

INSIGHT

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Proposition 2½ Threatens Barnstable

By Daniel J. Lyons

A vote taken on Tuesday October 17 to override proposition two and a half and was defeated by a margin of 2-1.

A recent report issued by the superintendent of schools states that retaining proposition two and a half will greatly affect the Barnstable school system. Classes will be enlarged, enrichments will be reduced or eliminated, athletics will be eliminated or athletes will be charged fees, libraries funds will be curtailed, audio-visual programs will be eliminated, administration, guidance, and health service will be reduced, bus service will be curtailed, custodial work and maintenance will be reduced, and fees will be charged for community usage of schools such as night school.

Dr. Edward Tynan, Superintendent of Schools, described proposition two and a half, "In its essence, it says that local property and personal tax cannot exceed two and a half percent of the full fair cash market value of the property." Dr. Tynan then explained that "your tax rate can't be over twenty five dollars (tax) a thousand...there are two caps placed on tax spending...the twenty five dollars a thousand is the maximum cap. Any community that's below the maximum cap can only increase its taxes by two and a half percent of the previous year's local tax levy."

To help clarify the concept of proposition two and a half, Dr. Tynan gave the following analogy. "The movies used to be two fifty, you made two fifty an hour, you went to the movies once a week. The movies went to five dollars you still made two fifty and you're going to go every other week or get another job so you can keep going every week."

Dr. Tynan states that, "The cost of government, like the cost of everything else, is going up at five or six percent. And if what you're allowed to levy only goes up to two and a half percent, then obviously you're going to fall short. You either pay

more taxes for the difference between two and a half and five, or reduce the service. There is a choice."

Vaughn Avedian, Principal of Barnstable High School, sums up the possible areas of cuts, "Extra curricular will be probably the most affected. The next will be any of those programs involving very few students. The third ones will be anything that has a high per pupil cost...under current projections, the schools will lose money. When that happens something has got to give."

"I'm going along status quo until I find out exactly what's going to happen," Steven Goveia, Barnstable High School's athletic director, answered when asked about possible cuts in the sports department, "A lot of things can happen, none of them good. It's cutting back on schedules, cutting out entire programs, whether it be at the middle school level or high school level. There's talk of users' fees, in other words, you have to pay to play...I'd like to say I'm optimistic, but at the same time, I'm realistic about what's going on. If you don't have the money, you have got to cut back somewhere...I think there will probably be an organizational meeting where people sit down and start to plan this thing...All areas of the school system will be hit, not just the sports."

When asked what effects proposition two and a half will have on the art department and the drama club, John Sullivan, head of the Barnstable High School art department stated, "It could eliminate the art department, band...or it could half them...Drama Club would be eliminated, Summer Family Theater will be eliminated...It doesn't look good...You can't cut two million (dollars) and expect things to stay the same."

Robert Geary, Library Director for BHS, said, "Unless there's another override in the spring...there are going to be cuts in services all over the school, in every school, and every area. It's not going to be the same place. As (to) the direct effect on

libraries, I don't know...our big concern is that, right now, there doesn't seem to be any commitment in the legislature or in the governor's office to education at all. We're way down on the list of their priorities...the federal government is even worse."

"We don't waste their(the tax payer's) money in this town" Geary continues,"people get a really good value for their (tax) dollar. We (Barnstable) are the fourth wealthiest town in the commonwealth. Our per pupil cost for schools is two hundred dollars less than the state average...the town is very well managed, the school department in particular, and people have to know that."

Geary further added, "Last Tuesday was

not the end of the world, we lost one battle. Maybe that wasn't the way we needed to go, maybe we need to look at some other source of funding, or some other wording of the questions. I don't know. We're not going to give up."

Along with extra curricular activities, guidance is also slated for reductions.

"It will be reduced in staff," Carol Wilkins, Guidance counselor, said about ramifications in the BHS guidance department, "We don't know how many...we're all targeted for reduction, but right now we don't know what it means."

Edward O'Toole, coordinator for the speech team, stated, "I don't think anybody knows what's going to happen. I do know that activities might be in

line to be cut, simply because they might be considered as less crucial than classroom instruction. But I hope they're not. I think that they serve an extremely important purpose and I just wish that the people of Barnstable, those who voted anyway, would have been more foresighted and would have realized that everybody in the society has to share the burden of educating our children. Otherwise, we have no future."

When asked what he feels about the override's defeat, Dr. Tynan replied, "It represents the defeat of what I think is a pretty good plan...it's back to the drawing board for all concerned...all is not lost, we just haven't come up with an acceptable solution."

Superintendent Edward Tynan discusses school cuts with the Barnstable Teachers' Association.

(photo by James W. Cormier)

