

Cultivating Transparency After a "Yes" Vote

Mayor Jen Grigoraitis
City of Melrose

Timeline

January 8, 2024	January 10, 2024	May 6, 2024	June 18, 2024
Mayor Jen sworn into office.	The FY25 budget is looking pretty dire.	Mayor Jen asks the Council to schedule a \$7.7 million operational override vote.	Override fails 45-55.

Dos and Don'ts of Passing an Override

- DO Give elected officials the information they need to be effective advocates
- DO Start early in engaging the public: town hall meetings, listening sessions, coffee hours, webinars...
- DO Empower department heads and other appointed or professional leaders to talk openly about the budget and the override.
- DO Make sure to treat any outside campaign groups equally.
- DON'T Try to hide the necessary cuts during a bad budget. If revenue shortfalls or budget pressures lead to eliminations or cuts, be honest and clear with residents about what these decisions look like and why they're made.
- DON'T Litigate the issues on social media. Facebook is full of tempting misinformation, but it's a no-win proposition to get into back-and-forth arguments with bad-faith actors.

“Understanding the Override” Resources

Shared online, on social media, in local newspapers, in flyers available at City Hall, at public meetings...

“Why Do Voters Have Three Options in November, and What Would They Do?”

Proposed spending priorities if override options are adopted*

	\$9.3 million ("Stabilize")	\$11.9 million ("Repair")	\$13.5 million ("Strengthen")
Fund Current Positions**	✓	✓	✓
School Positions Restored	3	9	17
Public Works & City Positions Restored	X	3	5
Police Positions Restored	X	2	2
Road & Sidewalk Maintenance	Essential Repairs Only	✓	✓
City Building Maintenance	X	✓	✓
Public Works Programs	X	✓	✓
Educational Materials	X	✓	✓
Parks & Field Maintenance	X	X	✓
Senior & Veterans' Services	X	X	✓
Library Programs	X	X	✓

*All spending is subject to appropriation by the City Council; if an override is adopted by voters, the Mayor and Council would work together to develop and adopt a "supplemental" budget for **any** new spending. **Only** the highest option receiving a majority of votes will take effect.

** Funding for "current" positions reflect the budget cuts and reductions made by the City in the past two years.



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How Would an Override Impact Individual Taxpayers?

Estimated Impact of 3 override options on annual residential real estate tax			
Assessed Home Value*	\$9.3 million ("Stabilize")	\$11.9 million ("Repair")	\$13.5 million ("Strengthen")
\$350,000	+ \$406 per year	+ \$518 per year	+ \$588 per year
\$450,000	+ \$522 per year	+ \$666 per year	+ \$756 per year
\$550,000	+ \$638 per year	+ \$814 per year	+ \$924 per year
\$650,000	+ \$754 per year	+ \$962 per year	+ \$1092 per year
\$750,000	+ \$870 per year	+ \$1110 per year	+ \$1260 per year
\$817,630**	+ \$948 per year	+ \$1210 per year	+ \$1374 per year
\$850,000	+ \$986 per year	+ \$1258 per year	+ \$1428 per year
\$950,000	+ \$1102 per year	+ \$1406 per year	+ \$1596 per year
\$1,050,000	+ \$1218 per year	+ \$1554 per year	+ \$1764 per year
\$1,150,000	+ \$1334 per year	+ \$1702 per year	+ \$1932 per year
\$1,250,000	+ \$1450 per year	+ \$1850 per year	+ \$2100 per year

*Assessed value is determined annually by the City of Melrose Assessors Office and represents the full and fair market value of a property as of January 1 of each year.

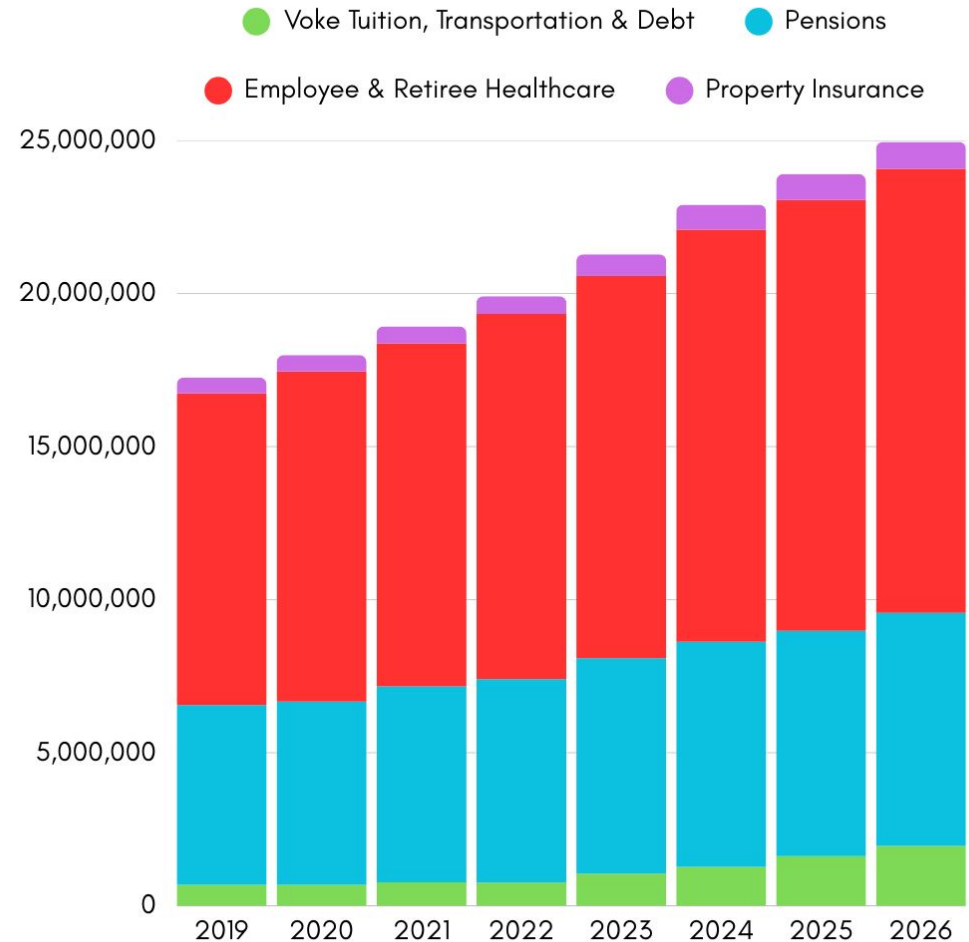
** The average **assessed value** of a single-family home in Melrose was **\$817,630** in Fiscal Year 2025.



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“What Cost Drivers Are Causing the City Budget To Grow?”



Second Attempt



- On November 4, 2025, Melrose voters adopted a \$13.5 million operating override in a 54-46 vote.
- There were active “Yes” and “No” campaigns in the community, but the City had an important informational role
- The override was retroactive, taking effect immediately in FY26, meaning that Q3 and Q4 property taxes reflected the result immediately and the City Council could adopt a supplemental budget for the current fiscal year.

Schools \$8,688,852.00	School Building Maintenance & Improvements \$4,345,052.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MHS - Bathrooms Renovation MHS - Courtyard Stairs MMMS - Solar Inverter Repairs MMMS - Front Stairs and Sidewalk Repairs MMMS - HVAC Control Upgrades Winthrop School - Doors & Masonry Repairs All Schools - Asbestos Remediation
	Instruction & Learning \$3,818,800.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restore 17 Positions \$1,649,000.00 Current Fiscal Year Contractual Obligations \$529,000.00 Curriculum Materials \$1,469,500.00 Instructional Technology \$171,300
	School Technology Needs \$525,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School Security Cameras MHS - Projector Upgrades Districtwide - PA System Upgrades Back Up Power Modernization Elementary Schools - Chromebook Replacements
Department of Public Works \$1,718,744.00	Restore 5 positions \$284,521.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Engineer (General fund portion) Facilities Manager (General fund portion) Facilities Laborer Heavy Machinery/Equipment Operator (Cemetery) Mechanic
	Restore DPW Summer Work Program \$131,000.00	
	Restore Overtime Costs for Programs \$63,223.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Main Street Flower Baskets City Yard Saturday Hours Municipal Park & Weekend Downtown Trash Removal City Event Support & Parklets Roadway Line Painting
	Roads & Sidewalks \$ 1,240,000.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional Road Paving Projects Sidewalk Repairs Projects Howard Street Speed Tables Crosswalk Improvements Road Flooding Mitigation Projects Engineering Projects & Repairs

Supplemental budget: clarity and detail

School / City Employee Benefits & Human Resources \$1,503,579.00	Pension \$500,000.00	
	Post Employment Benefits \$500,000.00	
	Health Benefits for Restored Positions \$442,455.00	
	Medicare Employer Tax for Restored Positions \$41,124.00	
	New Hire Advertising \$8,000.00	
	New Hire Physical Exams \$12,000.00	
Parks & Fields \$1,243,300.00	Tree Planting, Trimming, Removals, & Adopt-A-Site	
	Common Park & Dunton Park Playground Replacements	
	Softball & Baseball Field Improvements	Infield Work at Morelli, Common and Conant Fields Lights at Monk Field Scoreboard at Common Field
	Tennis & Pickleball Court Repairs (Crystal & Tremont Street courts)	
	Foss Park Basketball Court Repairs	
	Citywide Open Space & Playground Maintenance	
Police Department \$200,210.00	Restore 2 Police Officers \$154,076.00	
	New Recruit Costs \$46,134.00	
Council on Aging \$80,000.00	Milano Center Outdoor Lighting \$40,000.00	
	Program Support \$40,000.00	
Library \$35,315.00	Restore Sunday Hours \$25,315.00	
	Program Support \$10,000.00	
Veterans' Services \$30,000.00	Outreach, Events, Commemoration Program Support \$30,000.00	

1. Communicate expectations and timelines with City Council in advance of vote – councilors knew what to expect and when to expect it.
2. Plan for success – work internally to develop schedule for post-election action before the election.
3. Communicate with the public before and during the budget deliberation process – remind them that decisions are being made because of the override result.

Other
considerations
for a successful
post-override
budget

Cultivating Transparency



When you're implementing an override, it's *vital* to communicate the impacts!



DPW Annual Roadwork Program Fixing Streets & Sidewalks Across City

2025 Override Will Fund Additional Roadwork Not Originally Budgeted for 2026

Read on...

- Don't hide the results! "Yes" voters want to see the impact they've made, and even "No" voters who are unhappy with higher taxes want to see their money being put to good use.
- Don't be afraid to repeat yourself! Nearly every communication about Melrose Public Library's restored Sunday hours or the DPW's yard waste drop off on weekends mentions that funding these services was made possible by the 2025 override.

THANK YOU

City of Melrose, Massachusetts



Design Rendering



Anticipated Completion Sep. 2026

Go big!

We made lawn
signs...

MADE POSSIBLE BY THE PROP. 2 ½ OVERRIDE
APPROVED BY MELROSE VOTERS IN NOV. 2025



Mayor Jen Grigoraitis

mayorsoffice@citymelrose.org

Thank you