

# Parcenomics

## Berkshire Fiscal Levers and Assessment Fairness

Worked example: Stockbridge, FY2026

*How does a Berkshire town fund its obligations without pricing out the families who live there?*

# May 19, 2026 in Sheffield

## 22 staff laid off

### Mid-school-day email notification

Southern Berkshire Regional School District announced May 19, 2026, that 22 staff were laid off effective immediately — primarily teachers. Notification was by email during the school day; the superintendent acknowledged the method was 'far from ideal.' (Source: Berkshire Edge, Berkshire Eagle, May 19–21, 2026.) The point of opening with this is not to relitigate SBRSD's decision but to name the structural reality Berkshire towns are operating under right now.

*The point isn't to relitigate SBRSD's decision. It's to name what every Berkshire town is operating inside right now: government costs are rising faster than property tax revenue can grow under Proposition 2½.*

# Two Berkshire towns, one day

## May 12, 2026

### Mixed override results across the region

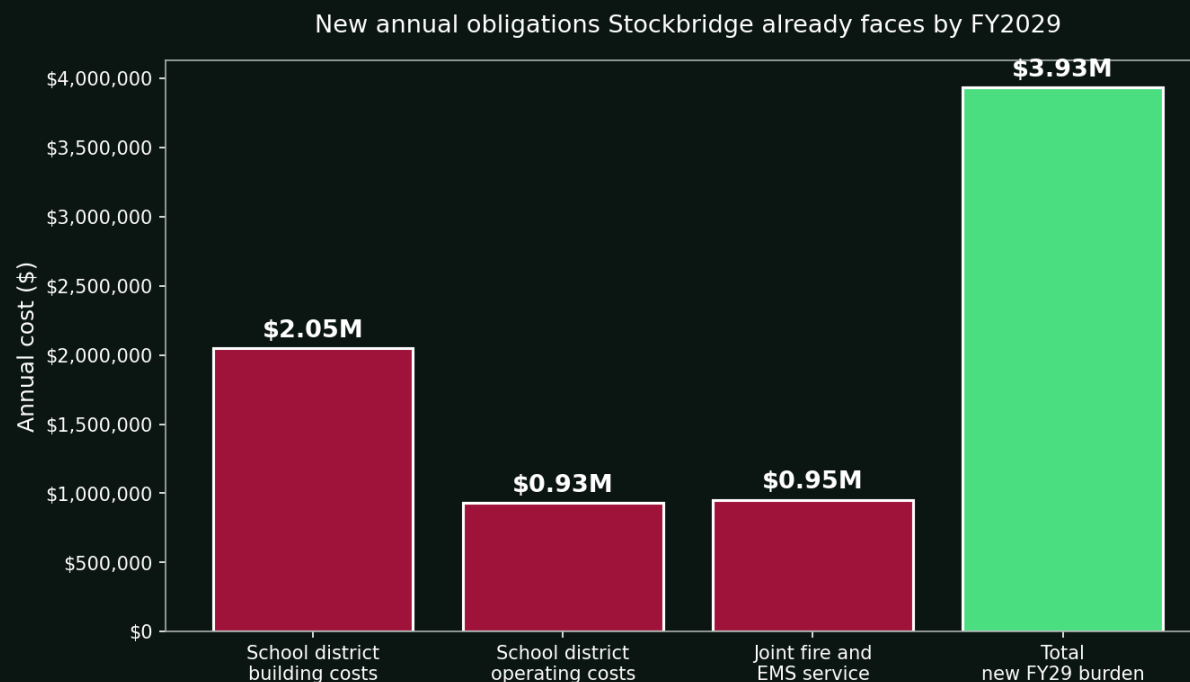
On May 12, 2026, multiple Berkshire towns held override votes with mixed outcomes: Egremont approved a \$630K override (~\$600/avg single-family home); Great Barrington rejected a \$2M operating override 631-397 (61% no); Richmond approved its override. The override path remains procedurally available under Proposition 2½. The levers in this deck do not require an override; most can be activated by Select Board decision alone.

*The override path is procedurally available to any Berkshire town under Proposition 2½. Outcomes on May 12 varied by town. The levers in this deck do not require an override — most can be activated by a Select Board decision alone.*

**\$3.9M**

# The bills coming

New annual burden by FY2029 — Stockbridge



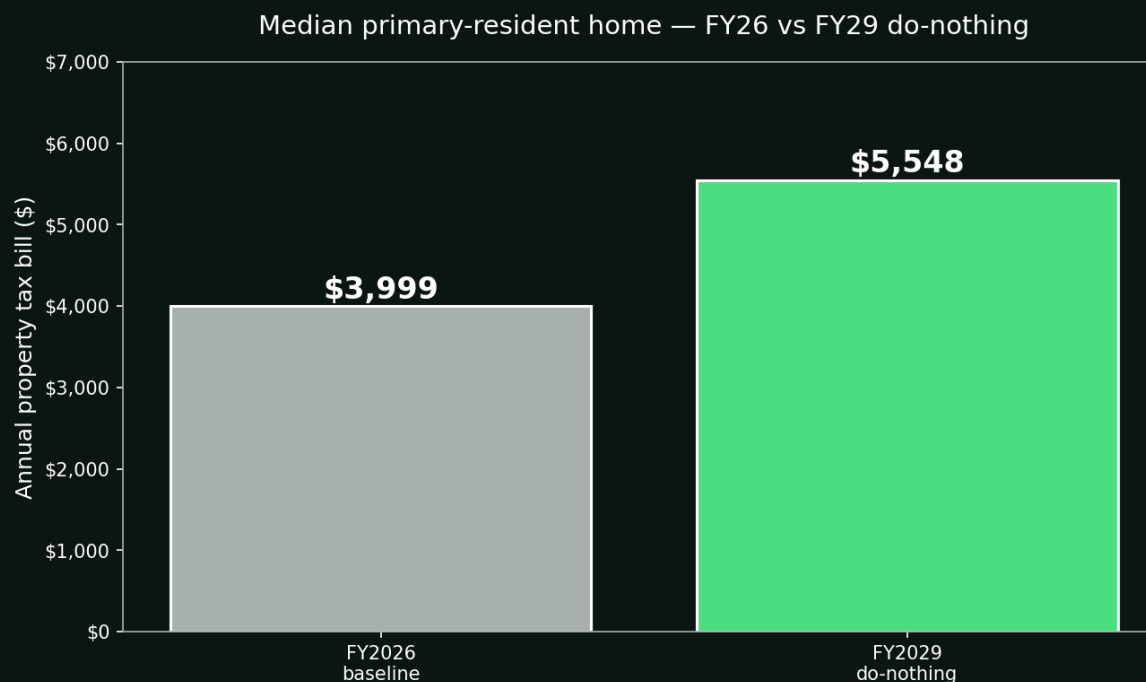
Three commitments already in motion: Berkshire Hills Regional School District (BHRSD) capital obligation, locked in November 2025 (\$2.05M/yr Stockbridge share); BHRSD operating-cost growth (\$0.93M FY29 vs current \$4.12M); joint Stockbridge/West Stockbridge fire-EMS operation, voted December 2024 with full implementation July 2027 (\$0.95M Stockbridge 60% share). Total new annual burden by FY2029: \$3.93M.

*These are obligations the Town has already taken on. They produce property tax pressure whether the Town acts on the levers in this deck or not. Slide 5 shows what that pressure looks like on the median home's annual bill.*

# What 'do nothing' looks like

## +\$1,549/yr

Median primary-resident home, FY26 → FY29



If Stockbridge does nothing on the levers and absorbs the FY29 obligations in the levy, the median primary-resident home's annual bill rises from \$3,999 today to \$5,548 in FY2029 — a 38.7% increase, paid on the residential property tax bill.

\*The \$4,000 figure refers to the median primary-resident-owned home; the town-wide average is higher because non-resident-owned homes are larger and pull the average up. This deck is calibrated to the year-round homeowner — the audience the levers are designed to protect.\*

*The bill rises because the new obligations from slide 4 are funded through the residential property tax levy under Proposition 2½. If Stockbridge's total residential property value stays flat, the residential tax rate has to climb from \$6.79 to \$9.42 per thousand to absorb the new burden. The trajectory assumes do-nothing on both fiscal levers and new growth — approved-but-contingent projects (DeSisto, Elm Court) could materially reduce this trajectory; see slide 15.*

## Within existing capacity

# The levers in this deck don't require a

Select Board action or Town Meeting confirmation — not a town-wide referendum

Most of the levers in this deck operate within Stockbridge's existing Proposition 2½ levy capacity — which the town has not fully tapped. The compliance recovery levers expand the tax base; the §5C residential exemption (M.G.L. c.59 §5C) shifts burden within the residential class without changing total residential revenue. None requires a town-wide override vote. The §5C exemption requires a Select Board majority at the annual tax classification hearing; the compliance recovery levers operate under existing statutory authority. The lever stack is available regardless of override outcomes in any given year.

*An override raises the residential rate uniformly across all residential property. Because non-resident-owned homes are on average larger, override dollars land disproportionately on non-resident-owned property — but override votes are decided by primary residents. The levers in this deck reach a similar redistribution along the primary/non-primary axis without depending on an override outcome.*

## The first question nobody asks

# Is the assessment system fair?

Before increasing the levy, audit the base

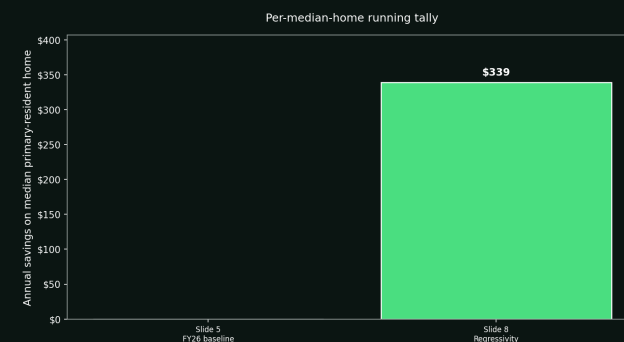
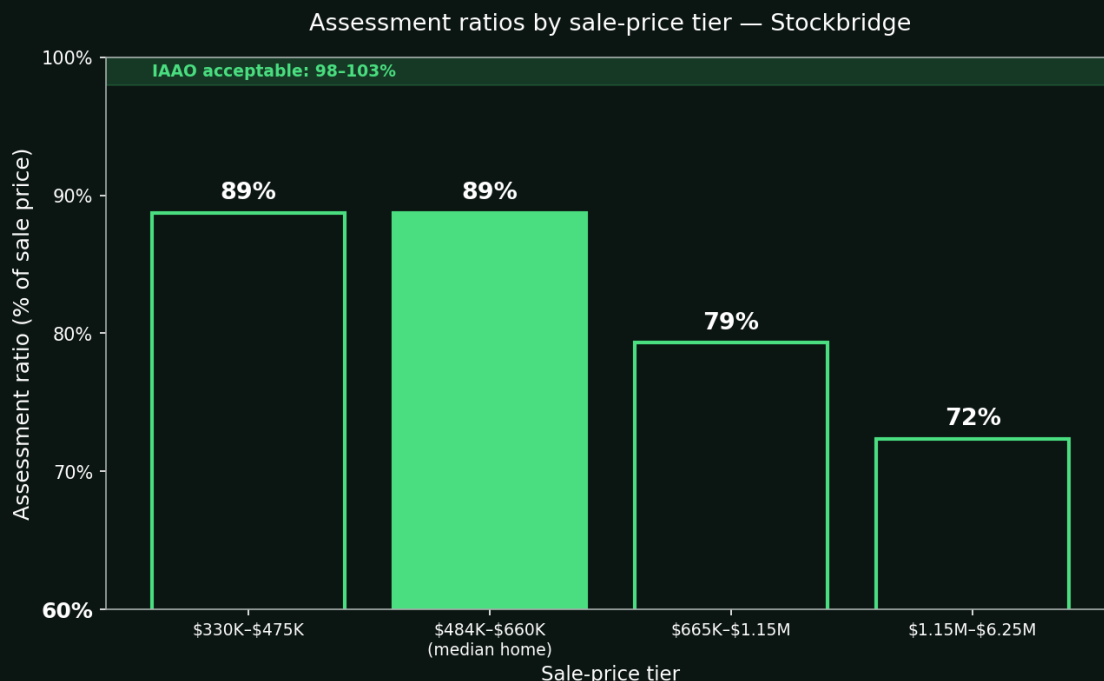
Before raising the levy, ask: is the existing tax base fair? Are modest homes being assessed at a higher percentage of their actual market value than high-value homes? If yes, fixing that lowers modest homeowners' bills without raising anyone's rate. The next slide reports Stockbridge's answer.

*If the assessment system over-assesses modest homes relative to high-value homes, the residential tax bill that lands on year-round homeowners is structurally too high. Slide 8 measures whether this is happening in Stockbridge.*

# Modest homes may be over-assessed

**\$339/yr**

What the median primary-resident home may be paying in extra tax under the observed pattern



A modest home in Stockbridge may be assessed at roughly what it would sell for. A high-value home in the observed sample is assessed at 72% of what it would sell for. Both pay tax at the same rate. If the pattern holds under comprehensive review, the modest homeowner is paying property tax on close to 100% of their home's actual value while the high-value homeowner pays on a fraction.

Stockbridge's measured assessment ratios in this study:

- Modest homes (\$330K–\$660K): **\*\*89%\*\*** of sale price
- High-value homes (\$1.15M–\$6.25M): **\*\*72%\*\*** of sale price

If the pattern holds, correcting it would bring the median primary-resident home's annual bill down by approximately **\*\*\$339\*\***.

This is a known feature of mass appraisal in resort markets, not an allegation against Stockbridge's assessors. The estimation algorithm has dozens of comparable sales to calibrate against for a \$400K home and only two or three for a \$4M property — extrapolation from dissimilar comparables almost always produces a conservative estimate. **\*\*Comprehensive sale-price-stratified ratio study with adequate high-value-tail sample is the recommended next step to confirm or revise the pattern Stockbridge-specifically.\*\***

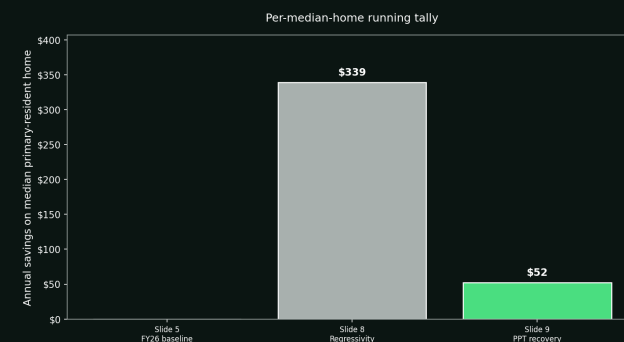
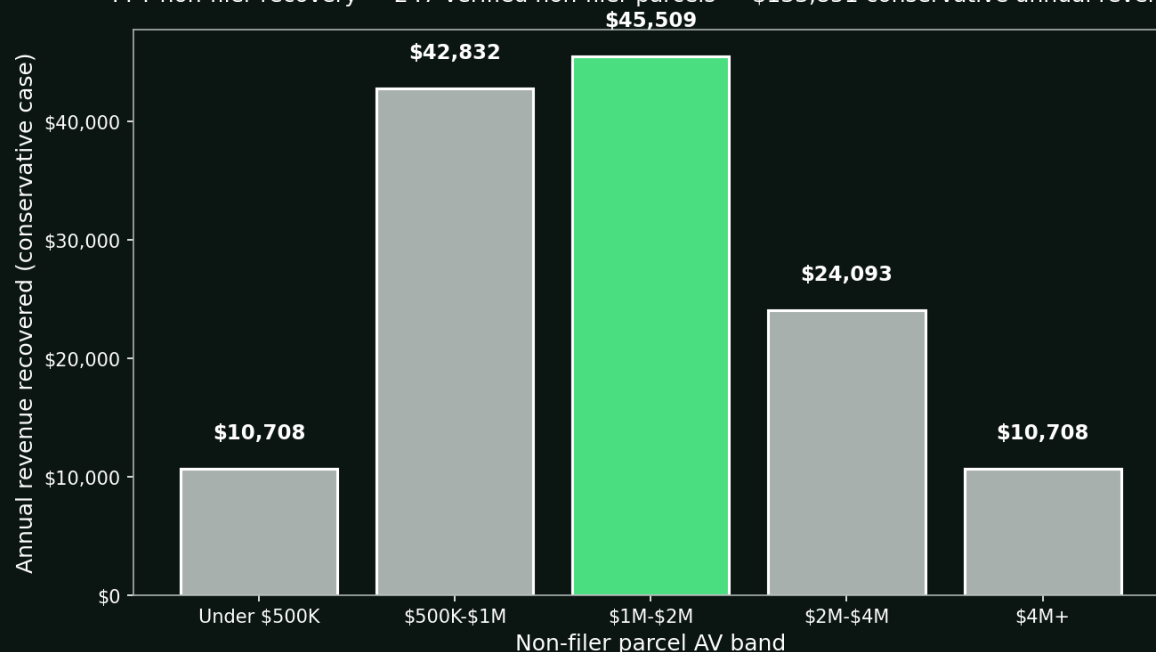
*Stockbridge striated review: N=274 arm's-length residential sales, FY2020–FY2026, deflated to sale year. PRD = 1.34 (IAAO acceptable band: 0.98–1.03). Quintile assessment-to-sale ratios: Q2 0.89, Q3 0.89, Q4 0.79, Q5 0.72. Second methodology (state-validated DOR EQV deflation) confirms within 0.004 PRD. Under-\$322K tier (assessment ratio 217%, N=small) excluded from chart — reflects atypical sales (estate transfers, distressed sales, family transfers under market), not the modest-home cohort the deck addresses. The data is suggestive of a within-class regressivity pattern requiring comprehensive striated review.*

# Lever 2 — PPT compliance recovery

**\$52.03/yr**

Median primary-resident home — conservative case

PPT non-filer recovery — 247 verified non-filer parcels — \$133,851 conservative annual revenue



Massachusetts law requires non-resident property owners to file a Form of List declaring personal property at the second home (furniture, fixtures, equipment), taxed at the residential rate. The annual filing requirement (M.G.L. c.59 §29) sets the obligation; the non-resident personal property exemption (M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.20) confirms only non-residents owe this tax — MA-domiciled primary residents are exempt. Stockbridge has 247 non-resident-owned parcels with no Form of List on file. Conservative recovery (50% of identified gap, sized via  $\text{building\_sf} \times \$50/\text{sf}$  insurance-replacement benchmark): **\*\*\$133,851/yr\*\*** to the Town. Bringing the 247 non-filing properties into compliance grows the town's tax base. With more property value to spread the levy across, the residential tax rate drops to keep total revenue flat. The median primary home saves **\*\*\$52.03/yr\*\***.

\*Compared to FY29 do-nothing partner: +\$1,549/yr (median home's bill increase).\*

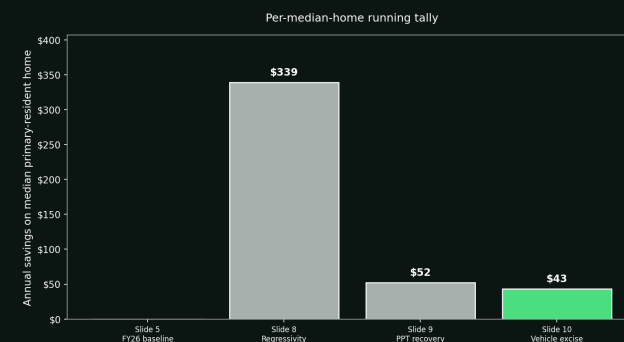
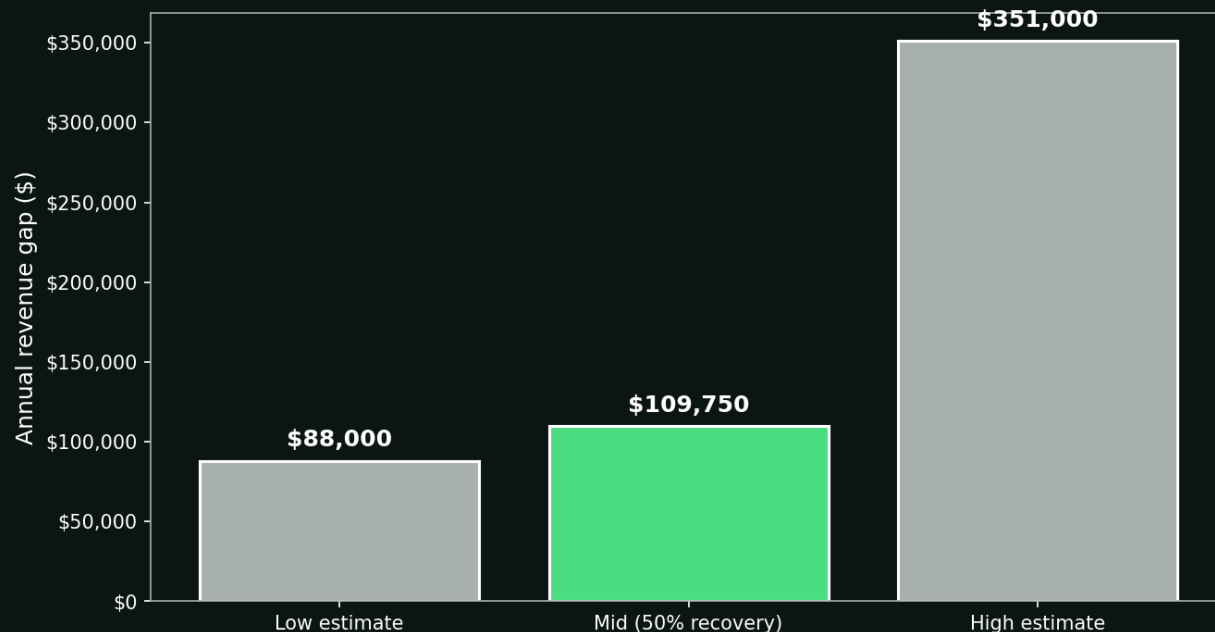
*Every dollar of recovered PPT enters the residential tax base, which means the residential rate drops to keep total revenue constant. The median primary-resident home pays less because the rate it's billed at is lower — not because anyone's individual bill changes directly.*

# Lever 3 — Vehicle excise recovery

**\$43.25/yr**

Median primary-resident home — conservative case

Vehicle excise recovery — conservative case \$43.25/yr per median primary home



Motor-vehicle excise is paid where a vehicle is \*garaged\*, not where the owner's bills are mailed. Non-resident owners often register vehicles at the primary home and garage them at the Stockbridge second home — depriving the Town of excise it is legally entitled to. Parcenomics identified 117 Stockbridge homes likely to have this issue based on ownership and registration patterns. Annual recovery gap: \$88K-\$351K. Conservative recovery: **\*\*\$109,750/yr\*\*** to the Town; **\*\*\$43.25/yr\*\*** to median primary home.

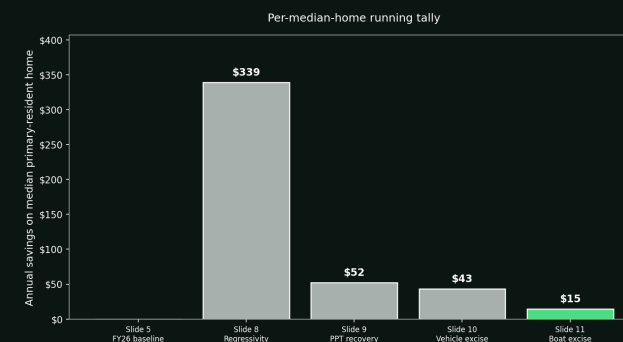
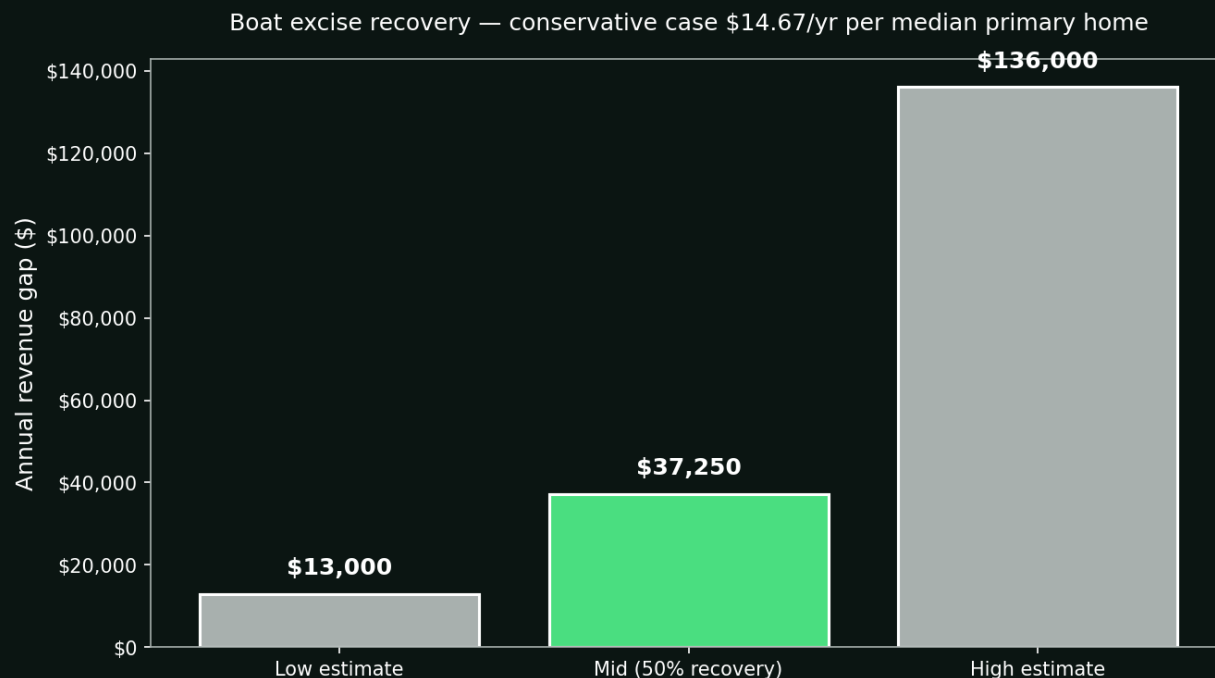
\*[pending] Computation pending source data: motor-vehicle commitment file not in canonical DB. Egremont PRR (schema audit Section C.5) specifies the records needed for direct measurement.\*

*Vehicle excise doesn't come out of the property-tax levy. Every recovered dollar of vehicle excise means the town needs less from property taxes to fund the same budget. The median home's avoided cost is the rate reduction this substitution makes possible.*

# Lever 4 — Boat excise recovery

**\$14.67/yr**

Median primary-resident home — conservative case



Massachusetts watercraft excise is paid to the town where a vessel is moored or stored on July 1 (the watercraft excise mooring rule, M.G.L. c.60B). Parcenomics identified 452 Stockbridge parcels with signals of boat mooring or storage that owe Stockbridge excise but appear on no commitment list. Annual recovery range \$13K-\$136K; conservative case **\*\*\$37,250/yr\*\*** to Town; **\*\*\$14.67/yr\*\*** to median primary home.

\*[pending] Pending mooring/storage registry data. Egremont PRR (schema audit Section C.6) names harbormaster/DPW records to request.\*

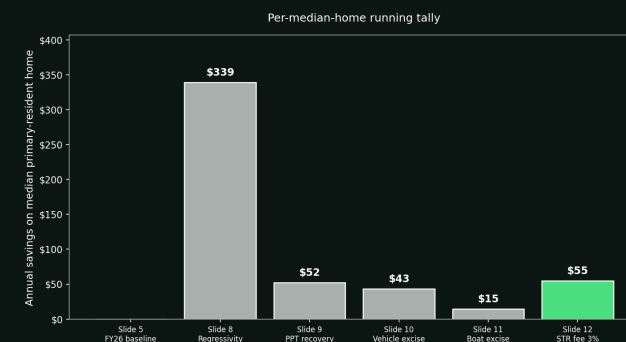
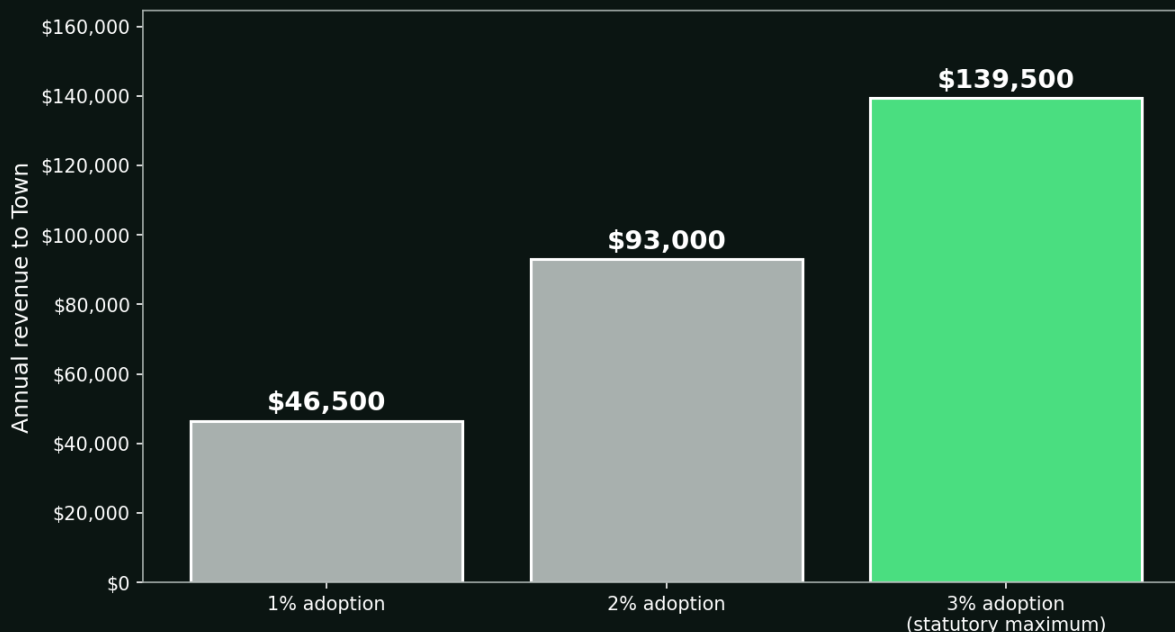
*Same structure as vehicle excise: boat excise doesn't come out of the property-tax levy. Recovered revenue means a lower residential tax rate.*

# Lever 5 — STR community impact fee

**\$55.00/yr**

Median primary-resident home — at 3% adoption (statutory maximum)

Short-term rental community impact fee under M.G.L. c.64G §3D — annual revenue by adoption rate



M.G.L. c.64G §3D authorizes towns to adopt a Community Impact Fee of up to 3% on professionally-managed short-term rentals (not on owner-occupied short-term rentals). At the 3% statutory maximum: estimated annual revenue **\*\*\$139,500\*\***; median primary home saves **\*\*\$55.00/yr\*\***. External revenue offset; reduces residential levy.

\*[pending] Pending source data: town short-term rental registry data not yet acquired. Egremont PRR (schema audit Section C.7) requests both town-side registry and DOR Operators Registry.\*

*Massachusetts allows towns to adopt this fee at any rate from 0% to 3%; the deck assumes maximum adoption because no political constituency advocates for partial adoption. Short-term rental operators oppose any fee; year-round residents support the maximum. Adopting at the statutory ceiling is the politically aligned choice.*

## Lever 6 — Senior exemption suite

# Four clauses, expanded parameters

Stockbridge already adopted — has your town?

Stockbridge has adopted all four senior-related clauses at expanded local-option parameters:

- **Senior deferral (Clause 41A).** Stockbridge ceiling \$75K income (statutory \$40K); interest 5% (statutory 8%, 16% on transfer/death)
- **Senior 65+ exemption (Clause 41D).** Stockbridge \$1,000 (statutory \$500)
- **Surviving spouse / elder exemption (Clause 17E).** Stockbridge \$426 (parameter expansion adopted)
- **Hardship exemption (Clause 18).** Adopted

Adoption is a Select Board majority + annual Town Meeting confirmation — *not* a town-wide vote. Per-qualifying-household savings figure pending utilization data acquisition. **The implicit question: has your town done this?**

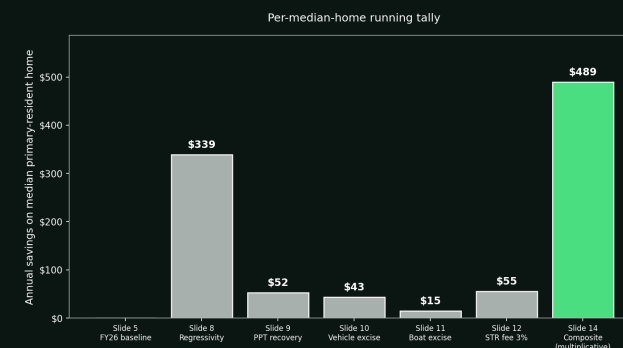
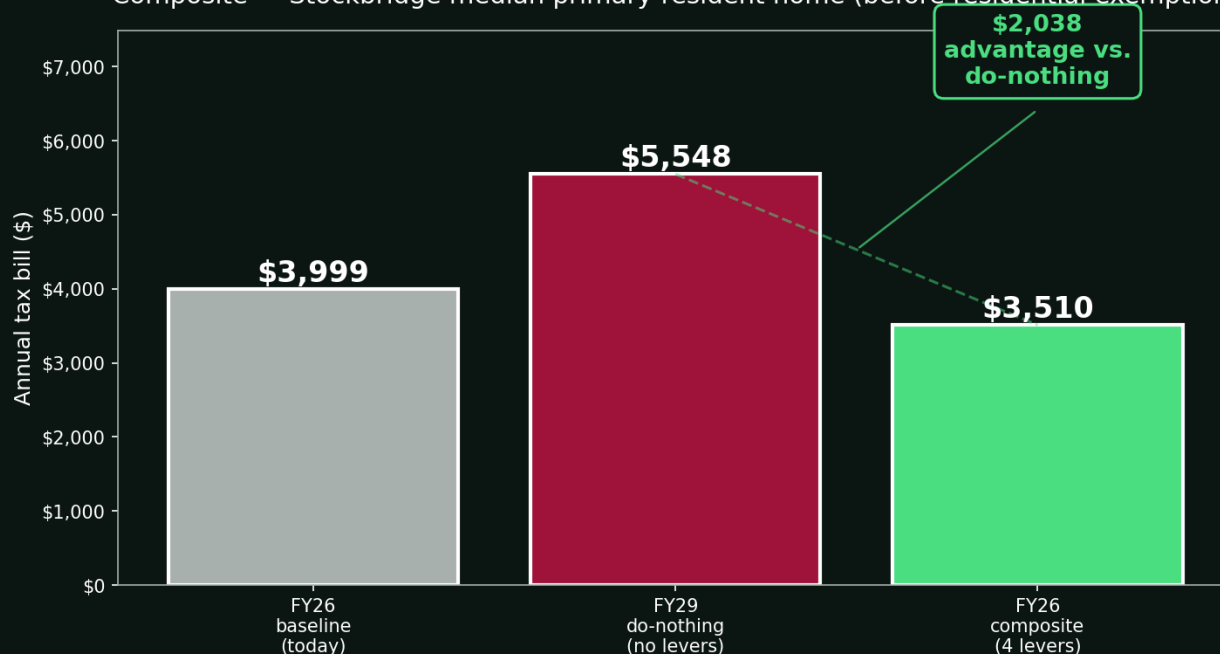
*Adoption requires a Select Board majority and Town Meeting confirmation — not a town-wide vote. The four clauses operate at the per-qualifying-household level, not at the per-median-home level, which is why this slide pauses the running tally. The next slide picks the tally back up.*

**\$3,510**

# WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER

Median primary-resident bill under composite (vs. \$5,548 do-nothing)

Composite — Stockbridge median primary-resident home (before residential exemption)



Combining the four levers before the \*residential exemption\* — the flat-dollar exemption for primary-resident-owned homes, detailed on slide 16 — at conservative case throughout: regressivity correction (Path 2 anchor) + PPT recovery + vehicle excise + boat excise + short-term rental fee at 3%:

- Composite residential rate: \$6.513/\$1,000 (vs. \$6.79 current)
- Median primary-resident bill: **\*\*\$3,510\*\*** (vs. \$3,999 today)
- vs. FY29 do-nothing (\$5,548): **\*\*\$2,038 advantage\*\***

\*The four levers interact: when personal property tax recovery grows the tax base, the residential rate drops, which makes each subsequent lever's dollar effect slightly smaller. We report the more conservative combined effect rather than a straight sum, which would slightly overstate what a homeowner actually saves.\*

\*\*This is how a town affords the government it wants. Slide 15 covers new growth (the long-horizon base-expansion lever); slide 16 covers the residential exemption (which adds further savings on top of this composite).\*\*

*Combining the four levers in this deck — assessment fairness correction plus PPT, vehicle excise, boat excise, and STR fee recovery — the median primary-resident home's annual bill drops from \$3,999 today to \$3,510. Compared to the FY2029 do-nothing forecast of \$5,548, the levers produce a \$2,038 advantage. The residential exemption on the next slide adds further savings on top of this.*

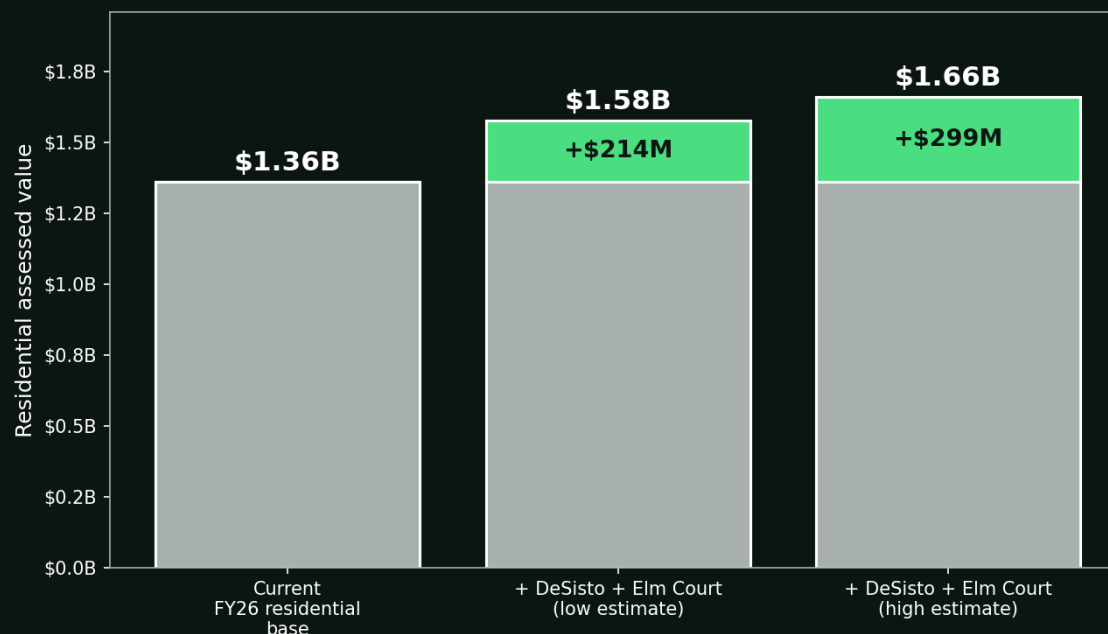
# New growth — the lever that adds capacity

# \$2.6M–\$3.7M annually

— potential, not bankable

If both Stockbridge projects fully build out, three revenue streams; neither project has broken ground

New growth — the property-tax piece: residential base could grow by \$214M–\$299M



"New growth" is the property-tax revenue from new construction. Under Proposition 2½, new growth is the only mechanism — other than an override — that lets a town's tax levy grow beyond the 2½% annual ceiling. When a new building is completed and added to the tax rolls, its first-year tax bill expands the town's permitted levy permanently.

New growth is structurally different from every other lever in this deck. **\*\*Stockbridge illustration — potential, not bankable.\*\*** Neither DeSisto nor Elm Court has broken ground; the figures below are scale of what's at stake if buildout occurs, not expected revenue.

Three concurrent revenue streams at full buildout — combined **\*\*\$2.6M–\$3.7M annually\*\***:

- **\*\*Property tax\*\*** \$1.45M–\$2.03M — levy-limited under Prop 2½ (M.G.L. c.59 §21C). Expands the levy ceiling; lowers the residential rate.
- **\*\*Local rooms tax\*\*** \$1.13M–\$1.55M — 6% under c.64G §3A. Revenue from this tax doesn't count against the Proposition 2½ levy ceiling and doesn't require an override; the town can spend it on anything.
- **\*\*Local meals tax\*\*** \$56K–\$97K — 0.75% under c.64L. Same structure: outside the levy, no override needed.

The off-levy streams (rooms and meals) are structurally distinctive: they would reduce dependence on the property tax levy without a classification hearing or override vote — *\*if and when projects of this kind execute.\**

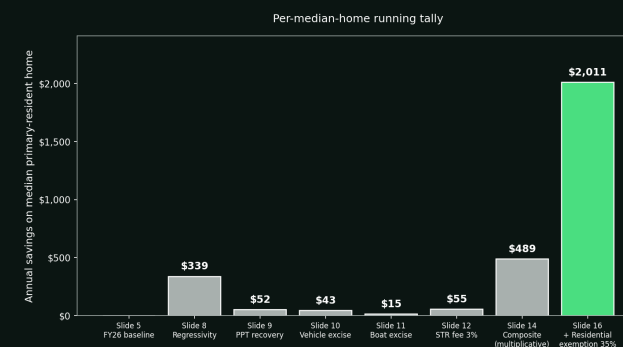
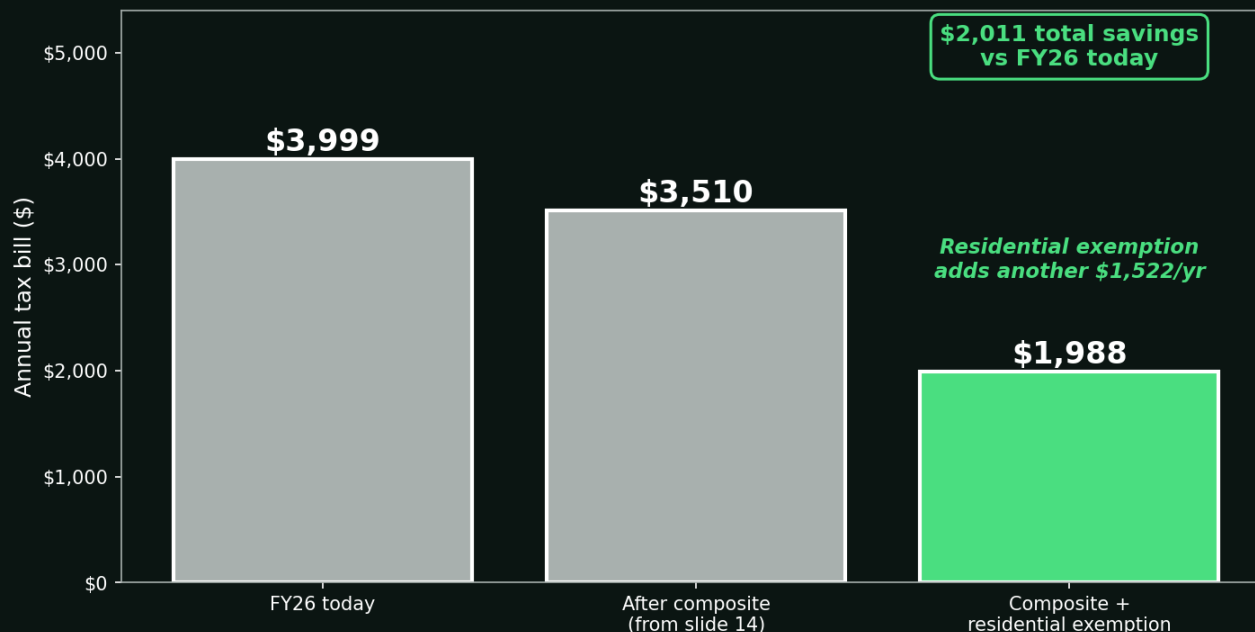
**\*\*Both projects approved; neither has broken ground\*\*** — *the visible signal that financing has not closed. Elm Court additionally pending Lenox Zoning Board approval because a small portion of the property crosses the town line. Material potential — but not bankable, similar to other approved-but-stalled Berkshire projects (the Bard Simon's Rock disposition in Great Barrington carries the same posture). The chart visualizes the property-tax piece; rooms and meals tax revenue is additional if and when buildout occurs.*

# If you want more — residential exemption at the 35% ceiling

**\$1,988**

Composite plus residential exemption (vs. \$5,548 do-nothing)

Residential exemption at 35% — cumulative recommended path



The residential exemption (authorized under M.G.L. c.59 §5C) allows the town to grant a flat-dollar exemption — up to 35% of average residential AV — to every primary-resident-owned home. Stockbridge 35% exemption: **\*\*\$281,071 per primary home\*\***, applied to **\*\*698 eligible parcels\*\***. Shifts burden within the residential class; total residential revenue unchanged.

\*Chart above shows the cumulative recommended path:\*

- Median primary-resident bill (composite plus residential exemption): **\*\*\$1,988\*\*** (vs. \$3,999 today; \$5,548 do-nothing FY29)
- Median primary savings vs FY26 current (composite plus residential exemption): **\*\*\$2,011/yr\*\***
- Median primary advantage vs FY29 do-nothing: **\*\*\$3,560/yr\*\***
- Median non-resident-owned bill (composite plus residential exemption): **\*\*\$5,105\*\*** (additional **\*\*\$607/yr\*\*** vs. today)

\*For reference: residential exemption alone, without the other four levers, would produce a bill of \$2,442. The combined path on the chart shows what happens when the exemption is added to the composite — the strategy this deck recommends.\*

Adoption: Select Board majority vote each year at tax rate classification. Seasonal Communities towns can extend to 50% ceiling (Stockbridge is one of the 19 designated).

*The residential exemption redistributes burden within the residential class — primary residents pay less, non-resident owners pay more, total town revenue is unchanged. The chart shows the cumulative recommended path: starting from today's \$3,999, the composite lever stack from slide 14 lands at \$3,510, and adding the residential exemption on top brings the median primary-resident bill to \$1,988 — \$3,560 below the FY2029 do-nothing forecast.*

# What a town commissions

## Three layers, one product

Pipeline (Parcenomics) + Per-town data (PRR) + Local champion (you)

Parcenomics is built on three layers:

**Layer 1 — Pipeline.** Parcenomics-owned. Universal. Canonical database schema; residency tier classifier; per-parcel computations; deliverable templates. Built once, runs many times.

**Layer 2 — Per-town data acquisition.** Standardized public records request templates; ingestion process; manual-override curation for ambiguous parcels.

**Layer 3 — Local champion.** Town-contributed. Records-officer access, override-layer judgment, editorial review, narrative input, convening authority. The local champion's time is what makes the engagement affordable.

**Engagement structure:** Town commissions the initial assessment (low/no cost). Initial assessment surfaces follow-on workstreams the town's findings warrant — prioritized PPT outreach, residential exemption adoption support, senior exemption expansion, vehicle/boat excise outreach, annual fiscal review, regional school assessment renegotiation analysis. Each follow-on is its own engagement.

**Supporting analytical work referenced in this deck:** BHRSD school capital lock-in policy brief (Matsuzaki et al.).

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*Each town's engagement begins with the initial assessment shown in this deck. The follow-on workstreams the assessment surfaces — prioritized outreach lists, adoption support, ongoing analytics — are commissioned separately as the town decides which levers to activate.*

# Glossary — Statutory references

*Plain-language terms used in the deck, paired with their Massachusetts General Laws citations.*

<b>Residential exemption</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5C</i>
<b>Senior deferral</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.41A</i>
<b>Senior 65+ exemption</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.41D</i>
<b>Surviving spouse / elder exemption</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.17E</i>
<b>Hardship exemption</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.18</i>
<b>Annual filing requirement (Form of List)</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §29</i>
<b>Non-resident personal property exemption</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §5 cl.20</i>
<b>Vehicle excise garaging rule</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.60A</i>
<b>Watercraft excise mooring rule</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.60B</i>
<b>Short-term rental community impact fee</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.64G §3D</i>
<b>Tax classification hearing</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.40 §56</i>
<b>Proposition 2½ override</b>	<i>M.G.L. c.59 §21C</i>