

# Leverett Revenue Committee

## FY21 Year-end Report to Select Board

*Committee Members: Michael Dover, Pat Duffy, Dan Emery, Tom Ewing, Susan Lynton, Susan Mareneck, & Tim Shores, with Select Board Liaison Tom Hankinson*

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# 1. Introduction

On April 27, 2019 Town Meeting approved Warrant Article 25, establishing a Revenue Committee “to explore, examine, and present for consideration potential ongoing revenue opportunities for the Town of Leverett.” The Committee is called on to “focus on creating and/or exploiting ongoing municipal revenue sources (other than tax surcharges, licensing, permits, etc.). Town infrastructure, zoning and other restrictions, and aesthetics will be considered by the Committee.” The Committee mandate was renewed for another year at the June 20, 2020 Town Meeting.

The Town created the Revenue Committee to address the Town’s high tax rate and the risk of approaching the Proposition 2½ property tax rate cap of \$25 per \$1,000 of assessed value. If our tax rate goes over that cap as a result of rising expenses or a drop in property values in an assessment year, it will trigger state intervention in the Town’s budget. This would take departmental budgets out of Town control to the tune of an immediate 15% cut that would degrade quality of Town services, Town livability for current residents, attractiveness to property developers and home buyers, and confidence in the Town. In FY18 this risk captured the Town’s attention when the tax rate reached a recent high of \$21.05. Though it has since inched back down to \$19.73 in FY21, the lesson remains that we must become proactive about revenue development.

This report summarizes what the Committee has accomplished and learned in two years of deliberations.

The Committee focused on major revenue sources:

- Property taxes
- Personal property taxes (including business-owned)
- State funding
- Payment in lieu of taxes

During its first year, the Committee:

- Communicated with key committees/boards
- Heard a presentation on public-private partnerships
- Held brainstorming sessions on ideas for generating revenue
- Consulted with a staff member of the FRCOG economic development office
- Identified & explored options to consider recommending, including:

- Development projects, such as commercial buildings, cluster housing, affordable housing, and solar farms
  - Capital-intensive businesses that would generate personal property taxes
  - Advocacy of change in the state’s charter school funding formula that penalizes public schools in order to subsidize charter school enrollment
  - Creation of an economic development council
- Surveyed Leverett residents on revenue issues and economic development

## 2. Survey

From June to July 2020, the Revenue Committee conducted a Townwide survey to learn residents’ opinions on economic development and other ideas related to raising revenue. The survey collected 316 responses. Survey data and the full report is publicly available on the Town website Committee page<sup>1</sup>, and by request.

The Committee analyzed the data, and drew the following conclusions (excerpt from the report):

Although this survey was not designed to be a statistically robust study, it highlights development directions through which Leverett might acquire additional tax revenue. This summary of the responses yields some common elements. One is the interest in more places to eat and drink in Leverett: perhaps a cafe or a lunch spot in addition to the Co-op, or a pub somewhere. The emphasis seems to be on amenities to make Leverett a more attractive place for businesses and for individuals to live, rather than on full-blown economic development projects. Clearly, respondents value the rural character of Leverett, as evinced by the business owners who responded – who are mostly self-employed and working from or near home. Among the eight ideas raised in our February report, interest was highest for infrastructure improvements (with state aid), but also for an economic development council to attract new businesses. There was also some support for such developments as light manufacturing and food processing.

These results suggest that a path exists for some limited business development in town, along with amenities to make Leverett a more attractive option for small businesses, home builders, and home buyers – and increasing the town’s property tax base as a consequence.

Knowing that it must take care to build consensus in good faith with all Town residents, the Committee found that the survey results justified continued exploration of economic development. The question became, what to develop, and how?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://leverett.ma.us/p/2093/Summer-2020-Townwide-Survey>

### 3. In Pursuit of an Economic Development Study

To better answer the question of what and how to develop, the Revenue Committee spent most of its second year exploring how and with whom to undertake an economic development study. The Committee met with planning departments in other small towns in Massachusetts, the planning department at the University of Massachusetts, and property developers, gaining baseline information for recommendations to the Town.

We found that other towns had explored economic development in a number of different ways. Some hired planners to assist them. Shutesbury for instance was able to pass a community-backed plan to change their town and prepare it for development in its Town Center. Other towns went through the Master Planning process as outlined by the State. Some, such as Boxborough, hired a planner who conducted community listening sessions to hear from town residents who opposed development, and to build a relationship that empowered communication about the consequences of foregoing development. New Boxborough development and changes to past development are now in the process of being approved.

The Boxborough planner Simon Corson shared how situations can change and cause a crisis that needs to be solved immediately. For those in town who think that development should be relegated to Route 63, where businesses or office parks could be built, Boxborough's past development is a cautionary tale. A major tech company moved into a newly-built office park only to move out years later, leaving a white elephant and a hole in the town's tax revenue. This situation is different from Leverett's, but it does remind us that any large taxpayer can have an outside influence on our town's economic health. Our major concern has been bumping up against the tax cap, but there are other reasons to undertake reasonable and planned development that would improve our town's tax base and offer community amenities.

To understand Leverett's development challenges, we also met with the University of Massachusetts planning department. A sub-committee of the Revenue Committee spent several hours discussing how we could use the University of Massachusetts's services with members of the University's Department of Planning. As a consequence of those meetings, the sub-committee wrote a proposal to acquire CPA funds. The study would be led by the UMass planning department. Although other towns have used CPA administrative funds for similar studies, our CPA board rejected our proposal. At this juncture, we discussed other ways that we could move forward including other grant opportunities through the State Community One Stop for Growth NOFA grant opportunity,<sup>2</sup> which unites a town's needs with State grant priorities. The Planning and Select Board approved applying to the One Stop Program and the Town Administrator has taken the first step in the application process.

As a way to understand more broadly what kind of development could be undertaken in Leverett, we invited real estate developers to come talk with us. We interviewed two types:

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.mass.gov/doc/community-one-stop-for-growth-nofa>

ones who develop through revitalizing historical buildings and landscapes and others who build small subdivisions, using a variety of levers in zoning laws to effectuate their projects. These interviews proved to be very informative. They provided us with detail about how we could undertake development in different parts of Leverett using different strategies. Some involved working with existing zoning laws while others would mean making changes to them. They also shared where and how it might be possible to have access to water and sewer, one of the major limiting factors for development in Leverett. The town has an interest in making use of our historical assets and a mandate from a Historical Commission Survey to do so. Two areas stand out for enhancement: Leverett's Town Center and Moore's Corner. More research will be done if we receive a Master Planning Grant from the State, but we know from developers that there is an interest in pursuing the possibilities for reuse.

As a Committee, we have concluded that town listening sessions and a Master Plan are needed to insure right-sized development for Leverett, recognizing a rule of thumb that the Planning Department at UMass shared with us: \$1M invested for \$25K/annual revenue increase. Our goals are to provide all citizens of Leverett with a livable, affordable, and demographically diverse environment in which to live. To achieve these goals we will explore further commercial, residential, amenities and CPA-funded projects.

## 4. Local Economic Forecast

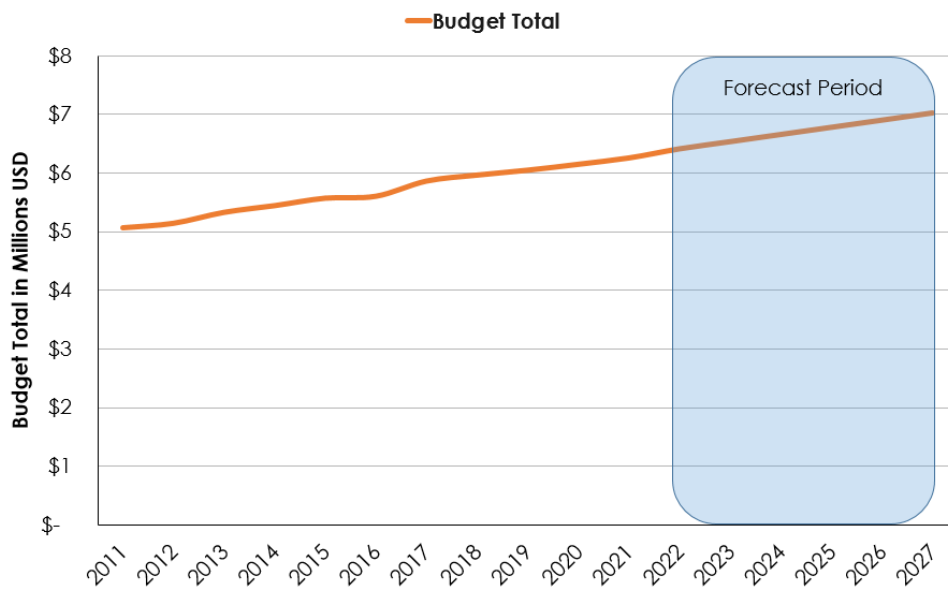
To better understand the Town's financial problems, the Committee sought to answer the hypothetical question: what would happen if the Town took no action to raise more revenue? To answer the question, the Committee reached out to the Tax Collector and Board of Assessors to collect historical data on Town **Budgets**, **Property Tax Rates**, and **Assessed Property Value** from 2011 to 2021<sup>3</sup>, then used simple linear trend calculations to forecast those factors 2022 to 2027. This forecast is purely numerical, and should be interpreted as a best guess. An economic study conducted in support of a Master Plan, to evaluate quantitative and qualitative factors of the Leverett economy in greater detail, will provide more precise and more accurate answers.

In summary, these charts tell a story of a town that keeps its budget growth well-maintained. This town's tax rate growth is growing but not as quickly as it did a few years ago. Its property value is growing faster, increasing revenue and taking pressure off of the tax rate. Although these do not seem like alarming conditions, with no data to explain the factors of town prosperity yesterday and today, the town in this story lacks a shared understanding of how to manage for ongoing prosperity tomorrow. Should property values drop sharply, or expenses rise, we have no fallback.

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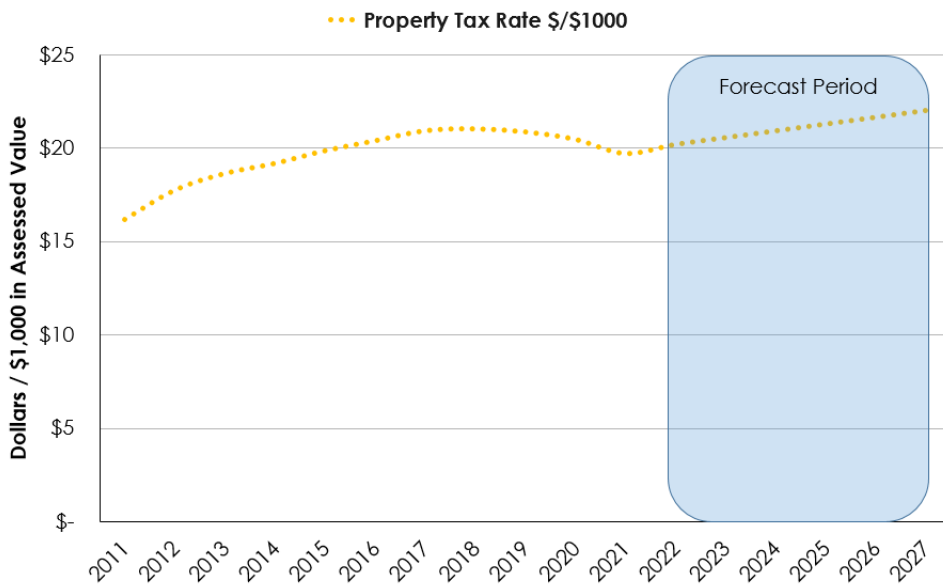
<sup>3</sup> Refer to Appendix to review the source data

**Figure A.** shows the Leverett budget in millions of dollars, from FY11 to FY21. The blue box highlights the forecast period until 2027. The smooth line is a reminder that the budget is the only one of these economic factors that the Town can manage directly.



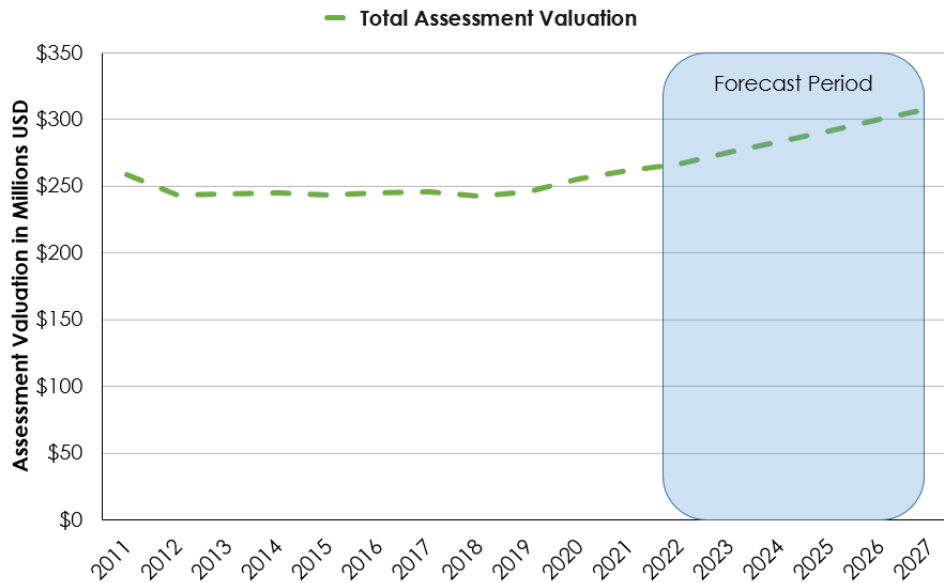
*figure a. Budget total in millions during the period 2011 - 2021, forecasting until 2027.  
Annual Slope: \$122,435*

**Figure B.** shows the tax rate rise and fall. But the trend is up, forecasting a gradual increase to a new high of \$22/\$1,000 by 2027.



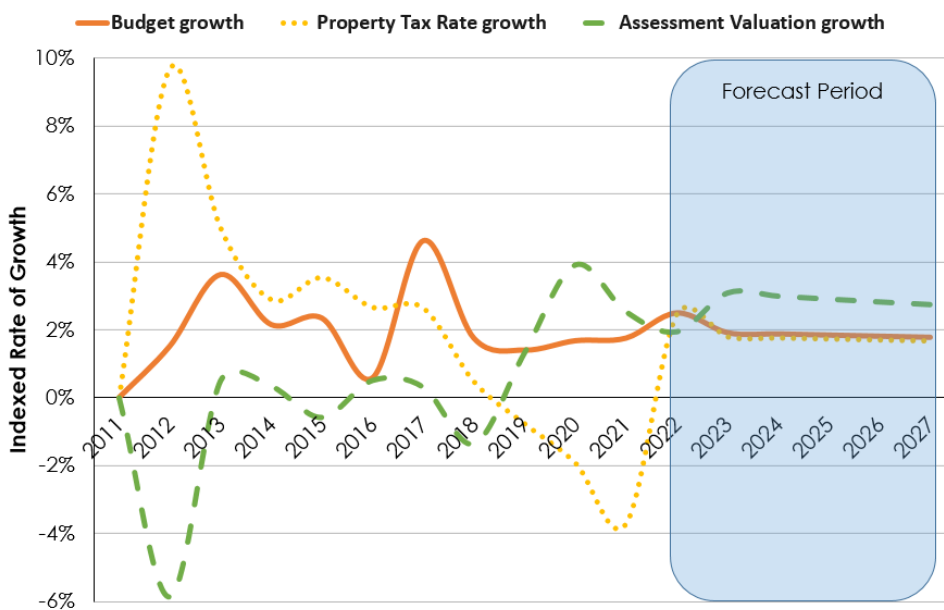
*figure b. Property Tax Rate expressed in Dollars per \$1,000 in Assessed Property Value.  
Annual Slope: \$0.24*

For assessed value, the decade began in decline after the Great Recession, plateaued, and ended with growth in value. **Figure C.** shows that the growth trend continues upward.



*figure c. Assessed Property Value of the entire town, in millions.  
Annual Slope: \$3,700,280*

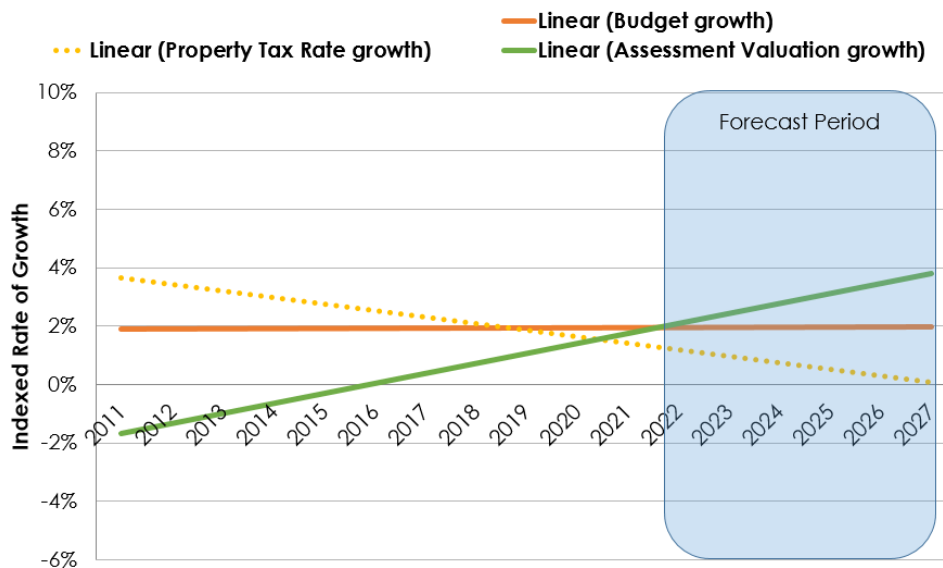
But, which trend is greater? If these three factors are in a footrace, who is winning and will it be good for Leverett? The above charts show growth over time, but with different scales and dimensions, it's difficult to see how they compare. To make them comparable, **Figure D.** calculates how quickly each factor grows, and indexes the result so they all start at 0%.



*figure d. Rate of growth of each factor indexed to common origin in 2011.*

Now they're comparable, but it's still not easy to read. To make it readable and reveal a little good news, **Figure E.** compares the annual slope of each factor:

- *Budget*: +0.006%
- *Property Tax*: -0.22%
- *Assessed Value*: +0.34%



*figure e. Linear trends equivalent to slope, or “growth of growth”: growing faster, or growing slower?*

The **Figure E.** forecast shows that:

- **Budget** will grow constant 2%
- **Tax Rate** growth is positive, but slowing down
- **Assessed Value** growth is positive, and speeding up

This does not look like an emergency. Instead, the Property Tax Rate growth will slow down in a gradual climb to \$22/\$1,000 in property value by 2027. This suggests we have several years of status quo financial management practices until we hit the Prop 2½ cap. According to the Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center writing in June 2020<sup>4</sup>:

Among Massachusetts’ 351 cities and towns in 2020, 327 set property taxes at less than 90 percent of their total allowable tax ceiling prescribed by Proposition 2 ½, and 303 municipalities set levels less than 80 percent of their ceiling. In other words, they could collect significantly more property tax. In Springfield and Holyoke, on the other hand, there is relatively less property wealth and fewer options to raise additional revenue. Total property taxes in these cities are basically already at the tax ceiling,

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.massbudget.org/reports/pdf/PropTaxes-COVID19-6.30.pdf>

preventing them from additional property tax revenue, even through a local override vote. A majority of residents in Springfield and Holyoke are people of color – 68 percent and 58 percent, respectively – compared to 28 percent statewide. Similarly, in Worcester where 44 percent of residents are people of color, property taxes are already at 92 percent of the ceiling imposed by Prop 2 ½.

Compared to the practices of other towns in Massachusetts, we find that Leverett taxation is high, but not out of the ordinary, and not in a state of crisis. The FY21 tax rate of \$19.73 per \$1,000 in assessed value yields a total tax levy of \$5,646,879, or 88.3% of Leverett’s FY21 maximum levy limit of \$6,388,148.<sup>5</sup>

Although we don’t see this as a crisis in which we are perilously close to the Prop 2 ½ cap, the Committee offers observations about the above charts and trends that make a strong case for recommending investment in a Town Master Plan and ongoing economic development study:

1. **Budget growth** remains constant because Town government and voters exert direct control over the budget and capital planning in order to manage expenses. But this simple forecast cannot predict anomalous expenses or events of macroeconomic instability, such as a real estate downturn, unemployment crisis, or sustained economic instability following the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. **Property Tax Rate growth** depends on the relationship between Budget and Assessed Property Value: it can go down when Budget growth remains steady while Assessed Value growth goes up. If the Budget goes up, or Assessed Property Value goes down, this puts pressure on the Tax Rate to go back up.
3. **Assessed Property Value growth** increasing is a cause for celebration. But the Committee is not able to identify the factors that cause this increase in value. Confident identification of those growth factors, as only an economic development study by a third-party could provide, would put the Town in a better position to yield optimal ROI from decisions that impact budget and development.

## 5. Livability

Missing from this forecast is any factor that clearly represents Town livability. To shed some light on the matter of livability, **Figure F**. removes the budget trend line. In its place, the average **Tax Burden**, or the tax dollar amount an average value property owner must pay, serves as a proxy for affordability. We see that the growth trend of average Tax Burden has declined, but barely.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Prop2.5.ExcessLevyCapandOverride\\_MAIN](https://dls.gateway.dor.state.ma.us/reports/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=Prop2.5.ExcessLevyCapandOverride_MAIN)

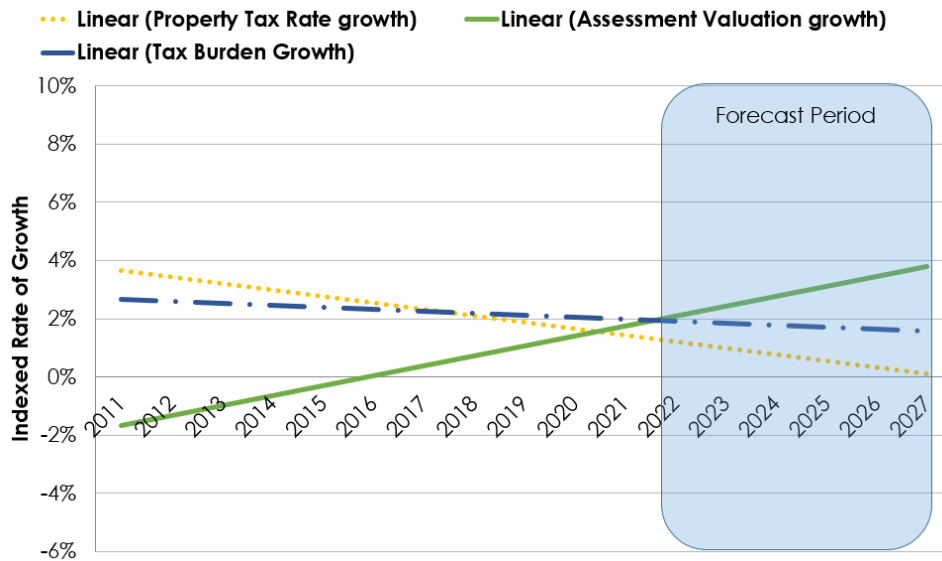


figure f. Tax Burden: What can we do to shrink it down so people can afford to live here?

Livability is a critically important goal for the work of Leverett Town government. Livability can be thought of in terms of affordability, accessibility, sustainable mobility, community amenities, open and recreational spaces, environmental quality, public health, education, housing, jobs and economic opportunity, reliable communications infrastructure, accessible and accurate information, responsive and fair Town government, social justice and social solidarity.

Quoting again from the June 2020 Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center report, this Committee cautions against excessive or uninformed austerity measures:

To the extent that local revenue shortfalls and inadequate state aid push municipalities to cut public spending, it will also hinder Massachusetts’ economic recovery. Furloughing teachers, first responders, and other public employees, as well as forgoing repairs and other public contracts, will remove dollars that would have circulated in the local economy. Cutting state and local budgets during a recession is like cutting off the gas to the economy. It would be the surest way to deepen and prolong the current economic downturn.

In other words, don’t feast on the seed corn.

For the same reasoning that led to the formation of this Committee in the first place, making deep budget cuts will harm our Town. It doesn’t matter whether those deep cuts are state-ordered by the authority of Prop 2 ½, or undertaken by our own initiative. The Committee is concerned that the Town lacks sufficient information to make deeper budget cuts without unintended harm to livability factors, since austerity today can mean lost revenue and increased inequity tomorrow, and austerity in budget distribution is regressive, harming vulnerable populations the most.

This situation is in spite of, not because of, the very hard work and commitment of all members of Town government: we simply have economic problems that are too complex

to address without better tools, such as a comprehensive Master Plan that supports sustainable economic forecasting to inform budgeting and planning.

Creative and continuous efforts aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of Leverett by improving amenities, infrastructure, and livability, using CPA funds whenever possible, would be a low-cost and high-impact path to invite growth and investment. The most accessible way to broaden our tax base is to enhance the livability of Leverett, and, working to build consensus with multiple stakeholders in Leverett, to actively court property developers.

In an effort to inform the public discussion, and to gauge residents' experience with and priorities for Town livability, the Committee will kick off its third year with a town-wide survey on the topic of livability.

## 6. The Levers of Leverett

Let's recap:

In our current circumstances, the Town has mobilized to keep the tax rate growth from approaching the Prop 2 ½ cap too quickly. As the above forecast illustrates, this mobilization has met with some success.

By keeping annual budget growth at around 2%, our strong growth in property value is what allows us to maintain manageable tax rate growth despite no planned development.

However, this balance has two vulnerabilities:

1. What will we do when property value growth weakens, or declines?
2. What if we want to reduce the tax rate?

When property value growth weakens or declines, the Town must decide whether to let the tax rate go up faster, or make deeper budget cuts. Our high tax rate is regressive, making the tax burden unaffordable for many residents and would-be home buyers.

Both prongs of this dilemma come with risks of regressive impacts on livability that would affect more vulnerable citizens first:

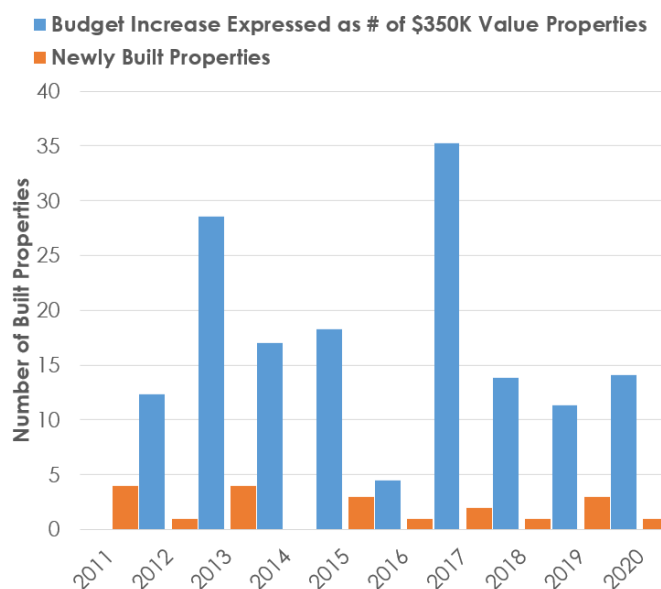
1. If we let tax rates rise too much, we not only risk hitting the Prop 2 ½ cap, but we increase the individual tax burden to unmanageable levels for some of our neighbors.
2. If we cut budgets too deeply, we degrade the quality of Town services. Not only do residents depend on these services, but they attract new home buyers.

Therefore, if we want to prepare ourselves for a sustainable future in which we are less dependent on property value growth and able to address affordability proactively, then we must take steps now to lower the property tax rate *more than what today's property value growth affords us*. We have only two ways to do this:

1. Development: build more properties, and more valuable properties (for example, capital intensive businesses), to broaden the tax base and reduce tax burden;
2. Efficiency: manage Town departments in order to do more with less.

As mentioned above, our survey showed support for both modest growth and economic development, along with strong support for maintaining the rural character of the town.

**Figure G.** depicts budget increases for the last ten years in terms of \$350K value properties, alongside the actual number of properties built that year<sup>6</sup>. This is meant to visualize a development quota if we set a goal of loosening our economic constraints, such as lowering our property tax rate.



This graph depicts the complexity of the challenge ahead. The most important lesson of our exploration has been the confirmation by planning and development experts that there are no quick fixes or easy answers to the question of raising new revenues in a rural town like Leverett. Any new residential or commercial development will take years to plan, build and yield beneficial results from the Town budget and tax burden.

Given Leverett's infrastructure constraints, new development will primarily be residential. However, Leverett has a limited land area that is suitable for development. We also have zoning and other regulations designed to restrict new development in order to protect the town's natural environment and rural character. If economically meaningful residential growth is a priority to Leverett, these regulations need to be reexamined.

Some commercial development is possible, including businesses that could increase such amenities as one or more additional food and drink establishments, another grocery, or a retail store or two. There are also limitations on commercial development due to the lack of town water and sewer, along with the limited availability of suitable land for a relatively large development (e.g., an office park).

<sup>6</sup> Refer to Appendix to review the source data

Immediate gains can be had with investment of time and effort into enhancing and celebrating existing assets. The Historical Commission is planning to do so for Leverett's historical assets, and one of the Revenue Committee's recommendations at the end of this report concerns those historical assets. There is plenty of research from across the United States on the positive effect of historic preservation on rural town economic prosperity.<sup>7</sup> To support this with an accessible visualization, the Revenue Committee in its third year will inventory town properties and create a Town asset map.

Education costs will need to be assessed with due attention, as will the impact of education factors on property values. With deference to the complexity of the education budget impact on Town financial and social well-being, the Revenue Committee limits this year's recommendations to becoming more vocal to the State government about education finance policy that is not working.

Given all that we have learned, we feel confident about the recommendations in the next section of this report. However, we feel it is important to be candid: we don't expect that our recommendations, or any recommendations, can alleviate budget conflicts or tax burden in the near future.

## **6. Recommendations to the Select Board**

### **A. Plan to achieve a sustainable economy**

We need to redefine the problem as one of achieving a sustainable economy, and of planning together how to achieve it.

We need to discover together as a community that proactive, evidence-based financial management will be necessary for sustaining the quality and efficiency of municipal services, including education, that is required to sustain a livable community. If we instead continue managing in reaction to immediate conditions and historical lessons, we'll continue to approach the Prop 2½ cap while making Leverett ever less attractive to people seeking a livable community with quality education.

Boxborough town planner Simon Corson told us about the series of meetings they held for their economic development study. Boxborough residents were invited to explore what kind of town they wanted and what tradeoffs they were willing to accept in exchange for an economically viable and sustainable community.

Outside of these meetings, a Boxborough resident may feel firmly pro-development and against budget cuts. Or resolutely in favor of austerity and the maintenance of town character. But when gathered together in a facilitated meeting, Boxborough found that people were able to find common ground and work together toward an economic plan.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nado.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Asset-Based-Economic-Development-Part-3.pdf>

### *Recommendation*

Working with the Planning Board and other relevant boards and committees, the Revenue Committee should be expanded to a Sustainable Economy Committee, tasked with helping to fund a comprehensive Master Plan that supports sustainable economic forecasting, and tasked with supporting the Planning Board with Master Plan development and implementation, by practicing ongoing economic research, community outreach and organizing, and grant funding development. While remaining compliant with Massachusetts requirements for a municipal Master Plan, dedicating this Committee to a supportive research role will better enable thorough economic study as a core component of the Master Plan and Town planning in general. The Master Plan and economic study should include:

- An assessment of the economic challenges facing Leverett, and an asset map to reveal strengths and opportunities that the Town can use to address those challenges;
- Facilitated public meetings and listening sessions to hear feedback, engage people with the process, and build consensus for the types of growth or other changes in town that would make the town more sustainable and that residents are willing to accept; and
- Development of sustainable economy scenarios, such as smart growth, infrastructure improvements, amenity enhancement, and encouraging business investment, to guide strategic decision-making.

The terms of this recommendation have been included in the Revenue Committee's FY21 Town Meeting warrant article, Article Fourteen. See the Conclusion of this report for the full text of the article.

### **B. Restore, maintain and celebrate historical assets**

The Historical Commission has identified a significant number of historic assets in town, and a survey of residents found that they support efforts to preserve these assets. Redevelopment of some of them for housing and/or small to medium-size businesses could bring revenue to the town and improve livability, increasing attractiveness to visitors and new residents, and improving amenities.

### *Recommendation*

The Town should support two projects involving historical assets that are currently underway or being considered:

- Slarrow Mill (North Leverett Center) redevelopment as a site for a small business. A site on the south side of the Sawmill River has recently been resold and the prospect of a small business seems likely. The historic mill on the north side of the

river is under contract to be sold to a new owner who would use it as the headquarters of her preservation business and restore the water-powered mill.

- Adaptive reuse of the former Field Library, now the Field Family Museum in Leverett Center, and/or the Moore's Corner Schoolhouse Museum in North Leverett. The Field Family Museum is Town-owned, with expenses shared with the nonprofit Leverett Historical Society (LHS) in an informal public/private partnership. The Moore's Corner Museum is the property of LHS. LHS and the Leverett Historical Commission are inventorying the collections of both properties as a first step towards developing a plan for restoring and repurposing the properties, perhaps combining the collections in one location and then proposing a new use for the other in collaboration with development of nearby amenities. The Planning team for Leverett's 250th Anniversary would like to see those properties on the way to adaptive reuse and rehabilitation or at least a plan to reach that goal by 2024.

### **C. Inventory land parcels appropriate for development**

As part of developing a long-range plan for the town, we believe a review of land parcels, both private and public, that might be suitable for new housing or commercial development would be helpful. Town-owned land might be leased for affordable housing designed to maximize preservation of open space while keeping the cost of the housing within reach of first-time or low-income buyers. Incentives could be considered to encourage developers to incorporate affordable units in multi-unit developments. Ideas like this could be an outgrowth of the community conversations mentioned above, or offered as options for the conversations to explore.

#### *Recommendation*

The Town should undertake such an inventory with participation from the Planning Board, the Conservation Commission, the Historical Commission, Affordable Housing and the Board of Health. The Town should seek expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other assessment tools to determine sites that could support housing, commercial development, or mixed use while conserving open space and maintaining environmental quality. The results of the review should be used to encourage carefully planned and managed development over an extended period of time.

### **D. Advocate for State education funding equity**

Like all Massachusetts municipalities, Leverett suffers financially from the inequitable formula that the state uses to fund charter schools. If the charter school funding formula were the same as school choice funding, the town would recover tens of thousands of state funds. In the current fiscal year, four Leverett students are attending charter schools; this is causing the elementary school to lose \$88,000 in state funding. An equivalent number of students moving through school choice would cost Leverett about \$20,000 in lost state support. Using the observation mentioned earlier that a million-dollar

investment would raise \$25,000 in taxes, the disproportional effect of charter school funding would require about \$2.7 million in new investment in the town to make up the lost state funds. This inequity means either the town has to cut services (including but not limited to the elementary school budget) or that it must raise the property tax rate to maintain those services, or do both. It is solvable only by changing the way the state allocates education funding between community public schools and charter schools.

### *Recommendation*

The Town should urge state officials to change the charter school funding formula so that it is on a par with the formula for transferring funds due to school choice. The School Committee, Finance Committee, and Select Board should jointly prepare a letter addressed to:

- Our state senator and representative;
- The governor and the director of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education; and
- The Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and the chairs of the relevant legislative committees.

Copies of the letter should be sent to the Massachusetts Association of School Committees, the Massachusetts Association of Finance Committees, and Massachusetts Municipal Association, urging these associations to support this proposed change before the administration and the legislature, and to track and report on any legislation brought forward regarding this change.

## **Conclusion**

The findings in this report are meant to contribute to the Town discussion. The Revenue Committee wholeheartedly welcomes disagreement with and further investigation of the report findings.

The recommendations in this report are for the Town to consider and implement as a whole community. The Revenue Committee can and will help, but none of these recommendations are intended to be solely Revenue Committee responsibilities, actions, or achievements. Engagement with multiple stakeholders, including other boards and committees as well as residents not serving in government, is essential.

The Revenue Committee appreciates having the opportunity to work on this challenge, having the support of the Select Board and Town, and a chance to see its mandate renewed and expanded upon in the upcoming Town Meeting, where residents may vote on the following warrant article:

**Article Fourteen:** To see if the Town will vote to rename the Revenue Committee to the Sustainable Economy Committee (SEC) and vote to extend the mandate of the renamed Committee for an additional two years, and in keeping with the Committee's mission for the past two years, vote to extend the Committee's original mandate to explore, examine, and recommend potential ongoing revenue opportunities to the Town of Leverett, to include the following activities for the promotion of sustainable economic development:

**One**, economic data collection, analysis, and forecasting, and consultation with community members, in order to recommend actions to the Leverett Selectboard and Finance Committee that are aligned with community values, citizen and stakeholder input, and the achievement of one or more economic objectives: revenue growth, cost cutting, or Town affordability;

**Two**, support the Leverett Planning Board in the development and implementation of a Town Master Plan;

**Three**, organize and lead a business development subcommittee, with adjunct members from outside this Committee, in order to meet with property developers and business interests about opportunities in Leverett that are aligned with community values, economic objectives and the Master Plan.

The Selectboard shall appoint up to 9 individuals to the Sustainable Economy Committee, each appointment for a period of two years, or take any action relative thereto.

## Appendix A: Tax and Value Analysis

Figures A through F graph the data in this table.

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Budget Total	5,072,129	5,148,863	5,335,124	5,449,503	5,576,739	5,608,983	5,867,722	5,969,818	6,052,921	6,153,972	6,261,432
Budget growth	0%	1.51%	3.62%	2.14%	2.33%	0.58%	4.61%	1.74%	1.39%	1.67%	1.75%
Property Tax Rate \$/\$1000	16.20	17.77	18.66	19.20	19.88	20.41	20.95	21.05	20.89	20.49	19.73
Property Tax Rate growth	0%	9.69%	5.01%	2.89%	3.54%	2.67%	2.65%	0.48%	-0.76%	-1.91%	-3.71%
Total Assessment Valuation	258,237,235	243,082,831	244,306,199	245,143,952	243,731,976	244,991,730	245,767,439	242,443,818	245,682,172	255,320,764	261,803,444
Assessment Valuation growth	0.00%	-5.87%	0.50%	0.34%	-0.58%	0.52%	0.32%	-1.35%	1.34%	3.92%	2.54%
Budget increase		76,734	186,261	114,379	127,236	32,244	258,739	102,096	83,103	101,051	107,460
Number of parcels assessed	1192	1194	1196	1194	1198	1200	1202	1204	1201	1203	1206
Tax Burden	3,510	3,624	3,824	3,949	4,065	4,195	4,319	4,281	4,306	4,389	4,333
Tax Burden Growth	0	3.25%	5.54%	3.25%	2.95%	3.20%	2.97%	-0.88%	0.57%	1.93%	-1.26%
Median Total Assessed Value	229,200	216,600	217,800	217,500	231,050	218,700	219,350	217,800	221,300	229,000	
Tax Incidence change (at median value)		3,849	4,064	4,176	4,593	4,464	4,595	4,585	4,623	4,692	0
Budget Increase Expressed as # of Median Value Properties		19.94	45.83	27.39	27.70	7.22	56.30	22.27	17.98	21.54	
Tax Incidence change (at \$350K value)		6,219.50	6,531.00	6,720.00	6,958.00	7,143.50	7,332.50	7,367.50	7,311.50	7,171.50	
Budget Increase Expressed as # of \$350K Value Properties		12.34	28.52	17.02	18.29	4.51	35.29	13.86	11.37	14.09	
Newly Built Properties	4	1	4	0	3	1	2	1	3	1	

The data can be accessed in greater detail at <https://tinyurl.com/levrevecondata>. Note that the table uses Excel formulas not compatible with Google Sheets formulas so must be downloaded to view all calculations.

This data was collected with the help of Tom Hankinson from the Leverett Select Board, Lisa Stratford the Leverett Town Clerk, and Sam Black, Jeff Reynolds and Linda Bevan from the Leverett Assessors Office.