

## Voters facing a single lump sum

---

By Paul Bistoff  
GateHouse Media  
Thu Mar 29, 2007, 10:11 AM EDT

---

Maynard -

MAYNARD — The voters at annual Town Meeting in May will vote on an estimated \$5.08 million debt-exclusion override to fund the construction of a new police station and several school facility repairs.

Selectmen voted last week to combine five costs into one Town Meeting warrant article and, if it passes, one election ballot question. The decision was made at a meeting of the Budget Subcommittee, with members of the School Committee, Finance Committee, Board of Selectmen and public safety chiefs in attendance.

Town Administrator John Curran urged town officials to combine the initiatives in order to present a unified plan to voters. Only then, Curran said, would residents feel confident enough in the town's leadership and planning to approve the override.

"These aren't menu items," said Curran. "These are critical items that need to be addressed."

The majority of the money, \$3.9 million, would pay for the conversion of the old town library, which abuts Town Hall, into a new police station

The funding also includes \$750,000 for the rehabilitation of the Green Meadow school, \$280,000 for installation of one new boiler at each the high school and Green Meadow, and \$150,000 to improve the high school's library to meet the demands of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges.

Also included is a placeholder, currently set at \$0, for fire station repairs and upgrades after the police move out of the building. Curran said that cost "could be a couple hundred thousand."

School Committee member Mary Brannelly and Superintendent Mark Masterson initially voiced opposition to bundling the projects together. They feared that if the override did not pass Town Meeting, or at the ballot, the \$150,000 to fix the high school library would not exist, and NEASC would move forward with rescinding the school's accreditation.

But selectmen said that if voters deny the override, they would still try money to fix the library. Selectman Bill Cranshaw said that in a worst-case scenario, money might need to be taken from the stabilization fund.

"If it doesn't pass then we need to find a way somehow to fund that \$150,000, whether it's this fiscal year or next fiscal year," said Selectman Bob Nadeau.

Selectmen Chairman Sally Bubier said she believes bundling all of the costs into one vote will upset some resident. Bubier said the town must concentrate on educating those who have an open mind, and driving those who will vote "yes" to come to Town Meeting, and to the polls.

"We are taking away some of the democratic rights of the citizens to pick and choose, and we are going to get some flak for that," said Bubier.