including changes in the Regional Agreement and Operational Audit to further streamline and improve its overall operation.
- A \$673,250 override would add \$0.25 to the anticipated FY 2026 Tax Rate and cost the average taxpayer (a home valued at \$707,877) an additional \$177.





Fire Department

- The balanced Fiscal Year 2026 Operating Budget includes funding for two (2) additional Firefighter/EMTs that were added at the 2024 Fall Town Meeting, bringing the total number of full-time Firefighter/EMTs to ten (10), plus the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief.
- The Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Manager are proposing that the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget be increased by \$630,904 to add an additional six (6) Firefighter/EMTs to the Groton Fire Department to bring the total number of full-time Firefighter/EMTs to sixteen (16) allowing for four (4) Firefighter/EMTs to be on duty 24 hours per day, 7 days a week.

History of Need

- This request is not new, as additional staffing has been requested in the Fire Department as early as 2020. From Fiscal Year 2021 through Fiscal Year 2025, former Fire Chief Steele McCurdy and current Fire Chief Arthur Cheeks have provided data to justify the need for additional staffing in the Groton Fire Department.
- It should be made clear that the request for additional staffing has been discussed and requested long before the closure of the Nashoba Valley Medical Center.
- The call volume alone since 2021 has required a consideration of additional staffing. The Fire Department responded to 1,705 calls in 2024 compared to 1,465 calls just one year prior. Of the 1,705 requests, 53% were classified as EMS which is a 30% increase from 2023.





Overlapping Calls

From January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022, out of 1423 total incidents, there were 163 overlapping incidents, or 11% of the total calls.

From January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2023, out of 1470 total incidents, there were 207 overlapping calls, or 14% of the total calls.

From January 1, 2024 through August 31, 2024 (closure of Nashoba Valley Medical Center), out of 1085 total incidents, there were 140 overlapping calls, or 13% of the total calls.

From September 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024, out of 635 total incidents, there were 112 overlapping calls, or 18% of the total calls. This represents a 62% increase of the calls over the first 8 months of 2024.

Proposed Override of Proposition 2½ to add six Firefighter/EMTs to the Groton Fire Department

- The Select Board, Finance Committee and Town Manager are recommending an Override of Proposition 2½ in Fiscal Year 2026 to add six (6) Firefighter/EMTs to the Groton Fire Department in the amount of \$780,904 (FY 26 impact of \$630,904).
- This will allow for four (4) Firefighter/EMTs to be on duty 24 hours per day.
- The FY 26 increase of \$630,904 would add \$0.22 to the anticipated FY 2026 Tax Rate and cost the average taxpayer (a home valued at \$707,877) an additional \$156.



FY 2026 Proposed Balanced Budget



<u>Category</u>	<u>FY 2025</u>	<u>FY 2026</u>	<u>Dollar Difference</u>	<u>Percentage Change</u>
General Government	\$ 2,574,970	\$ 2,565,835	\$ (9,135)	-0.35%
Land Use	\$ 520,749	\$ 549,503	\$ 28,754	5.52%
Protection of Persons and Property	\$ 4,683,315	\$ 4,864,896	\$ 181,582	3.88%
Department of Public Works	\$ 2,389,516	\$ 2,475,216	\$ 85,700	3.59%
Library and Citizen Services	\$ 2,288,957	\$ 2,439,509	\$ 150,552	6.58%
Employee Benefits	\$ 5,199,336	\$ 4,922,406	\$ (276,930)	-5.33%
Sub-Total	\$ 17,656,843	\$ 17,817,366	\$ 160,524	0.91%
Debt Service - Excluded	\$ 4,393,463	\$ 5,148,723	\$ 755,260	17.19%
Debt Service - In Levy Only	\$ 538,989	\$ 406,680	\$ (132,309)	-24.55%
Sub-Total - All Municipal	\$ 22,589,295	\$ 23,372,769	\$ 783,475	3.47%
Nashoba Tech	\$ 966,719	\$ 908,490	\$ (58,229)	-6.02%
Groton-Dunstable Operating	\$ 26,412,384	\$ 27,777,948	\$ 1,365,564	5.17%
Groton Operating Grant	\$ 619,000	\$ -	\$ (619,000)	-100.00%
Groton-Dunstable Excluded Debt	\$ 384,622	\$ 110,389	\$ (274,233)	-71.30%
Groton-Dunstable In-Levy Debt	\$ 60,534	\$ -	\$ (60,534)	-100.00%
Groton Dunstable Capital	\$ 295,767	\$ 278,643	\$ (17,124)	-5.79%
Sub-Total - Education	\$ 28,739,026	\$ 29,075,470	\$ 336,444	1.17%
Grand Total - Town Budget	\$51,328,321	\$52,448,239	\$ 1,119,919	2.18%

Balanced Budget Tax Impact

	<u>Actual</u> <u>FY 2025</u>	<u>Proposed</u> <u>FY 2026</u>	<u>Dollar</u> <u>Change</u>	<u>Percent</u> <u>Change</u>
Levy Capacity Used	\$ 38,052,807	\$ 39,317,497	\$ 1,264,690	3.32%
Tax Rate on Levy Capacity Used	\$ 13.55	\$ 13.92	\$ 0.37	2.73%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 9,592	\$ 9,854	\$ 262	2.73%
Excluded Debt	\$ 4,776,976	\$ 5,258,050	\$ 481,074	10.07%
Tax Rate on Excluded Debt	\$ 1.70	\$ 1.86	\$ 0.16	9.41%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 1,203	\$ 1,317	\$ 113	9.41%
Final Levy Used	\$ 42,829,783	\$ 44,575,547	\$ 1,745,764	4.08%
Final Tax Rate	\$ 15.25	\$ 15.78	\$ 0.53	3.48%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 10,795	\$ 11,170	\$ 375	3.48%

Override Budget Tax Impact

	<u>Actual FY 2025</u>	<u>Proposed FY 2026</u>	<u>Dollar Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Levy Capacity Used	\$ 38,052,807	\$ 39,317,497	\$ 1,264,690	3.32%
Tax Rate on Levy Capacity Used	\$ 13.55	\$ 13.92	\$ 0.37	2.73%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 9,592	\$ 9,854	\$ 262	2.73%
Excluded Debt	\$ 4,776,976	\$ 5,258,050	\$ 481,074	10.07%
Tax Rate on Excluded Debt	\$ 1.70	\$ 1.86	\$ 0.16	9.41%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 1,203	\$ 1,317	\$ 113	9.41%
School District Override	\$ -	\$ 673,250	\$ 673,250	1.77%
Tax Rate on School District Override	\$ -	\$ 0.25	\$ 0.25	1.85%
Average Tax Bill	\$ -	\$ 177	\$ 177	1.85%
Fire Department Override	\$ -	\$ 630,904	\$ 630,904	1.66%
Tax Rate on Fire Override	\$ -	\$ 0.22	\$ 0.22	1.62%
Average Tax Bill	\$ -	\$ 156	\$ 156	1.62%
Final Levy Used	\$ 42,829,783	\$ 45,879,701	\$ 3,049,918	7.12%
Final Tax Rate	\$ 15.25	\$ 16.25	\$ 1.00	6.56%
Average Tax Bill	\$ 10,795	\$ 11,503	\$ 708	6.56%



THANK YOU

QUESTIONS

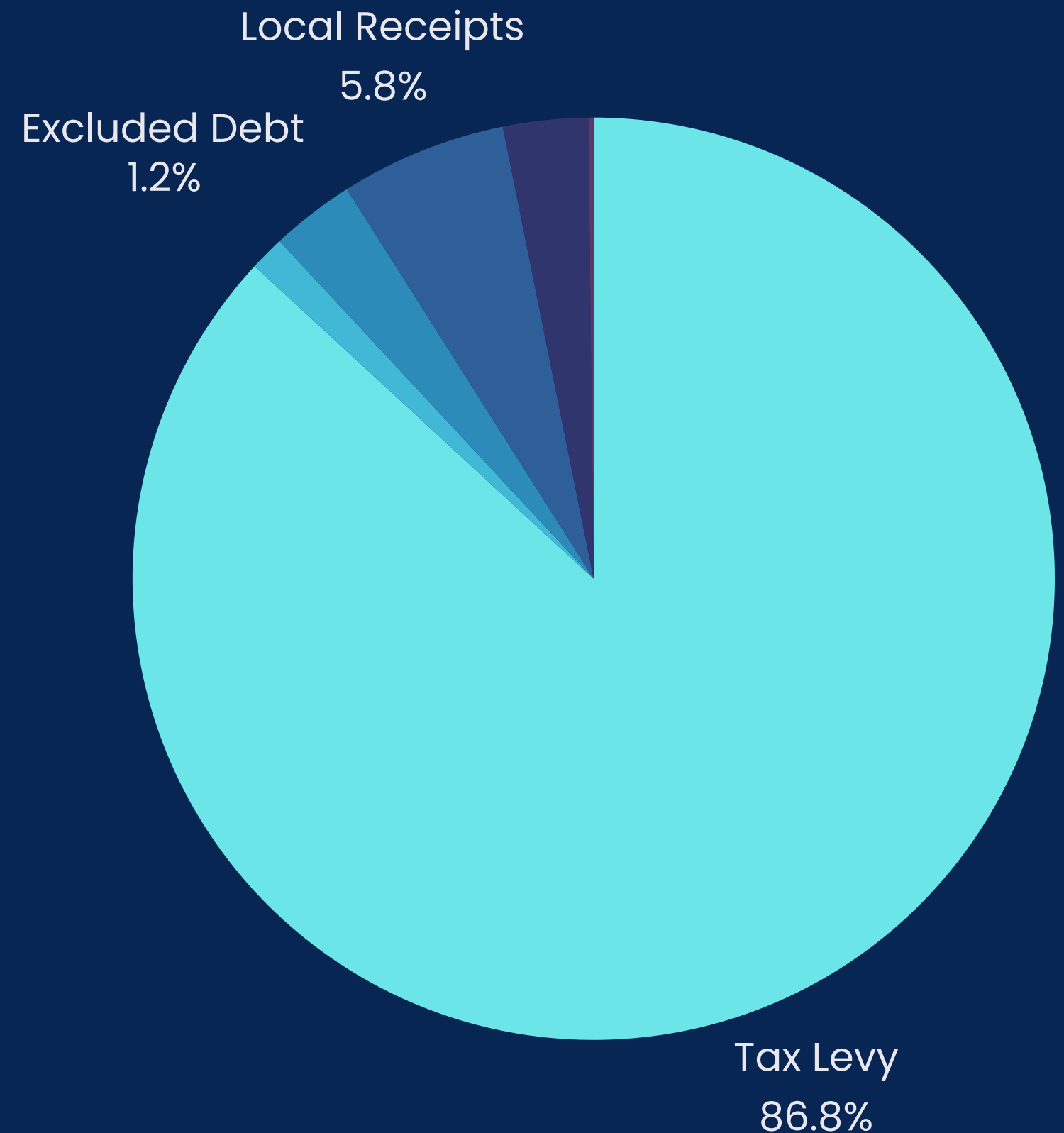
TOWN OF DUNSTABLE

**FY26 OPERATING
BUDGET**

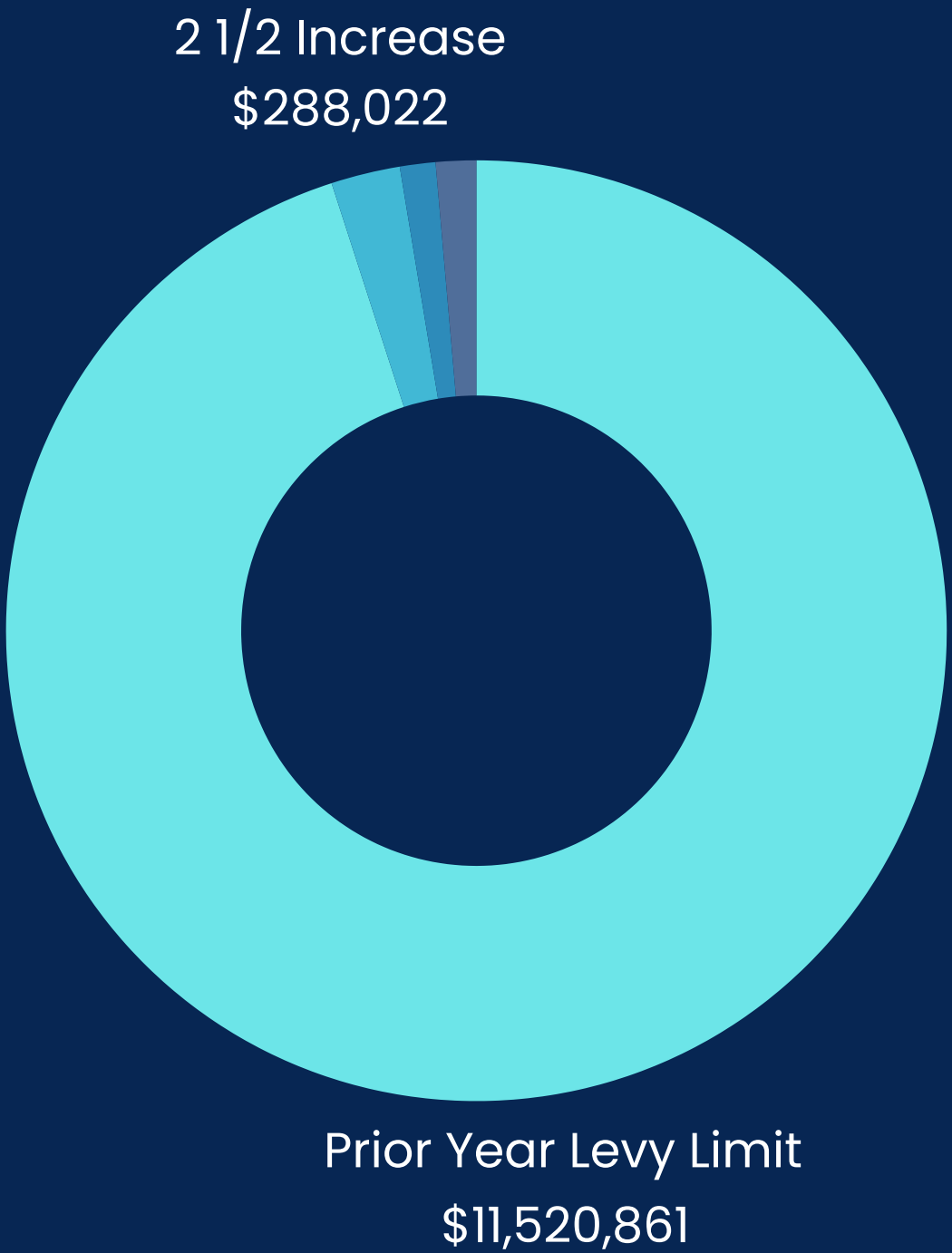
Budget Forum
April 16, 2025

FY26 REVENUE OVERVIEW

Revenue	Amount
Tax Levy	11,928,883
Excluded Debt	\$167,853
Cherry Sheet	\$403,149
Local Receipts	\$800,000
Free Cash	\$408,724
Overlay Surplus	\$25,000
Total	\$13,733,609



REAL ESTATE TAXES



	FY25 Actuals	FY26	\$ Increase	% Increase
Prior Year Levy Limit	\$11,095,321	\$11,520,861	\$425,540	3.84%
2 1/2 % Allowed Increase	\$277,383	\$288,022	\$10,639	3.84%
New & Amended Growth	\$148,157	\$120,000	-\$28,157	-19.00%
Excluded Debt	\$315,217	\$167,853	-\$147,364	-46.75%
Total	\$11,836,078	\$12,096,736	\$260,658	2.20%

Excluded

Debt Service



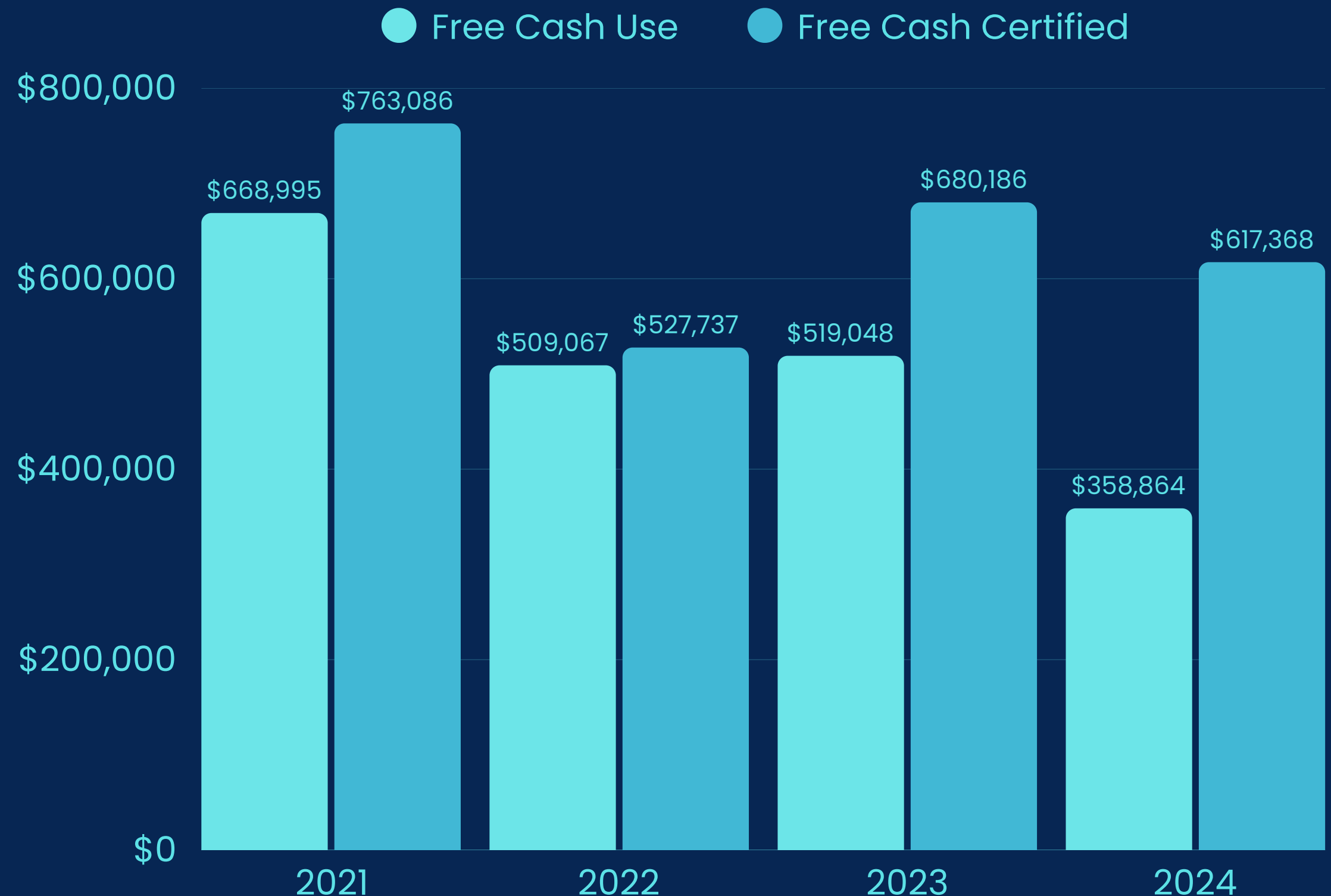
	Excluded Debt	Capital Exclusion
FY18	\$586,446	
FY19	\$561,136	
FY20	\$530,275	
FY21	\$489,288	
FY22	\$365,120	
FY23	\$475,253	\$188,974
FY24	\$326,394	
FY25	\$315,217	
FY26	\$167,853	

Historic Trends

FREE CASH

The FY26 budget continues the Town's past practice of utilizing its free cash to balance its operating budget. The FY26 operating budget relies on a total of \$105,117. The Town is also using free cash for the following purposes:

- \$83,607 for GDRSD Capital Improvements
- \$120,000 for Town Capital Improvements
- \$50,000 to transfer to the Town's General Stabilization Fund
- \$50,000 to transfer to the Town's Capital Improvement Stabilization Fund



FREE CASH

Next year, the Town is using \$408,724 or 51.61% of its available free cash. The Town's Certified Free Cash available for use in FY26 is \$791,942.

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Budget	\$11,537,330	\$12,265,143	\$13,010,740	\$13,114,504
Free Cash	\$763,086	\$527,737	\$680,186	\$617,368
Free Cash % Budget	6.6%	4.3%	5.2%	4.7%
Free Cash Use	\$668,995	\$509,067	\$519,048	\$358,864
Free Cash % Use	87.7%	96.5%	76.3%	58.1%

REVENUE CHANGES

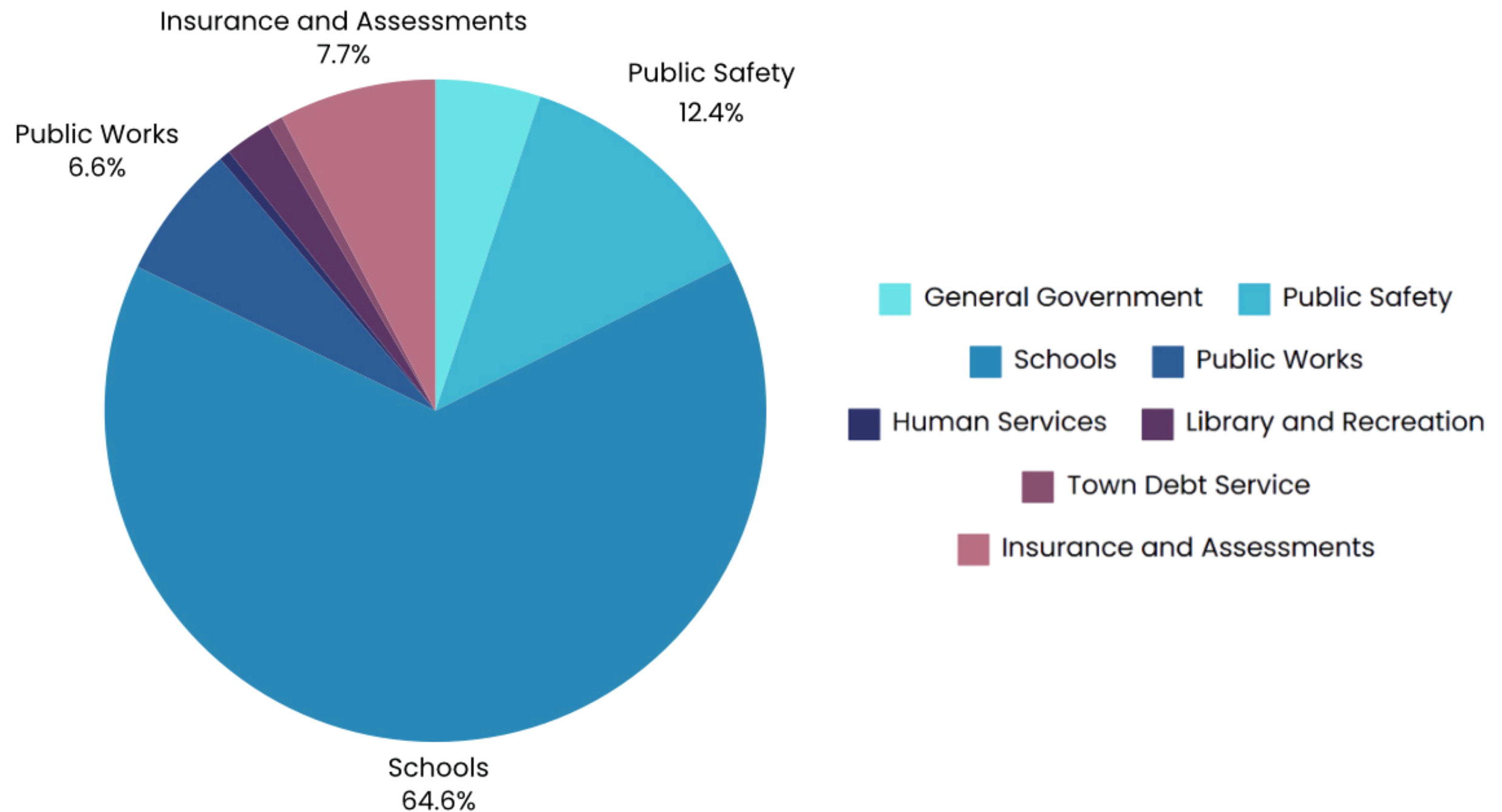
FY26 VERSUS FY25

- The statutory 2.5% increase on the Town's tax levy.
- Projected new growth of \$120,000; in FY25 the Town projected \$110,00 in new growth revenue.
- Local receipts projected to increase from \$750,000 to \$800,000.
- State aid based on the Governor's proposed budget.
- Decrease in free cash from budget revenue from \$358,724 to \$308,724.
- A reduction in excluded debt tax proceeds from \$315,217 in FY25 to \$167,853 in FY26 to fund previously approved excluded debt payments.
- \$25,000 from overlay surplus.

FY26 EXPENDITURES OVERVIEW

The Regional School Districts' Assessments amount to approximately 64% of the Town's overall budget totaling \$9,020,968

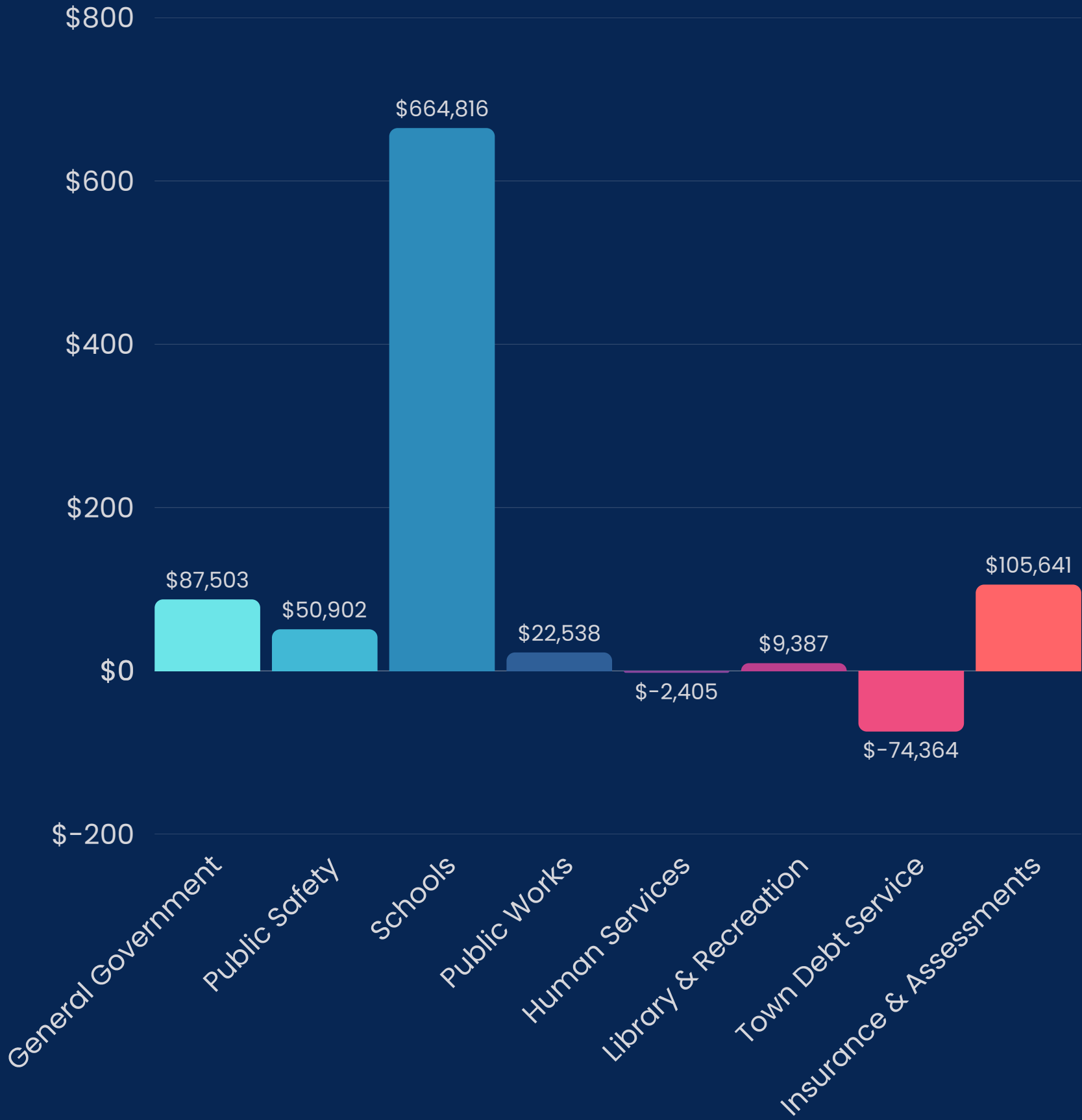
Town operations, debt, and capital makeup the remaining 36% at a total of \$5,070,797.



FY26 EXPENDITURES

Town

	FY25	FY26	Increase/Decrease	% Increase
General Government	\$631,255	\$718,758	\$87,503	13.86%
Public Safety	\$1,687,507	\$1,738,409	\$50,902	3.02%
Public Works	\$895,811	\$918,349	\$22,538	2.52%
Human Services	\$79,328	\$76,923	-\$2,405	-3.03%
Library & Recreation	\$310,494	\$319,881	\$9,387	3.02%
Town Debt Service	\$179,627	\$105,262	-\$74,364	-41.40%
Insurance & Assessments	\$967,574	\$1,073,215	\$105,641	10.92%
Total Town Budget	\$4,751,596	\$4,950,797	\$199,201	4.19%



Schools

GDRSD	\$8,177,586	\$8,822,894	\$645,308	7.89%
GLTHS	\$178,566	\$198,074	\$19,508	10.92%
Total Schools Budget	\$8,356,152	\$9,020,968	\$664,816	7.96%

Total

Total Town Budget	\$13,107,748	\$13,971,765	\$864,017	6.59%
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FY26 MAJOR BUDGET VARIANCES

Schools



Regional Schools Assessments: GDRSD overall assessment is increasing by 7.89% and the Greater Lowell Technical High School assessment is increasing by 10.92%

Town Employee Benefits



Health insurance rates increasing by 14.13%; only increased budget by 2%
Retirement assessment from the Middlesex County Retirement System is increasing by 24%

Town Salaries



Total municipal salaries are increasing by 4.93%
New contracts for the Town Administrator, Fire Chief, and Police Officers Union
Preparing for implementation of ongoing Compensation and Classification Study for administrative employees

FY26 MAJOR BUDGET VARIANCES

Debt Service



Debt service expenses are based on FY26 debt schedule. All debt service is excluded which means that it is outside of the normal 2.5% levy limitations as voted and approved by the Town residents. Excluded debt service tax revenue is projected to decrease by 46.75%

Decreasing Expenses



Veterans Affairs budget reduced by \$5,648 based on historic spending
Elections budget reduced by \$2,250 based on elections planned
Town Engineer budget reduced by \$2,000 based on historic spending
Town Reports budget decreased by \$700 based on historic spending

Increasing Expenses



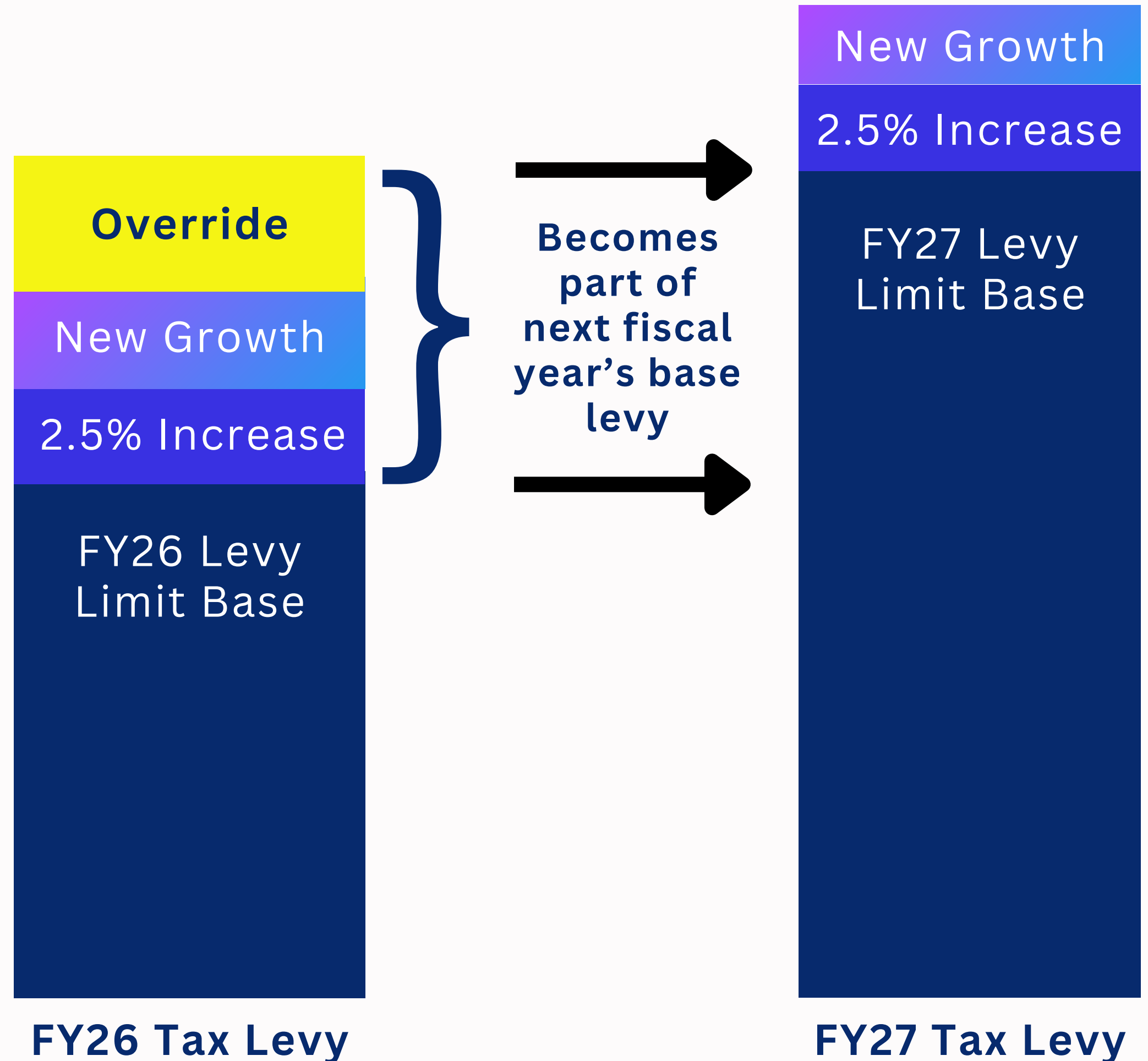
Liability insurance increased by 3.27%
Preparing for the Regional Dispatch Assessment in FY28 which equates to \$22,000
Vehicle, equipment and building repairs
Treasurer/Collector budget increased by \$23,921; offset with lower increase in health insurance
Technology budget increasing by \$2,500 to reflect actual costs

PROPOSITION 2 1/2

How it works

Permanent increases in the levy limit result from the following:

- Automatic 2.5 percent increase. Each year, a community's levy limit automatically increases by 2.5 percent over the previous year's levy limit. This does not require any action on the part of local officials; the Department of Revenue calculates this increase automatically.
- New Growth. A community is able to increase its levy limit each year to reflect new growth in the tax base. Assessors are required to submit information on growth in the tax base for approval by the Department of Revenue as part of the tax rate setting process.
- Overrides. A community can permanently increase its levy limit by successfully voting an override. The amount of the override becomes a permanent part of the levy limit base.



BUDGET SCENARIOS

There are two budget scenarios in Dunstable

Based on Groton Dunstable Regional School District level service budget, the Town of Dunstable’s assessment (operating, capital, debt) will be \$8,822,894 or an increase of \$645,308.

This results in a total GDRSD FY26 budget increase of \$3,116,948 or 6.53%.

The level service GDRSD budget requires an override in both Towns of Dunstable and Groton.

Deficit Breakdown

Groton Dunstable Regional Deficit	-401,037
Town Deficit	-65,543
Greater Lowell Technical Deficit	-14,261

To fund the assessment to support the Groton Dunstable Regional School District level service budget, Dunstable requires an override in the amount of **\$480,841**

What does this mean

If the override to support a level service budget for Groton Dunstable Regional School District **passes**, the **Town will have a balanced budget.**

If the override to support a level service budget for GDRSD **fails**, the **Town will seek a smaller override.**

BUDGET SCENARIOS

The Town of Groton has committed to an increase of \$1.365 million to their Groton Dunstable Regional School District Assessment. Groton can fund this amount from their estimated tax levy without an override.

The regional school agreement stipulates that the member towns assessment is based on student enrollment on a 5-year rolling average.

Currently, the Town of Dunstable's assessment is based on 23% of the overall student enrollment. In recent years, Dunstable's proportional share has increased slightly year-over-year.

Based on Groton's commitment to a \$1.365 million increase in their assessment, the Town of Dunstable's proportional assessment (operating, capital, debt) will be \$8,620,884 or an increase of \$443,298.

To match the Groton Assessment proportionally, Dunstable requires an override in the amount of **\$278,831**

Deficit Breakdown

Groton Dunstable Regional Deficit	-201,053
Town Deficit	-63,592
Greater Lowell Technical Deficit	-14,185

**What does
this mean**



BUDGET SCENARIOS

If an override of \$278,831 **passes** in Dunstable to proportionally match the Town of Groton the results are as follows:

Budget Reductions

- Groton Dunstable Regional School District will need to reduce its requested budget by approximately **\$875,000**.
- Groton Dunstable Regional School District budget will increase by 4.7%

Reductions in Personnel

- Teachers
- Nurse
- Counselor
- Paraprofessionals
- Central Office

If an override of \$278,831 **fails** in Dunstable to proportionally match the Town of Groton the abovementioned reductions will be necessary and, additionally, **the Town of Dunstable will need to reduce the municipal budget by \$278,831 and call a Special Town Meeting before June 30 to pass a balanced budget before the new fiscal year.**

BUDGET SCENARIOS

The Town's Recommended FY26 Operating Budget is based on a **\$480,841** general override

If the override passes



The Town's budget will be balanced and will maintain current levels of services for municipal and schools.

Reminder

The Town is required to adopt a balanced budget for the next fiscal year. If the Town doesn't have a balanced budget following the results of these override requests, it will need to schedule a Special Town Meeting in advance of July 1 to propose a reduced and balanced budget.

If the override fails



But Groton passes the override



Town has a \$480,841 budget deficit in municipal budget



And override fails in Groton, too



Town still needs a \$278,831 general override for a balanced budget. This budget does not support a level service school budget and would require an \$875,000 school budget reduction requiring further personnel cuts.



If \$278,831 general override fails, Town has a deficit in the municipal budget in that amount.

Why?

Because Groton can afford a higher school assessment increase without an override than Dunstable and the Town is required to proportionally match Groton.

ESTIMATED FY26 TAX INCREASES

Based on FY25 Tax Rate: 13.75 on an Average Single Family Tax Bill

**2 1/2 Increase Plus New
Growth and Excluded
Debt**

\$205.61
Estimated

Overrides

**Level
Service
\$383.80
Estimated**

**Groton
Assessment
\$219.31
Estimated**

**Total FY26 Estimated
Tax Increase**

**Level Service
Groton Assessment**

**\$589.41
\$424.92**

MAGNITUDE OF DEFICIT

Groton Assessment
\$278,831 Deficit

Level Service Budget
\$480,841

	Library Budget \$204,935		Recreation \$11,400
	Per Diem Firefighters \$106,080		Highway Paving \$45,500
	Police Officer \$84,000		Highway Brush, Signs, Line Painting \$30,000
	Capital \$120,000		Town Administrator \$178,700
	Parks Budget \$62,500		Council on Aging \$17,754

IN THE HEADLINES

THE  SUN

Pepperell,
Townsend voters
reject overrides

Athol Daily News

Firefighter override passes
by narrow margin at Athol
Town Election

westford



2024 Spring election
results: Proposition 2
1/2 override fails

Local Headline News

VOTERS REJECT \$7.7M
OVERRIDE OF
PROPOSITION 2 1/2

WINTHROP TRANSCRIPT

Town Council
Approves Putting
\$4.95 Million School
Override on November
Ballot

THE  SUN

**Dracut deficit
deepens to \$3.6M**

FY25 Budget We are not alone

General Fund Override requests

42 communities

22 WINS
28 LOSSES

Debt exclusion requests

77 communities

121 WINS
21 LOSSES

Several communities had more than one election and/or question on the ballot

FY24 AND FY25 BUDGET

FY24 BUDGET REDUCTIONS



- Town requested a \$301,162 override which passed at Town Meeting but failed at the ballot by 6 votes
- In FY24, reductions were made to balance the budget after the failed override in Police, Fire, Highway, and Town Hall budgets

FY25 BUDGET REDUCTIONS



- The Groton Dunstable Regional School District laid off a total of 24 FTEs and cut approximately \$2.7 million from their requested FY25 budget
- These reductions resulted in a net increase of the GDRSD FY25 budget of under 1%

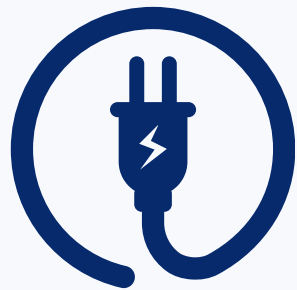
FUTURE PLANNING



Master Plan Implementation Committee, Land Use Committee, Economic Development Committee continue their work.



LIP Projects continue to move forward with the MUD proposal to file locally this week; the state issued the project eligibility letter for the Lowell Street site.



Town is implementing the new **Municipal Electricity Aggregation Program** for its residents in June offering a lower basic service rate than National Grid.



The exterior restoration of the **Union Building** continues to move forward. The project was bid and the Town has received proposals. Work to begin this summer.



NMCOG awarded the Town a technical assistance grant to conduct a **Route 113 Land Use Study and Vision**.



The Affordable Housing Committee and Affordable Housing Trust are discussing and reviewing options for future plans for the **Best Triangle parcels**.



Town continues to work with T-Mobile to advance their proposal to site **their telecommunications equipment** on the Town water tank.



Based on a fee survey of area communities the Town adjusted its **permit, license, and other fees** charged for town services. This will be an ongoing practice moving forward.

GOALS, PRIORITIES, AND POLICIES

Select Board Goals and Priorities

- ✓ Revenue generation and cost efficiencies
- ✓ Development and adoption of financial policies
- ✓ Align budget process with GDRSD and Town of Groton
- ✓ Development of more comprehensive budget document
- ✓ Development and improve upon financial forecast
- ✓ Development of comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan

Financial Policies

- One-time revenues should be appropriated to reserve funds and used to fund one-time budget or capital costs
- Free cash after supporting operating expenses will be distributed in the following manner: 5% to the General Stabilization Fund and no less than 30% used for short-term capital expenses
- No less than \$25,000 will be appropriated to the General Stabilization Fund with the goal of reaching a balance of 8-10% of the operating budget

FY26 Budget Forums

GDRSD

Spring 2025

GDRSD School Committee



Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings:

Student Learning & Achievement:

- Focus on student achievement ranges across our two elementary schools - Florence Roche & Swallow Union
- Strengthen literacy results across the K-4 spectrum and continue to strengthen math performance as measured by MCAS and internal benchmark assessments
- Improve student growth percentiles for our lowest achieving students and close the achievement gap across all schools
- Strengthen English Language Arts achievement, particularly in writing, across the middle school grades.
- Close the gap between our highest and lowest performing students at the high school level, and compete with the highest ranked public high schools in the Commonwealth.

Superintendent's Entry Plan Findings:

Instructional Leadership:

- Strengthen district and school leadership teams through setting aligned and measurable student learning and professional practice goals.
- Build interdependent professional learning teams among teachers and staff, focused on impacting student learning through effective instructional practice and individualized support.
- Break down school “silos” through sharing of effective practice, teacher leadership, and collaborative professional development K-12.

Critical Action Areas:

- **Communicating and connecting with the community**
- **Building trust and staff morale**
- **Transparent budget process that addresses the funding gap**

FY26 Superintendent's Proposed Budget

The Superintendent's Proposed Budget includes the **restoration** of:

- 1.0 FTE Guidance Counselor at the Middle School (cut in FY25)
- 1.0 FTE Nurse to restore coverage at Middle School and Florence Roche (cut in FY25)

And,

Proposed **reduction** of:

- 1.0 FTE Administrative Assistant (Central Office)

FY26 Operating Budget Increase:

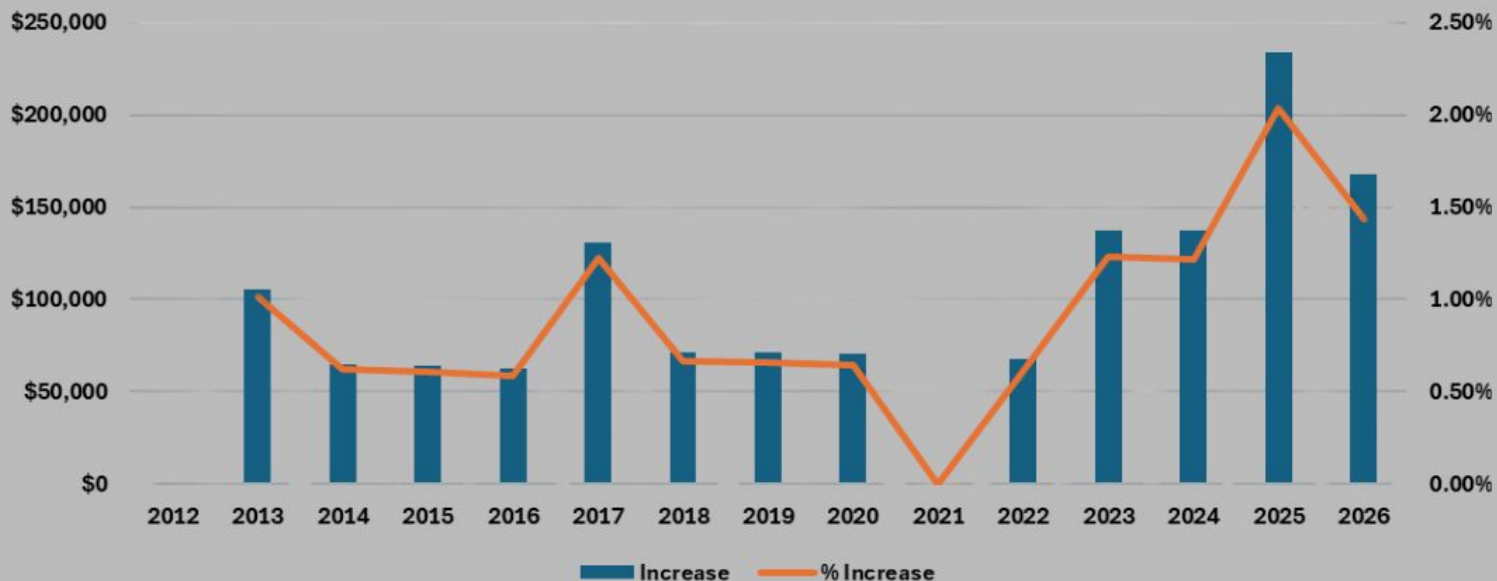
FY25 Operating Budget:	\$47,743,822
FY26 Operating Budget:	\$50,860,770
Increase:	\$3,116,948
Increase:	6.53%

See page 35-39 of Budget Book for Expenses by Function with notes

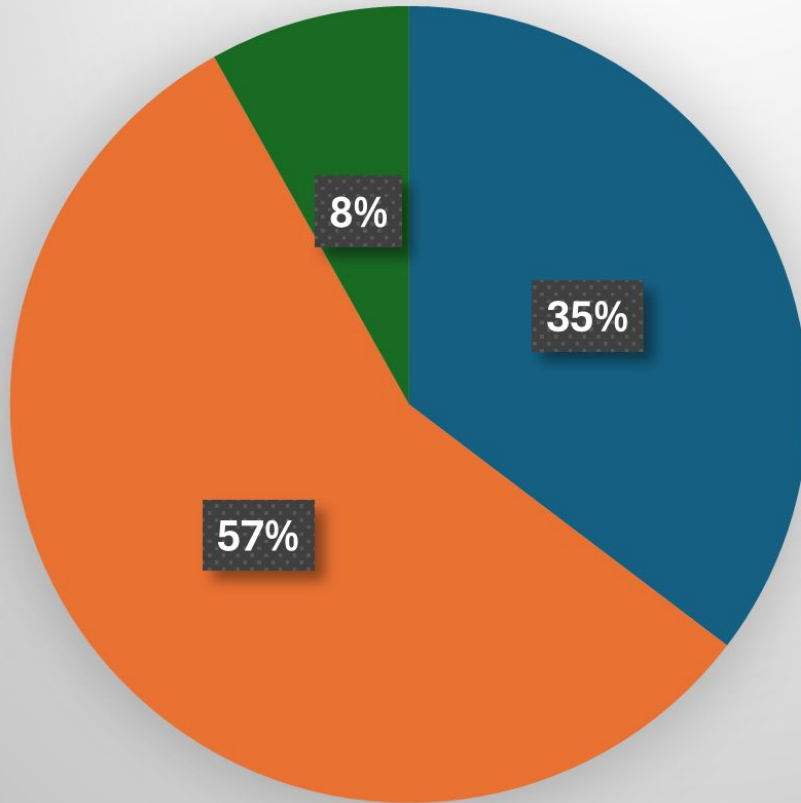
CHAPTER 70

Over the last 15 years, the Groton Dunstable Regional School District's allocation of Chapter 70 has increased by a total of \$805,169 or 0.44%. To put this in perspective, this year's FY26 proposed budget is increasing by \$3,116,948 to maintain level services! Almost 4 times higher than the Chapter 70 increase over this period of time.

Chapter 70 Trends

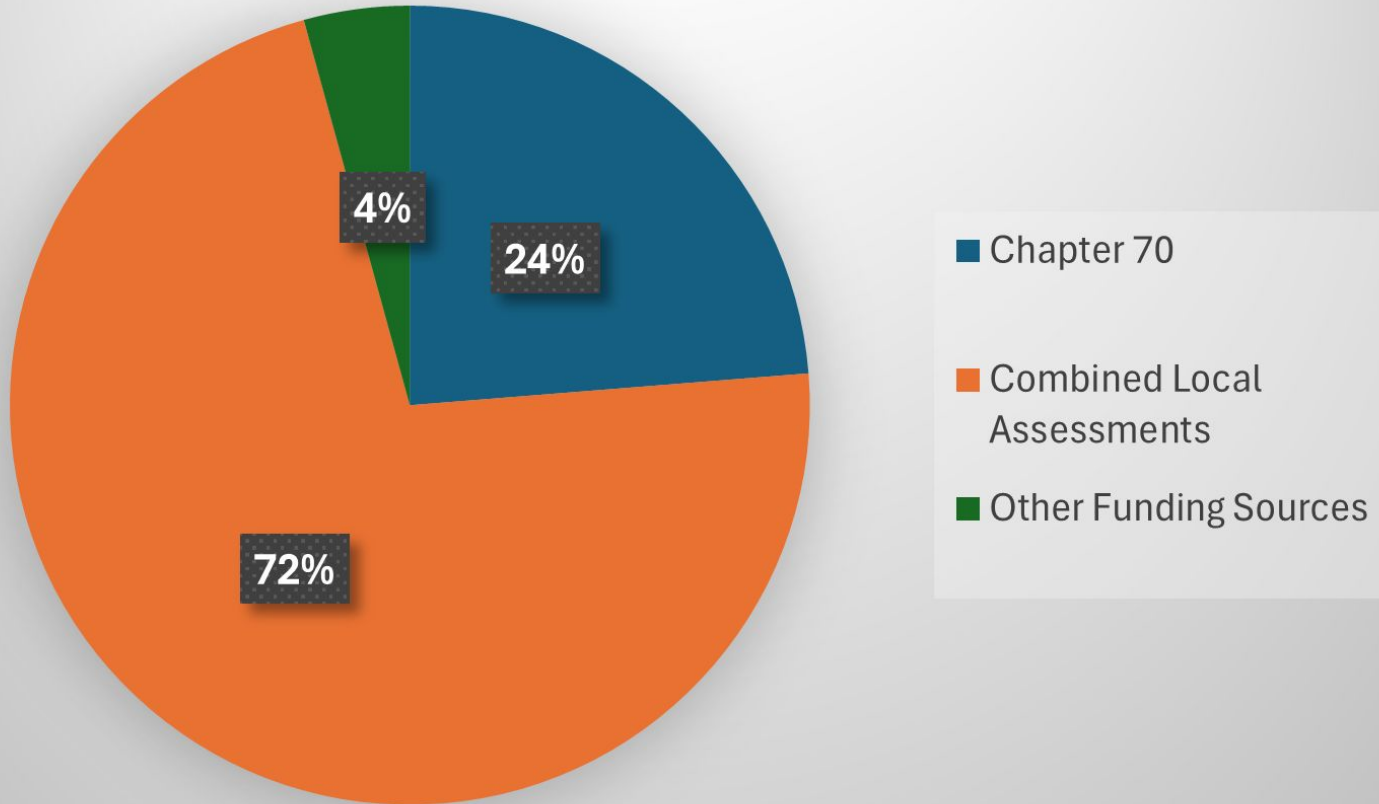


2008-Revenue Sources



- Chapter 70
- Combine Local Assessments
- Other Funding Sources

2025 Combined Revenue Sources

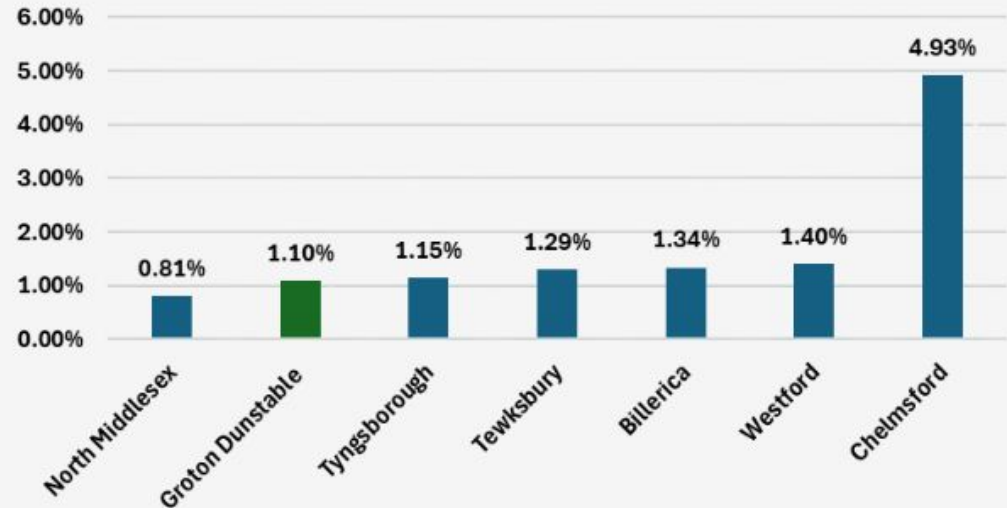


How does Chapter 70 history compare with some of our neighbors?

CHAPTER 70: REGIONAL COMPARISON

While no school district in the region is receiving its fair share of Chapter 70 funding, since FY21 the Groton Dunstable Regional School District has experienced a smaller increase in Chapter 70 than all districts in the region except for North Middlesex.

Growth in Chapter 70 since FY21



*percentages represent the average annual increase in Ch 70 from FY21-FY26

Recap of FY24 & FY25 Reductions

Over the past two years, our budget has been reduced by over \$3 million, leading to the elimination of...

18 Teachers

5 Counselors

1 Assistant Principal

3 Nurses

2 Administrative Assistants

K-6 ELA/Literacy Coordinator

2 Team Chairs

HS Content Coordinators

Impact of Further Reductions in FY26:

Central Office:

- Staff professional development and critical training will be impacted; district instructional leadership efforts will be compromised.
- Analysis and dissemination of student data for teachers will be more challenging - this is critical to inform instruction, implement school and district improvement plans, and communicate with families on academic progress
- Lack of curriculum directors and fewer teacher leaders will slow the implementation of a regular curriculum review process

Impact of Further Reductions in FY26:

Reductions of Teachers and Paraprofessionals:

- Impacts in-class academic and behavioral support for students
- Continued increase in class size and possible further reductions of elective course offerings at the high school
- Potential further loss of athletic or club advisors and reduction in participation for extracurricular and co-curricular activities: high school and middle school

Impact of Further Reductions in FY26:

No Restoration of nurse and counselor positions:

- Large caseloads for current counselors continue - compromises effectiveness of student support
- Continue having a nurse sharing time and duties across two buildings: Middle School and Florence Roche. No clinic staffed in the MS North building during school hours.

What Happens If...

Overrides Pass in Both Groton & Dunstable: Superintendent's Proposed Budget is Fully Funded!

Operational Budget increase is 6.53%

Override of \$673,250 PASSES in Groton

Override of \$480,841 PASSES in Dunstable

Override Fails in Groton, Passes in Dunstable:

Override FAILS: Groton can fund an assessment increase of \$1.3 million without an override

Override of \$278,831 PASSES in Dunstable to match what Groton can pay

Budget reduced by \$875,259

Overrides Fail in both towns:

Reduce budget by \$1,678,728

Superintendent's Proposed Budget

Impact to Groton Assessment

FY25 Operating Assessment:	\$26,412,384
FY26 Operating Assessment:	\$28,451,198
Increase:	\$2,038,814 (7.7%)
Override Amount Needed:	\$673,250

Impact to Dunstable Assessment

FY25 Operating Assessment:	\$7,962,157
FY26 Operating Assessment:	\$8,702,862
Increase:	\$740,705 (9.3%)
Override Amount Needed:	\$480,841

See page 85-87 of the Budget Book for complete Assessment calculation

What would \$875,259 reduction look like?

Reductions in Personnel:

Central Office:	3.0 FTE
Nurse:	1.0 FTE *FY26 restoration of FY25 cut
Counselor:	1.0 FTE *FY26 restoration of FY25 cut
Paraprofessionals:	4.0 FTE
Teachers - Unit A:	1.0 FTE
Estimated Total from Personnel Reduction:	\$775,000
Non-personnel reduction:	\$100,000

FTE = Full-Time Equivalent

What would \$1,678,728 reduction look like?

Reductions in Personnel:

Central Office:	4.0 FTE
Nurse:	1.0 FTE *FY26 restoration of FY25 cut
Counselor:	1.0 FTE *FY26 restoration of FY25 cut
Paraprofessionals:	8.0 FTE
Teachers - Unit A:	4.0 FTE
Estimated Total from Personnel Reduction:	\$1,375,000
Non-personnel reduction:	\$300,000

Important Dates

April 26 - Groton Annual Town Meeting

May 12 - Dunstable Annual Town Meeting

May 20 - Override Ballot Vote (assuming pass at Annual Town Meetings)

Where can you find budget information?

www.gdrsd.org

Budget Information links on Home Page under scrolling pictures

Questions can be sent to budgetquestions@gdrsd.org

FAQ document will be updated weekly with questions asked and answered.