



TOWN OF DOUGLAS

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STATEMENT FROM TIM BONIN

The **BOS** formed the Strategic Budget Committee shortly after the creation and ultimate passage of the FY13 budget when it became clear that our business model could not support the level of services we, as a community, have come to expect. The Strategic Budget Committee is comprised of 2 Selectmen, 2 Finance Committee Members, 2 School Committee Members and three citizens at large.

The committee has met 8-9 times since August and, through its work, identified a \$1.9 million budget shortfall for FY14....

And that's using all of our certified free cash.

Reality is, over the past few years, we've cut and cut and cut some more hoping to stave off the effects of a dismal economy, sorely lacking growth in town, substantial cuts in state aid, extremely modest increases in Chapter 70 funding, incredibly expensive (and dare I say unfair) state mandates, and a 33 percent reduction in lottery aid from our 2008 high.

For the Committee and for me, personally, the SBC's work told us that we cannot cut our way out of this problem AND maintain essential town services that we, as a community, expect. The prospects of the state level funding our state aid only added to this belief.

In short, if you thought FY13 (where we, among other things, reduced the school day and cut the senior van) was bad, FY14 will be far worse.

We need teachers in the classrooms and police on our streets. As a community, we need to recognize that we can push off capital expenses only so long... we need to invest in our infrastructure and projects that have languished for too long.

After deliberating last night, the committee recommends asking the community to consider a \$1.4 million override.

The decision to go for an override was not made in a vacuum. I, for one, do not talk of raising taxes lightly and know that families are hurting. Mine is too.

Local government, however, has an obligation to provide the services that impact our lives on a daily basis. To do that here, in this community, we need additional money.

At the beginning, I stated that I would only support an override if it fixes the problem. I'm confident that, when you combine additional revenue with the additional cuts that will have to be made, we can get there.

Our needs are real. The \$1.4 million mark is defensible as it would place our average single family tax bill slightly below the average of our neighbors in the Blackstone Valley. I believe it is credible and the community deserves the opportunity to vote on it.

On behalf of the SBC we are asking you – the BOS – to vote to place a proposition 2-1/2 override vote before the citizens, at the next BOS meeting.