

## **Statement by Elizabeth Dionne**

On February 26, the Select Board unanimously adopted a statement in favor of the override and warning about devastating cuts to town services if the override fails. I want to address a couple of questions I'm still hearing about the Select Board's position on the override.

People have asked me if the mailers sent out by the yes campaign are true. The answer is yes, they are completely accurate. The town had no involvement with drafting or distributing the mailers, but everything in the mailers is based on the budget presentations given at the town's February 8 Budget Summit, which was open to the public. Those can be viewed on the town website.

If the override fails, the first round of cuts in the FY25 budget would go to Town Meeting this spring. School and town employees whose jobs are at risk have already been notified. The cuts in FY26 would be much deeper and at a scale that would change Belmont permanently.

The second question I have been hearing is whether it's possible for Belmont to get to a better financial position?

The answer to this is emphatically yes. I ran for Select Board a year ago to help Belmont achieve financial sustainability. Since then, we have made tremendous progress in terms of putting the right policies in place and putting the right staff in place, to foster business growth. We have much more to do – we must keep working on zoning reform to encourage new businesses, we must keep paying down the town's pension liability, we must keep working creatively to reduce expense growth -- but there is a light at the end of the tunnel.

At this moment, the key to securing Belmont's future is passing the override. Destroying institutions is easy, but rebuilding them is really hard and even more expensive. We must not be penny wise but pound foolish. An override will keep Belmont intact while we work--with urgency--to pay down the pension liability, grow the commercial tax base and find ways to reduce expense growth.

It is not an exaggeration to say that the future of our community hangs in the balance. I hope residents will join me in voting yes.

Elizabeth Harmer Dionne  
55 Wellesley Road, Belmont, MA 02478  
617-905-8674

