



Southampton Override FAQs

Question 1 on the Ballot

WHAT IS THE QUESTION

Southampton voters are asked to approve a budget override at the May 16th election. This supplemental budget request of \$332,555.29 passed unanimously at the May 9th Annual Town Meeting but must also be a ballot question. A **YES** vote will allow the Town to raise the needed amount to fully cover costs in the Public Safety category of the FY 2024 budget. Specifically, voters are asked to approve a slight increase in real estate and personal property taxes to ensure that we can provide adequate 24/7 ambulance and emergency services.

WHY DO WE NEED IT

ISSUE 1: We are not meeting either State standards for advance level paramedic service (ALS) nor the residents' expectations. Southampton currently relies on, and pays for, ALS coverage from Easthampton and/or Westfield 40% of the time. Ten years ago, the Town voted to upgrade our basic level ambulance service to advance level paramedic service and began to recruit trained paramedics to be on call for Southampton. Over the past few years, we have developed a roster of some 45 part-time EMTs and paramedics to try to cover all shifts 24/7. However, these shifts are second jobs for them so staffing night and weekends is particularly difficult. Resources are needed to hire up to two full-time Paramedics so we can provide timely emergency medical response service ourselves and also benefit from the revenue the ambulance services generate.

ISSUE 2: Smaller communities like Southampton have traditionally relied on part-time police officers to fill their police rosters for economic reasons. Due to the recent legislation and the Police Reform Act, all police officers, whether full or part time, are required to meet the same training requirements. Most part-time officers have little time or incentive to do so. In 2022, only 2,074 shift hours were covered by part-time officers. That is a 54% decline since 2020. In order to bridge the gap created by the void of part-time officers, we need to hire another full-time officer and ensure that we have a two-person team on all shifts 24/7.

WHAT WILL IT COVER

- Up to two Paramedics full-time salary and benefits to avoid gaps in coverage.
- A full-time Police Officer's salary and benefits instead of two part-time officers.
- A part-time shared administrative assistant for the Police and Fire/EMS departments to handle required paperwork tasks such as, payroll State reporting, and medical supply ordering.
- Ambulance equipment, particularly a medical IV Pump that will benefit those in need during transport.
- Additional resources to maintain fire trucks and ambulances to necessary standards. These vehicles have a long lifespan and would not need replacement for 10+ years.
- Funds for an independent outside assessment of our current Fire/EMS capabilities and future needs.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME

- 24/7 coverage with qualified EMT and Police staffing.
- Quick response times by having our own in-town Fire/EMS services.
- Tax rate increase of 34 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.
- With our current tax rate at \$14.33, this additional amount would mean:

Single Family House Assessed Value Impact

\$ 250,000 --- \$ 85/year or \$ 21.25/quarter	\$ 550,000 --- \$ 187/year or \$ 46.75/quarter
\$ 350,000 --- \$ 119/year or \$ 29.75/quarter	\$ 650,000 --- \$ 221/year or \$ 55.25/quarter
\$ 450,000 --- \$ 153/year or \$ 38.25/quarter	\$ 750,000 --- \$ 255/year or \$ 63.75/quarter

(over)



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WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THE OVERRIDE DOES NOT PASS (A NO Vote)

- Some overnight & weekend shifts likely not covered by paramedics
- Town may have to reduce its Ambulance Service from Advanced life Support to Basic Life Support which does not provide in-transport medical services.
- If Town is not able to meet the State requirements for our current level of Advanced Life Support, we would be required to reduce our service to Basic Life Support.
- Town may have to contract with another municipality which would reduce response times, and may be more costly.
- Town may alternatively have to contract with a private ambulance service for these Advanced Life Support transport services.
- We may not be able to adequately service or replace equipment required for EMS services.
- If the Town is not able to hire another full-time police officer there may be shifts that only have one police officer on duty which may reduce response times and could jeopardize the safety of the officer.