

Appendix 4. Full Text of Open-Ended Responses to Questionnaire

Question 8 was an open-ended question that asked respondents to provide feedback to the question, "My idea for fixing the Town's budget problem is:" Of the 437 people who responded to the questionnaire, 239 (54.7%) provided a response to Question 8. All of the responses were stored and then classified according to the topic(s) mentioned by respondents. Some respondents limited their response to only one subject area (i.e. economic development) while others commented on multiple topics at once (i.e. economic development, an override, and the police department). Portions of responses relating to specific subject areas have been extracted verbatim and appear in the relevant subject areas within the body of the report (see Chapters X and XX). This appendix contains the full text of all responses to Question 8, regardless of subject area(s). All comments appear verbatim, with only spelling, punctuation, and grammar—these done for ease of comprehension.

- [Local meals/lodging taxes] you mean to authorize us to increase them as a local option and we keep the money. [Fire Station Headquarters] we can't afford the annual costs.
- [scribbled notes and figures--look like notes to self]
- 1) Cuts--LSSE--make 100% self-supporting from fees. 2) Librarians--consolidate buildings--for size of permanent townspeople you only need main building @ Jones--rent out Munson, close N. Amherst or rent out. Amherst also has UMass, Amherst, Hampshire, let library keep funds collected from overdue books. 3) Senior Ctr.--self-funded--run more by volunteers or ask for fees for programs. 4)Public safety--consolidate with other towns, esp. the dispatch center (re--current Bulletin article--Gawle). 5) Municipal--work with schools to combine IT and combine positions. 6) Capital--complete buildings now in progress of restoration--freeze all else--no new vehicles, computers, only essentially--fix roofs--essential roads/sidewalks only. 7)Schools--cut teacher aides except for SPED needs--aides may not help (never in existence till '70's and '80's) and students paid attention to teachers (may actually be a distraction if two adults in one room) . Needs to be discipline in schools--right now problems with ADHD students and all students (re: attention spans) just move up to college level. Also have employees pay in more for health insurance.
- 1) Develop a industrial park to provide more local jobs and increase local tax revenue. 2)Have the local colleges pay more in donations to schools and services since they own more and more residential property that doesn't pay tax revenue because of their tax exempt status.3) Cut more admin. jobs in the secondary schools, do we really need all these deans and asst. deans and counselors?
- Cut all school bus routes within 1.5 miles of school. 2. Cut all night games at school. 3. Lower temp. in all municipal buildings. 4. Close all bars in Amherst (EXCEPT UMass campus) at midnight (this will reduce police overtime pay). 5. REDUCE IT budget. 6. Send out sewer/water bills only TWICE a year. 7. Close swimming pool in middle school. 8. NO salary increases for town employees. 9. Close Marks Meadows School. 10. Do NOT cut bus routes. 11. Reduce number of personnel in Planning Department (5 to 2 or 3) 12. Charge high school students a fee if they do NOT ride their bus but DRIVE to school instead.
- Dismiss the Town Manager immediately as well as the position. Elect a mayor at half the cost of the present Town Manager. 2. Discourage the settlement of abuse victims from other parts of the state. 3. Put welfare people to working on street cleaning, trash removal, etc. 4. Stop payments to welfare people. Establish a kitchen where welfare types have to work to prepare meals for others in same circumstances. 5. Get rid of the many "extra" teachers in the school system. Too many are doing nothing while classroom teachers carry the burden. 6. Increase fines for auto violations. 7. Publish names of delinquent tax payers.
- No one is "right" 2. We must have a more integrated dispatch and policing system between Amherst and UMass. They should be virtually one service. 3. We must have a Fire/EMS service that asks the question:

What is the most cost effective way to serve Amherst? 4. Cutting Community Services (especially Human Services and the Pools) is not the way to solve our problems. They are a minuscule number. Poor people and children will be disproportionately affected. 5. Technology expenses in the schools and town must be reigned in. Technology has become too important in our town. 6. Do we really need all the DPW equipment we buy every year? Can we share more with other towns? Can we contract out jobs more often?

- Plan, budget, and expend to live within the Town's annual income. 2. Institute meaningful and constructive structural cost savings. 3. Abolish contradictory and counter-productive municipal regulations. 4. Change the anti-business zoning bylaw to encourage the sought economic activity. 5. Accelerate the approval, permitting and code procedures for economic development. 6. Act responsibly, proactively and impartially to encourage economic development. 7. Appoint to municipal bodies impartial citizens. 8. Cease vituperating citizens with experience who present alternatives or solutions. 9. Focus valuable time, energy, and resources on the resolving issues rather than creating contentiousness. Tragically Amherst's zoning bylaw, approval, permitting and code enforcement regulations often require taxable entities years to navigate, while providing tax-exempt entities an accelerated process. That process seriously disadvantages Amherst's business initiatives, its ability to be competitive, favors non-taxable entities over taxable and reinforces Amherst's well-deserved anti-business characterization. From the business perspective, the resulting unreasonable delays increases costs, discourages venture that have immediate location/expansion needs, and constricts access to essential development capital. Interesting that 40-B "affordable housing" is granted preferential and expedited comprehensive permitting, while critically needed economic development is forced to endure endless and costly obstacles. Furthermore, tax exempt endeavors often receive municipal support, advocacy, and staff assistance; something unavailable to tax paying entities.
- 1. Schools: Use more volunteers. There are many retired teachers in this town. Do not hire more administrators. Turn off lights. Save fuel by making fewer school bus stops. Neighbors can organize volunteers to meet school buses and children can actually walk a reasonable distance. Be careful of technology spending. It can get out of hand and wreck a budget. See if companies will donate computers, etc. (It's done at UMass with pianos.) Forget about distance learning. It is over-rated and not good for the overall education of young people. It does nothing for socialization. Capital Budget: The town needs much less plowing. Public Works plows incessantly and maniacally. What are Jones Library furnishings and equipment doing in the Capital Budget. That is about it. I think we can all tighten our belts considerably. Thanks for doing this.
- a combination of economic development, more support from the colleges and university, and an override
- A combination of the six choices provided in this survey reflect the approach that will likely have the most long term positive impact for the town. I also feel that the Select Board governance structure hinders the town's capacity to make changes that will increase the town's financial health and well being.
- A Question I have had for a long time is why does Amherst have six assistant principals? I would think we could have a assistant to the superintendent that could do the job of the six assistant principals. I have a hard time believing those jobs of the six assistants are that much different that one person could take care of it for all. We also need to make DPW, Police and Fire departments are first priorities. I also believe LSSE needs to be self supporting. The town needs to stop thinking that we can take care of everybody's needs. It is also time to start bringing in development to help with taxes. The townies for years have said this but non townies seem not to go for it but want all the services.
- Accept that we can no longer do all the things we thought were necessary to do
- Actively demand the state become involved with health care cost reforms. Without a state or national effort to reduce health care cost growth, we cannot expect to control local spending.
- Address town luxuries: Tree warden Schools: divide students into classes by ability: honors, regular, and eliminate SOME of the "Specialty" FTE's like individual math or reading coaches
- All of the 6 ideas enumerated on the forced-choice page. There will need to be regular overrides. There will need to be fiscal restraint. There should be an all out campaign to leverage the wealth and resources of the colleges and UMass. This does not mean that the town can ask Tony Marx to write a check--he has said that he will not do it. But if the town comes to him with a proposal that uses Amherst College land--

e.g. for senior housing--he would be interested. From my conversations with Marx, I get the impression that the Town has done NOTHING to engage him. The meals tax of some other fraction-of-a-percent tax would help the budget enormously. It's not clear that the town--in alliance with other towns--has pursued this hard enough. Given the state of the federal and state budgets, I think the people who are waiting for the state to come to the rescue with more funds are loony. It's not going to happen in the foreseeable (5-10 years?) future, if ever.

- Allow more development of businesses and R&D facilities on University Drive and other places not already protected. Allow current APR lands to stand, but end the vigilante style pursuit of a completely open-spaced Amherst. Why let Hadley get all the \$\$?
- Amalgamate services where possible: across dept lines and regionally e.g.: fire and police; continue technology pursuits to reduce staff time and environmental costs; decrease health insurance costs...wellness initiatives with dedicated staff time and policy change actions; reduce hours of services not actual services; aggressively pursue grants (get a grants writer) work on grants with university partnerships (multi-agency approaches are very fundable; dedicated staff time for economic development, grants and wellness; not sure how firefighters use their time when not active...is there any way to maximize this staff time.
- Amherst needs to distinguish between core tasks for a town--education, public safety and roads, and virtually everything else. We consistently fail at this. Why do we need an assistant Town Manager? Axe Leisure Services. Reduce administrative staff in the regional school budget. It's hard, but municipal staff should pay for more of their health insurance--we just can't assume that cost increases will be picked up by the town. I haven't had a raise in over six years! I can barely afford to live here. I think the technique of letting a committee propose or negotiate difficult budget items is a way for the Town Manager to avoid taking heat for making difficult cuts, and he should make them. I am skeptical at the apocalyptic results being projected for schools too--this is a refrain and Peter has cried wolf one too many times.
- Amherst needs to learn to live within its means. The budget needs to prioritize things such as fire/EMS, police, DPW, our schools and make cuts in things that are "nicities" like LSSE and the golf course when things are tight. In tough economic times we have to cut "the fluff" and focus on the things that are really important to our community not just "nice," extra services. Amherst needs to realize that when prioritizing, every organization/service will be able to defend their reason for needing town support but we just can't make everyone happy all the time anymore! LSSE should be self-supported. Sure it's nice to be able to take a course through LSSE but it would be even nicer if we could provide adequate fire/EMS service to our community!!
- As a long time tax payer in Amherst, I have seen the very few services we use constantly cut. Yes, we need schools, but their budgets are so large that I really wonder if they need to have all of these services for the students and parents. Services that serve all ages should be supported and not cut. Fire and Police are important; however, library system serves everyone at such a bargain price. All areas of Amherst need access to information.
- Ask employees for a giveback on their raises
- Ask wealthy individuals or corporations (Bill Gates, Verizon, Microsoft, Dell, Buffet) to donate to Amherst, MA by advertising its peculiar and attracting character, environment, and historical [] asset.
- Assemble a varied team of Amherst business owners whose volunteer task will recruit more businesses to the town. Ideally 50% of these biz owners should derive the of their profits from Valley residents.
- Attract clean green businesses, increase conference space (beyond the new Jeff), override.
- Avoid layoffs - rather reduce time worked. Increase fees to developers. Provide incentive to preserve land - it saves school costs. Libraries - maintain core services but hive off ESL and related activities. Reduce times open. Senior population increases - so do services. Not all seniors are paupers. Continue to improve IT. The more info is made available the more will "avg" citizen be willing to support the community. GO FOR OVERRIDE!!!
- Be very careful about new expenditures.
- Be very, very frugal. Every other town is going to have to do the same. That's the kind of time we live in.
- Besides ideas in Question 6, visit the National Priorities Project Website to learn the \$ impact on Amherst of the current federal budget spending priorities! We all have to work hard to demand that billions of

federal dollars being thrown away on war, military spending, etc. be redirected to fund human needs on a local level! There really is a HUGE connection between our predicament locally and these issues. NPP's research is VERY eye opening and empowering. Especially green technology businesses!

- Careful consideration of all ideas provided in this survey, then do the best you can (I believe you CAN)...costs of everything is up, so Town's costs must also. Cheers!!
- Change governmental structure from Town meeting. Stop confrontational attitudes of town Boards and regulatory staff (i.e. change is not inherently bad). Stop accepting not-in-my-backyard attitudes and think more about the public good. Neighbors have too much power. If something is legal, it should be allowed. If you want it illegal, legislate it as such, and stop second guessing everything. Take professional reports and input seriously instead of mandating it and then throwing it out the window if some uninformed board member, town meeting member, or neighbor disagrees. Need I go on?
- Close both branch libraries and sell/lease the buildings Make leisure services completely fee-supported Close one of the two pools in summer Demand more \$\$\$ from local colleges
- Close branch (North and South) libraries Reduce budget at main library Negotiate for more money (PILOT) from UMass, Amherst and Hampshire colleges Renegotiate town employees wages/salaries and health insurance to lower cost Elementary Schools Reduce Special Ed program Make fee based ALL after school programs (academic and extra curricular) Regional Schools Eliminate and/or make fee based Russian and German language programs and Make fee based ALL after school programs (academic and extra curricular) Reduce Special Ed program
- Close Marks Meadow. Charge actual fees for everything (e.g., LSSE, Cherry Hill, etc.) -- no subsidies.
- Close pl. dept. They do little--follow Hadley example. Combine services--stop duplication. Get a real Inspection Services Dept who do their job and be of help to the public. Reorganize it. Stop the poor service and endless CYA attitude. When the town manager has to work on service quality of Insp. Services, there is a problem.
- Close the North branch of the library. Stop funding for human services. Pursue economic development - although this is increasingly difficult in this economy. Stop wasting time chasing state money that does not exist. Focus school budget on the basics.
- Combine a property tax over-ride, new taxes on meals and lodging in Amherst, and economic development in the business district for more tax revenue. Nothing is more important than restoring funds to local public schools and maintaining basic services (fire, police, library, plowing, leaf-collection).
- Concentrated economic and housing development to have no impact on open space--preserving the quality of life here. Property taxes excluding first 100K-150K to increase progressivity.
- Consolidate emergency services on a regionwide basis, pursue increased contributions from Amherst College, UMass; pursue more economic development.
- Continue doing what you are doing - find the excesses, consolidate where possible, keep going after Amherst College (they should be ashamed of themselves) and pursue an override that can pass.
- Creating a more progressive business environment; especially downtown where there are abundant possibilities in close reach for students.
- Cut administrative positions at both elementary and regional schools. Cut IT and Planning Department heads. Raise lodging and meals tax. TAX commercial property at higher rate than owner-occupied residential. Increase parking fees and fines.
- Cut all funding for Leisure services, free school meals and other social programs, these are the domain of private charity. Lease, sell or turn Cherry Hill into a no-maintenance public area like Amethyst Brook. The town has no business owning a golf course. 3 swimming pools is far more than most towns support, they should be able to offset their own expenses or very close to it through fees and memberships. If not close one. These are luxuries, and should not to be a burden to the tax payers. They are born out of good intentions, but there is no way to sustain non-self sustaining ventures any longer. Raise fines for student related problems such as Drunk, disorderly, traffic and noise violations. A more zero tolerance policy would, in the long run make our police costs lower and help make the police department more self sustaining. The fire dept and Ambulance service should be made to account for all hours and expenses and therefore be able to bill for these costs. If the ambulance service cannot break even, if not turn a slight profit, sub-contract the service. A movement to make at least some cuts in special education and

install an affordable cap should be considered. Cutting school programs that serve the fewest. Living in Amherst is not a right and the towns taxing paying citizens should not be expected to fund a socialized system. Lastly, the colleges, especially UMass should not cost the town a cent, if anything they should offer the towns people some relief, after all if they were outright commercial businesses (and they are in the business of making money buy selling diplomas) the tax base they would be contributing would subsidize more then enough to lower property taxes, not make them higher. Colleges need to pay Amherst what they cost us, a meals taxes is a good start. But I suggest far more, as much of UMass and some of Amherst and Hampshire are actually an industrial research park. Amherst needs a balanced budget amendment, one that puts basic real world services on one side and all the other "great society" expenses on the other. If there's extra funds after hard costs, like schools (and I mean a sensible school program we can really sustain/afford), police, fire, roads, snow removal and such, then spend some on other costs, but no funding for non-essential projects before the basics are covered in full and always with the middle and lower end tax payer in mind.

- Cut Assistant Town Manager. Cut Town Manager pay. No new tax. No new land.
- Cut down on administrators in the school system, do not overpay for a superintendent.
- Cut Municipal overhead (esp. management); require equitable PILOT payments from largest service users; assess services and budgets (demand transparency and accountability); create incentives for maximizing resources and accountability when they are not used efficiently (make managers' jobs dependent on the outcome); make energy conservation mandatory and a priority for all future expenditures; open up "the shop"--solicit involvement, allow people to DO something and let them do it; build community vs. defending prior bad choices. This community if filled with people who want to contribute in meaningful ways--with all due respect, sitting on another committee or appearing before one that has already determined the possible scenarios does not BUILD community. Quite the opposite. If the budget crisis is as bad as has been projected, then "collaboration" has failed and it is now time to listen to new ideas and creative solutions from new sources and examine the practices that led to the current crisis. No one wants a fiscally insolvent town or diminished schools. But the pervading impression is that meaningful change and debate is merely "tolerated" and those that speak out and ask difficult questions are marginalized. Whether that is the intent or not, the impression is worthy of examination and your committee has the power--if nothing else--to create an environment receptive to change rather than defensive of cuts to the status quo. Critique is a healthy and a meaningful expression of commitment to the Town, as much as carrying the torch. And when the torch is running out of fuel, it's time to seek alternatives to keeping it lit. Money follows policy. So when the money runs out, it's the policies that require change. It's a painful process watching Channel 17 and seeing more questions from residents seeking information evaded than answered. Any suggestion of an override is disingenuous until new policies are adopted that demand vigorous accountability and transparent answers to residents' questions. I hope that is the intention of your committee and that you will create a new environment in which questions about policy, priorities and budgets can be posed--and answered--from residents regardless of their status on existing committees or, even more importantly, their disagreements with them.
- Cut out the red tape on economic development. Encourage revenue generation business (that aren't large chains).
- Cut services that are "nice" to have in good times but need to be let go in hard times--outreach bus routes; branch libraries; non-essential staff. Privatize health and safety above all else. Next comes schools. Economic development needs to be part of short and long-term plan. Need to move forward on South Amherst Fire Station--too risky not to have it. Be realistic about future funding from UMass and Colleges. Be prepared for cuts in local aid.
- Cut services to the basics only.
- Cut the high school football program!!!
- Cut waste. Reduce or eliminate capital projects. Get fair share from institutions. Can town enact any sort of taxation or fees?
- Cuts in services (sadly).
- Develop the town.

- Do a barrel roll!
- Do not spend more than we have!
- Don't pay for more than you have!
- Economic development is essential, downtown as well as village centers. Working in partnership with the three colleges in this area is important.
- Economic development unfettered by crippling, preservationist nonsense!
- Economic development! Not a new idea, but one that needs to be pursued. Develop downtown with mixed use multi-level structures.
- Economic development. The fact that Amherst is home to thousands of university students and we have allowed Hadley become the primary benefactor of retail, hotel and restaurant venue that they bring is a CRIME. It proves my argument that the Town Meeting form of government focuses too much on the present and has not paid enough attention to Amherst's future.
- Economic development--spin-off businesses from UMass research should be made easier for their location IN Amherst.
- Economic growth is essential in Amherst, while maintaining our small town feel. There are places for larger businesses on the outskirts of town.
- Economic/ Business Development in Amherst. Cut out some leisure services such as golf course and one town pool in summer. Make UMass pay for police patrol, ambulance, fire. Tax override.
- Eliminate LSSE.
- Encourage increased commercial business in Amherst, thus added much needed tax revenues.
- Encourage more economic development. Get the colleges and University to contribute, i.e., renovate the elementary schools.
- Energy conservation measures in the Middle School first, then in others as needed. Wind turbines on school grounds to provide municipal energy system. Maintain open space and add to it to reduce costs of new residences/school children/town services.
- Enhance economic development first and foremost. Secure funds from the colleges as they can certainly shoulder part of our burden.
- Examine expenditures such as equipment and for duplicate service. One IT should service town. We have best heavy equipment and worst streets in valley. Put off equipment purchases and use funds to fix infrastructure. Think more of rentals, services for hire instead of "owning everything." Town services have shifted to provide social services and not services to keep town functioning. Keep in mind what Gov. Patrick said to retirees: "You don't need a cost of living if you get \$40K in retirement. Live on what you have." The town needs to listen and get along with what it has. The colleges need to pitch in. They provide the jobs and most people live elsewhere. Check the afternoon traffic out of town. Time to get real.
- Find a way to tax student individually every year/semester. This is probably illegal on many levels but can most likely be approved in the form of a override. Each student in the town of Amherst would be taxed anywhere from \$25-\$50 per semester/year depending on the language of the bill. Let's say that there are 30,000 student in the town (there are probably more but, round numbers are always easier). 30k x \$25-\$50= \$750,00-\$1.5 million per year, twice that if per year.
- Find the budget items that are really not necessary. One example that comes to mind is paying professional referees for recreational league basketball games. I am sure there are many others like this.
- Focus on the services that only the Town can provide. Let the private sector handle everything else. The Town should not be running a golf course or giving money to charity.
- Fund the essential services. Cut the optional.
- Get a Select Board that is not subservient to the Town Manager, or go to another form of government. Make administrators in all departments treat budgets in the same way that homeowners and heads of households have to treat their budgets. Don't think you can spend what you don't have and what the taxpayers also don't have.
- Get smarter people than me to figure it out!!

- Get together with other cities and towns to push for state and federal tax increases to support towns. Work with colleges for more contributions. Some service reduction and some additional property taxes. Very careful economic development that is locally owned.
- Get used to the fact that the state and federal gov't are not going to bail us out, and we have to figure out how to take care of our own community. How to share our resources to ensure the survival of the entire community.
- Given the current economic recession it is not possible to do much long term planning. The budget priorities should be reviewed in two years when economic is more stable. Seniors are especially hard hit by downturn in economy and low interest rates and it would add to their difficulty to raise taxes. More money should come from institutions, state local aid--and federal government grants.
- Good luck!
- Got to increase revenue. Can not cut more. There is nothing left to cut. Do anything possible to increase revenue. An override is appropriate at this time.
- Hard work containing costs with outside professionals evaluating budgets at the end of a fiscal year to mercilessly cut programs that are underutilized/duplicate--in all parts of town.
- Have independent evaluations of Town operations and expenditures to improve performance and accountability (as the GAO does for the federal government). For example, like measures at UMass that resulted in large savings from water and electricity efficiencies. Utilize Town residents with expertise or outside professionals for the evaluations. Encourage new ideas and approaches like the Town's cost saving new telephone system. When looking at the value of any particular budget item or personnel position, base its value on a realistic complete cost that includes, depending on what you are considering, add-ons like benefits cost, insurance, overhead costs (like staff support, space and equipment), etc.
- Thanks
- Hire at least one more grant writer for the town of Amherst. I would also recruit college students in the social service programs to learn aid and assist in the grant writing process. We also need to utilize the College work-study funds placing college students within the town services to alleviate the budget issues. College students can help seek grants for computers for the Regional School Budget. Our Amherst Colleges raise millions of dollars each year thru their seasoned fund raising staff we need to utilize the fund raising tools thru the universities to help off set our budget crisis. Utilize the work study students to write grants and fund raise for our Disability Services. MRC Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Services. Each town needs to find creative ways to help assist the state and federal government in providing accommodations and assistance to disabled students, disabled renters, to live, work and enjoy the many amenities here is Amherst to live a quality of life that might not be achieved elsewhere.
- High school seems heavy on high salary administrators. Try to reduce costs of town programs--not so much print materials/ mailing costs/etc. Stop superficial improvements such as new fancy sidewalks downtown.
- Hire an economic development director and increase tax base. Cut extra fluff and non-necessities. Charge real prices for services provided. Privatize the golf course. Let non profits and religious groups manage day care and senior care leisure services type efforts.
- Hire an economic development director - get the colleges to pay for it. Close North Amherst library Get rid of deadwood HR director and Leisure Services director Ask all town departments to do zero-based budgeting Join with other towns and colleges for regional dispatch service Work with UMass to combine town and UMass police departments - we have over 100 police between the two - too many.
- I am new in Amherst and I am coming from a town where property tax is not almost the only income the town has to support itself. I believe Amherst has to be more open and make a real effort to develop the town economically. These are hard times and you can't ask people to keep supporting everything by themselves.
- I believe our tax dollars should fund public works, public safety/fire, schools first, as needed. THEN, if there is funding for leisure services, numerous libraries, funding should go there. Our roads are terrible, our police and fire are maxed out, but we have a great rec department. That doesn't make sense to me. Take care of the core, then look to help others.

- I can't imagine how to fix the budget problem because I believe things are going to get worse due to the national fiscal problem (and this WILL "trickle down" to affect us locally). I can't see any way to "fix" this problem without an override--and nobody wants one. It'll be a tough pill to swallow. I believe we need to push for a local meals tax at the state level to help local government.
- I don't have a clue.
- I don't know how to fix the budget problems. What I DO know is I CAN'T AFFORD AN OVERRIDE.
- I don't think there's any one fix. I do think the town needs some additional economic development. I also think people need to get past the idea that Amherst is an agriculture based society. Too many of the decisions made revolve around the concept that Amherst is a small New England farm town. We are a dynamic community that has a mix of farm, retail, and education based economy. We need to understand this.
- I doubt we can "fix" the town's budget problem until the whole financial situation--local, national, and global improves.
- I filled this survey out previously, but wanted to give feedback on its design. There was not enough room to weigh in on choices within the different budget categories. For example, municipal government seems to include a huge range of potential funding needs (public safety, finance, public works, etc.). It would have been nice to have been able to comment separately on each of these. I think public safety needs a lot of attention. Fire and ambulance seems particularly stressed and there is the whole fee structure issues related to our service to other towns and what the cost/benefit ratio is related to that expanded service. This needs answering in my opinion, not just hypothesizing. (What would the department look like without the revenue from other towns--better or worse, what is reasonable compensation from those other towns, etc.) Also, we HAVE to do a better job of capitalizing on the existence of two police forces in town regardless of the pragmatic difficulties that might exist. There HAS to be greater efficiencies to be gained there.
- I have no great ideas, but appreciate your efforts.
- I have no ideas. But, I do want to know what the cause of ballooning expenses is when our salaries are basically level. Where is this money going? I assume primarily to health and insurance industries.
- I might have had ideas before the bank failures and the stock market crash. Now I think we ought to all tighten our belts and spend only what is absolutely necessary. I have to.
- I think that it has to be a balanced approach that involves setting priorities (thank you for this initiative to seek input on what those are) and weighing the cost/benefit of those priorities (do we need--or can we afford-- three libraries--all open full time, do we need--or can we afford--three pools, do we need--or can we afford--to replace vehicles/equipment in the capital budget at the "optimal" rate, etc. are examples of questions we should examine. Not every budget item is created equal in my view. Also, I would strongly urge the town to do more in encouraging collaboration between the Amherst and UMASS police departments. I would also encourage the town to remind the police department of the town meeting article that passed encouraging de-emphasis of enforcement of minor marijuana possession offenses. Too often I read in the paper of arrests for pot possession in situations that seem uncalled for (a police call for noise violation results in pot arrest). I think restoring services to the regional school system should be a high priority. We are an educational community (education is our main industry) and we can't afford to let our public schools decline. This will have huge ramifications over time for the attractiveness of our community to those considering locating here for employment. Lastly; smart, planful, economic development initiatives need to be a high priority in terms of our focus. It is the one thing, in all of the options presented in this survey that we have some control over. Continuing to stream line our permitting process is an important aspect of this process (I continue to hear horror stories) as well as planning board and zoning board of appeals approval of common sense proposals.
- I think the Town has no choice but to pursue several (maybe all) of the strategies listed above. Economic development is a long-term strategy; increasing tax revenue is not sustainable over the long term. But if we chip away at the revenue shortage in as many ways as possible, we can make some headway.
- I think there are not going to be any quick fixes for the budget. With the economy going the way it is, we will be lucky to keep level services in all departments in town. We must plan for tough budget times in the

short- to medium- term but start to work on as many long-term goals (such as economic development) as feasible.

- I wish I had one. But in the making of choices for cuts, please include human services, in particular the senior center, as a CORE service that must be preserved.
- I wish I knew!
- I wish I knew. It's pretty depressing.
- If cuts in the municipal budget are necessary, then we also need to look seriously at the regulations, bylaws and committees that are coordinated by the town and drive some of the budget. We may not be able to make all of our decisions together as a community in such a constrained environment, we may need to allow the town, or the townspeople more leeway to make decisions for themselves. Second guessing and the necessary justifications that follow, requires overhead to manage, we don't have space for that kind of overhead. 2 - In difficult Economic times, a number of business will look for alternatives, to reduce operating costs. There must be an opportunity for Amherst to be part of a solution to that problem. The concept of Economic Development should be considered separately from the municipal budget question. No effective business would cut their sales and operations staff in the same proportions without examining them separately first, I suggest we do the same here.
- I'm not sure how that fixing the budget problem is so simple but a suggestion to help it is to tax the university for families that live on their property and have children attend Amherst schools.
- Implement energy conserving measures across the board (from automatic shut-offs on lights, solar power where possible, apply for EPA grants for energy conserving school buses--many towns have already gotten hundreds of thousands for this but I don't think Amherst has even applied). Eliminate town vehicles that are poor on fuel consumption and replace with hybrids. (I just saw what looked like a new police vehicle that was like a small SUV--completely inappropriate considering gas prices.) Have lower paid town workers direct traffic around road construction instead of police officers. Use microbuses (hybrid if possible) instead of big buses. Use CPA to cover some priorities (e.g. with the Town Hall renovation) to free up funds from the general budget for other priorities. [ambulance fees] maybe if Amherst is significantly lower than neighboring towns. [Leisure Services] OK to increase full fee but NOT lower income fees. [Parking fees/fines] maybe OK.
- In addition to an override, we need to focus on managing employee health care and other benefits. The self-insurance model used by the town is inefficient. Moving employees and retirees to GIC would save hundreds of thousands of dollars immediately and slow the growth of health care costs in the future.
- In the context of the global financial crisis, the situation seems more dire than presented, with significantly diminished likely available non-property-tax revenue. Level Services may realistically be out of reach, given the size of the gap to be filled. In choosing Level Services for Questions 1 through 5, I meant "Better Than Level Funding". In Question 6 rankings, I reinterpreted "Cuts Only" as plain "Cuts", and ranked choices primarily by how much they'd contribute to bridging the gap: Overrides, Cuts, Economic Development, PILOTs, Other Taxes, Fees. (Both Overrides and Cuts need to be on the table, since that's where the big money is. Economic Development may require current investments to achieve net future gains. I distinguish Cuts from Efficiencies, which I believe to be small.) Debt Exclusions (as in Question 7) make sense to fund large capital projects. The Community Choices process has received sparse public response. State law provides mechanisms for gathering decisive voter input with respect to Overrides, including choosing from a menu of options or a pyramid of levels, but not so for Cuts. I suggest asking voters at election time what Cuts they'd choose through nonbinding ballot questions that would subsequently guide Select Board and Finance Committee recommendations to Town Meeting, and ultimately Town Meeting itself -- hopefully avoiding descent into a free-for-all on the floor. (For the municipal silo, a January level-funded Manager's budget has to include proposed Cuts. The Select Board can present its own alternate Cuts, or solicit Alternative Cuts from the public. Alternative Cut package or packages should realistically match the size of the Manager's Cuts. Voters can thus be made to weigh in on their preferences.)
- In this economic climate promoting economic development will be tough however it needs to be done. We also need to consider prioritizing and reducing funding for quality of life services--I do think schools

are important but I continue to think that there budget can be trimmed. We are all tightening our belts and the town needs to do so as well.

- Increase business development to increase tax base. Close a pool. Close the golf course.
- Increase commercial tax base
- Increase economic development by pursuing a major tech employer to locate here, and by creating, encouraging facility development that would hold mid to large size companies. Also invest in downtown, increase downtown business AND residences, and change zoning to allow density increases. Also, encourage UMASS extension to create a facility in downtown geared at adult learners.
- Increase in state meal and "sin" tax (cigarettes, liquor) fees; assist from private colleges (Amherst, Hampshire); increased economic development
- Increase property tax, press UMASS and Amherst College especially, for help.
- Increase property taxes. It makes sense because state and feral taxes have gone down over the past 6 years, which is why state aid to towns as decreased: the whole cause the whole problem to begin with. TOTAL taxation should be looked at, not just the property tax. A better idea is to increase state income tax and then increase aid to towns, but that is more out of our control.
- Increase tax base through business development, focus on core services, move to a mayoral form of government that provides greater accountability to the budget process.
- Increase tax base through wise and responsible economic development. Build an expectation of a Prop 21/2 override every three years.
- Increase the number of businesses paying into the tax coffer.
- Increase the tax base by promoting commercial development.
- Increase the tax base. No more discussions. Get more eco-friendly businesses to support the yearly increases in all services.
- Increased economic development (including creative economy ideas) to bring more tax revenue into the town. Allow for conservative development of conference center, hotel, etc that will bring business to the town. Expand the arts hub in Amherst so that more tourism comes to town bringing increased revenue. Look to increased town/gown relations and collaborations with the local colleges.
- Increasing the property tax base by facilitating smart, eco, high-density (condos), development in already developed areas like the intersection of Pleasant & Triangle, Atkins Farms Corner, University Drive and the North Amherst section by the library.
- Introduce an Amherst income tax
- Invest in long term priorities supporting schools. Reduce energy consumption; Masstech.org; clean energy. Solar hot water/P.V. Weatherise all schools. Biomass (sustainable wood chips). Biodiesel (for buses). Create a co-gen at the trash transfer station. Build a community cinema in the library to charge fees.
- Isn't that the job of our Town Manager and Select Board?
- It has to be a combination of creatively adjusting expenses and eliminating waste, making do with what we have until the economy improves.
- It is important to maintain town services-strong libraries and schools including keeping the branch libraries open, LSSE budgets to keep swimming pools open, and essential public safety and municipal services. Tax override in addition to promoting economic development with University & college associated business, additional fees in town services when appropriate.
- Keep an eye on the balance of what cuts hurt whom. Sometimes it looks like the resource-poor are taking the heat. Make do with some out-of-date technologies and equipment. Integrate police forces with UMass. Make sure surrounding communities are paying adequately for ambulance. They may be already, I realize. Keep an eye on belt-tightening vs. penny wise and pound foolishness.
- Leisure services is by no stretch a crucial function of a town government. In this environment, we can't afford it. It's time we prioritized, and leisure services is at the bottom of my list. Schools, public safety, potholes are at the top.
- Library closed one day per week. One swimming pool. Lowest possible over-ride.
- Library--close branch libraries and reallocate money to Jones; sell or lease branch buildings. Town--sell or lease Cherry Hill golf course!!! Use money for essential town services. Elementary Schools--increase

funding; concentrate on reducing class sizes Regional Schools--eliminate extras (low enrollment languages like Russian; low enrollment electives); charge fees for clubs just like you do for athletics; concentrate on strengthening the core subjects and getting kids out of study halls.

- Like all family budgets adjust expenditures to fit current income.
- Live within our means.
- Live within your means.
- Long term: Stronger advocacy at the state and federal level for fair funding for our school children and real economic development at home. Short term: Increased partnerships with area colleges, grants & a tax override - our kids have had enough taken away already & we cannot reduce the strength of Amherst schools anymore & still consider ourselves to be a high quality district.
- Look at what is really needed to maintain what we have. Do sidewalks really need to be redone now? Even though some things have been planned years prior, it doesn't mean we can't cancel or postpone when the economy of the town gets bad.
- MAKE ADDITIONAL SERVICES FEE SUPPORTED
- Make hard choices without compromising ESSENTIAL services -- fire, police and schools.
- Make it easier for businesses to be here and stay here.
- Make people understand that the 2.5% allowable annual budget increase is not even enough to keep up with inflation in most years. The structure of Prop 2.5 virtually requires overrides in order to maintain even level services. Helping people understand this would make them more likely to support a well-constructed override.
- Make the public much more aware of the need for economic development and the need to cut luxury services now provided by the town.
- Making it easier for businesses to start up in Amherst. Going after the increasingly lucrative senior housing market (including extended care). This area has been selected as one of the top areas in the country for retirement and Amherst should be making it easy for retirement housing as well as other businesses to come to Amherst.
- More data that make people aware how much UMass and Amherst College and Hampshire cost to the town. Sample: how much each child's education from University housing costs. How much fire department services to that institution cost.
- More economic development!!!
- More innovative and creative budgeting, less traditional conservatism.
- Most residents can afford to pay more taxes for our services. We need to find a way to tax those who can afford it and protect those who cannot.
- N/A
- No increase in budget. Aggressive initiative to change our form of government. It is dysfunctional to try to make choices by surveys. The results don't reflect to true political will of Amherst. The results only reflect those who go to meetings and fill out questionnaires . . . and there is no way for those who do participate to be assured that their concerns will be addressed or can they hold anybody accountable for choices made. Who will be held accountable for the choices made? Town Meeting? The community Choices Committee? Who and how and what consequences? Why not put all your efforts to finally changing our form of government to a fully accountable government of professional politicians that are paid and held accountable for their choices. It is the way the State, US and hundreds of thousands municipalities govern themselves. And please, don't respond that we have to work with the government we have. If you er-call, the first vote on the charter lost by 14 votes in an election where 9,000 registered voters didn't vote. If the "Choices" committee put their efforts into changing town government, perhaps two years from now we may still be in this mess, but we can be assured that choices will be made by people we know and who we can hold accountable. Jim Pitts
- NO TAX EXEMPTION FOR AMHERST COLLEGE
- Not a fix, but why do the Parking Enforcement folks ride around in full-size, four-door vehicles?
- Our only choice is to increase prop tax beyond the 2 1/2% limit which comes nowhere near covering uncontrollable increases in health insurance or even just the cost of living adjustments for personnel.
- Override.

- Override and working with Amherst College on a large scale economic development plan for down town/senior housing. Tony Marx has asked us, "give me specifics, what can we do to help?"
- Pass overrides as needed to maintain level services.
- PILOT needs to be done! More education is needed about why the elementary schools need to be renovated. A new national economic crisis will surely alter people's priorities locally.
- PILOT programs.
- Please preserve open space! Concentrated economic development in already developed areas.
- Pride=override!
- Prioritize better, focusing on maintaining public safety and education -- everything else is frosting on the cake. Close the branch libraries! Eliminate bus lines with low ridership; increase fees on remaining lines. Eliminate the human rights staff position, if it still exists. Increase LSSE fees to better cover costs. Close the Cherry Hill golf course. Open only one public pool in the summer, and/or charge a per-use fee (perhaps with summer pass option). Work very hard on business development, and on making sure we retain the businesses that currently exist (and generate revenue!). Quit using tax dollars for charity donations, that's inappropriate when we can't pay our own basic bills. Charge the farmer's market sellers a fee for use of the land each week. Pay attention to the fact that Hadley doesn't have a revenue problem -- I don't want to live in Hadley (weak schools, poor zoning), but they are very smart to use business development to create a strong tax base. We can be smarter about zoning, but still see some business growth.
- Promote targeted, low-impact economic development on a large scale (not piecemeal); for example, senior/retirement housing communities, a clinic/medical complex (like Valley Medical) for the north side of town (tax contributions by Valley Med are not insignificant), etc. Rezone the section of Route 9 to Office Park, to get more tasteful business like Blair/cutting (again, see tax contribution) on that side of town.
- Property tax override in conjunction with economic development that is consistent with community values and maintain town character.
- Provide for the necessities first, Police Fire Public works and Schooling. Make Amherst a more welcoming place for business. Cut back on leisure services and let people provide for them selves.
- Pursue additional sources of revenue, through PILOT program, meal and lodging taxes and the promotion of appropriate business development.
- Pursue budget cuts and revenue generators concurrently: Increase usage service fees (esp. for emergency services to colleges and surrounding towns) and, at the same time, reduce staff - esp. schools administrative staff at regional level and "middle management" at Town Hall and Public Works.
- Raise property taxes via override.
- Raise state taxes and state allocations.
- Recognize that in severe economic times, we have to make cuts and sacrifices, not just act as usual-- including schools. Kids will survive. Figure out a way for low-income people to be taken into account, not taxed out of town.
- Reconceptualize taxes from being necessary evils to positive goods. Insist on appropriate revenues from tax-exempt institutions
- Reduce services.
- Reduce services. Resided in Amherst for 50+ years. What used to be a reasonable real estate tax is now at maximum for me. You HAVE TO control school expenses. Amherst does not HAVE to be number one in Western Mass. Several people on my street are in similar position.
- Reduce staffing at municipal office--ex. recycling coordinator, etc. Keep libraries and school budgets as they serve a variety of people.
- Reduce the police force size by 10-25%, with concomitant operational and capital savings. Reduce school administration comparably. Fully fund the CPA at 3%; use the resulting funds wisely for protecting working farms and creating more affordable housing, as well as historic preservation of public facilities. Develop a modest, graduated Prop 2.5 override plan as a last resort, but seriously consider referenda for bonds to support school reconstruction (and possibly much later, a new fire station). Focus "economic

development" efforts on RE-development of contaminated, already-built-upon sites, nearer to Amherst Center.

- Reduce top-heavy school administration. Eliminate charitable contributions, i.e. Big Brother/Big Sister, ABC House, etc. Eliminate child care subsidy. Sell Cherry Hill with the restriction that it can only be a golf course or public recreation area. It could not be developed for housing. "Sell" our expertise. If we have very knowledgeable conservation people (and we do), why not sell a package of how to's (such as how to conserve heat and lower your fuel bill)? Talk with admission and handouts.
- Reducing wasteful expenditures--possible only after a research on what are the highest cash items and whether they can be decreased. Think of innovative ways to raise money--use an online bookstore strategy (sell stuff); ask people to help with their time to reduce employee costs. Volunteering would be useful.
- Regrettably, an override is necessary at some point. We need to exercise restraint on spending and implement cuts in programs that make sense in order to minimize the tax increase. We need to rely on the judgment of your committee and our elected boards to determine what is essential and what can be cut to produce real savings on the expense side. For example, if Cherry Hill is breaking even and we won't save anything by closing it, don't.
- Review the 1/2 day of school on Wednesdays. It has to be very wasteful to spend all these fixed cost (fuel, bussing etc)for 3 hours of school time.
- Revitalize downtown and make it easier for new businesses to open. I think a meal tax also makes sense.
- Run the government and schools as efficiently as possible; tap the Colleges/University in any way possible; keep property taxes stable; establish a position in the town to write education grants to provide outside funding for schools; pursue economic development that enhances (instead of diminishing) the current character of Amherst.
- Run things more efficiently--contract out DPW work where it makes sense, such as big road and sidewalk projects. WAY fewer school administrators. Keep one principal and assistant principal for each school--cut central office staff.
- Sadly, I don't see a lot of short term solutions for the Town's budget problems. Everyone I know is having to seriously cut back on personal spending just to make ends meet and with the global economic crisis, this will probably get worse. In the long run, we should work change the way we fund essential local services, i.e., reduce dependence on the property tax by increasing state and federal contributions which are funded by a somewhat more equitable income tax.
- Schools, Police, Fire, EMT, Public Works, Libraries. These are PRIORITY items for full and perhaps increased funding. Unfortunately, other budget categories should be reduced or eliminated. Raise or institute fees wherever possible (btw these choices did not offer TRUE cuts and/or elimination of budget categories). Stop the semantic games!
- See Q. 6 choices above.
- Seek state and national funds wherever possible -- let's get creative about accessing Massachusetts and federal budgets.
- Seeking meals tax and lodging tax increase for municipal use. Medium tax override (2 million) IF includes tax abatement for lower income residents. Strongly pursuing an appropriate type of economic development i.e. that fits with Amherst's values e.g. non-pollution and green industry, agritourism, computer-based industry, etc. If salary cuts should be necessary (or increases temporarily denied), perhaps they could be applied only to salaries above a given level. I would hope that "fairness" would be the key to such severe actions. I hope the 3% conservation funding will be established even in the face of the current financial crisis.
- Setting priorities and adhering to them. Dealing with issues honestly and openly. Seek additional sources of revenue that relieves the burden on home owners.
- Short Term: Raise as much as we can through increases in fees from users and from our colleges and universities. Offer partial scholarship for programs to families that qualify for free or reduced lunch. Close the Mill River Park swimming pool. We have one good pool in town. Raise sales tax a bit if we can. I would support an override, but I doubt most people will. In the long run, we need to promote sustainable commercial properties in specified zones. More important, we need to find partnerships to

build business incubators for those businesses that align well with our intellectual labor pool: research and development, all aspects of publishing, the arts, and where we can sustain it, high tech. Manager Schaffer's idea for such a site in North Amherst is a good one. Public employees, including teachers, need to understand that they cannot count on raises every year, regardless of the economy and regardless of whether the Legislature pays the state's fair share. If the economy tanks, then public employees will have to hold tight for awhile just everyone else. We could perhaps encourage our magnificent teacher corps to be entrepreneurial about developing on-line courses and other products that would bring income into the area. I hope it is possible to levy reasonable taxes on such businesses.

- Slightly raise LSSE fees for summer pools, tax override with real publicity asking people to support the standard of living in Amherst, filling vacant store fronts in town, supporting business to stay here, ask Amherst College to buy Jeffrey Amherst Book Shop.
- Small economic development projects, the way Town Manager is doing it now.
- Soak Amherst College.
- Spend money on only what is necessary and the schools.
- Start an initiative to raise the federal income tax to transfer K-12 school funding to the federal budget. Consolidate school and town libraries into one department.
- Start by selling the golf course. If you could get over the image of fiscal irresponsibility, the community might be more inclined to give you more of a budget to work with.
- State money. Tax override.
- STOP CREATING DESIGNER SIDEWALKS.
- Stop hiding the real numbers. Look at how we under funded the health care trust fund, depleted the reserved and then made it seem like it was a surprise. No one is looking at numbers like these.
- Stop spending! This is not easy, nor is it popular, but it must happen. Our town asks too much of its taxpayers. When times were more prosperous, we could better afford the wonderful services we have. Now, times are tough in the US and the world and we need to be satisfied with much less. We are ready for a mayor who has the skills to make the really difficult and unpopular decisions that need to be made. Amherst can remain a beautiful, New England college town without all the "extras" we have come to expect in the past. Please act responsibly and stop overspending!
- Stop trying to fund every program that the community wants. Manage the taxpayer's money much more wisely. Ask U. MA. to provide their own fire and ambulance services for the university.
- Stop waste. Why are we still working on sidewalks??? That project on N. Pleasant is never ending and really OTT. Money would have been better spent on schools
- Stop wasting money.
- Suggestions Library - Close the two branch libraries. Change the main library's weekday hours to 9:00am - 8:30pm. As a concerned customer of the library I also would like to mention that as a service provider library employees could do with a bit more training in dealing with their customers. A library's profit is measured in customer satisfaction! Capital Budget Scenario Increases - Was any consideration given to depreciation allowances on equipment purchases and possible write offs on restoration projects.
- Support cluster housing and low income housing as well as business development. Support and encourage energy conservation and alternative energy. Encourage public transportation and pedal/electric taxis.
- Tackling the big cost - health insurance. It looks like we could buy a clinic and hire doctors at those costs, self insurance is not a terrible thing. And get "wise" economic dev. in Town, R&D, sensible retail, Services.
- Take a hard look at our spending expenses line for line and cut out unneeded expenses at this time...
- Take advantage of Commonwealth Solar grants to install photovoltaic panels on all municipal and school buildings to offset electricity costs. Partner with local businesses for additional tax credits to further bring down cost of photovoltaics. 5 year payback, savings of at least \$600,000/year. Invest in other energy efficiency projects on town buildings, roll improvements into bond package.
- Tax landlord-owned residences at a higher tax rate than home owner-occupied residence. The city of Somerville does this by giving homeowners \$1,800 off their property taxes. Rental houses are businesses. 50% of Amherst homes are rentals and the increased taxes can be shared by landlords, who can write off ALL expenses related to their properties--unlike homeowners.

- Taxes provide the services and ambience that make Amherst a wonderful place to live. I believe in paying taxes I would appreciate increases in PILOTS but think our most likely sources of revenue are apt to be (over the short term) are overrides and local option meal taxes. It would be great if the economic development became sufficient to generate increase revenue--but I think this will be slow. I believe we will have to have strong high schools to prepare our kids for the future and we better up our capital budget as we cannot KEEP balancing the budget by cutting capital expenditures. Also--we can hope that level services for some areas now can increase in better times.
- Taxing businesses and not just property owners.
- Taxpayers need to pay more in taxes in order to maintain the services that we see as important - and are the reasons why we choose to live in Amherst rather than elsewhere. We must pay for what we use.
- The colleges/universities need to help more. Bring in more hotels, stores to increase tax base.
- The major factors causing the problems are: (1) health insurance costs increasing far faster than tax revenues, (2) fuel and electricity costs going up rapidly, (3) decreasing wherewithal of taxpayers to fund services that were "affordable" for some number of years. For #1, I recommend for consideration that the town self-insure its employees (i.e., create a municipal health care fund) and pay for most routine and common health care needs. Employees can be given the option to purchase premium plans at their own expense. We should also seek to develop a local network of low-cost health-care providers. For #2, continue to reduce transportation costs by minimizing door-to-door busing of pupils, invest in insulation and alternative heating/electrical sources (e.g., solar) for municipal buildings and schools. For #3, we are going to have to get used to much less service in public schools and people will have to increasingly rely on each other (i.e., volunteers) for home schooling, extracurricular programs, etc.
- The schools are the greatest asset the community has. People's property values are directly tied to the real and perceived merits of the Amherst town and regional districts. Rising costs are not avoidable, given unfunded mandates such as NCLB. Let's not squander our legacy.
- The town needs to become business friendly and develop means of generating income through technology and tourism.
- The town should reassess its assumptions about the budget and what it will need to cover in a few years when the impact of peak oil phenomenon is felt throughout society and the world enters the post carbon reality. I would anticipate that some expenses will disappear and others that don't even exist now would become necessary. Therefore, both revenue and expense projections are likely to be way off. The actual problem is not accurately described by the information presented by the committee and on which near-term decisions will be made. The town should take proactive steps to reduce the shocks that will be coming. "Level Services" (the concept) should be first to go, because the services provided will be different.
- The town tries to do EVERYTHING. I.e. funding human service agencies versus seeking grants; having 3 libraries (I think the Jones Board should be encouraged to SPEND some of their endowment). The town will have to cut back some NON essential services (i.e. not police and fire). Champagne taste on a beer budget comes to mind. We pay over \$6K in taxes and if our taxes continue to rise we will move out of Amherst and our 4BR house will probably be bought by someone who has kids. If you keep raising taxes people without kids will move out to be replaced by people who want to send their kids to Amherst schools.
- The University and Amherst College do not pay their fair share--they are elitist institutions that force the general population out of town.
- The wars drain a lot of money--get out!!
- There is no end in sight for our federal and state budget morass. We need to pare out town budget to highest priority necessities only like public safety and schools. We may need to close the Bangs center and all the programs it houses for a few years. I don't see anything coming of new development other than MacMansions since housing will get even cheaper for the upper classes while us retired professors are feeling squeezed. Good luck and thanks for all your hard work.
- There is no fix, given the condition of the economy state-wide and nationally. Unless state aid is increased Amherst must endure severe cuts in services and increased fees for some services, where permissible by state law.

- There is no way around a tax override this year. It is the only short term Band-Aid to mitigate the budget shortfall this year and possibly next. Other solutions should be seriously pursued to increase revenues, state aid, economic development etc BUT these avenues will not have the near term impact that is imperative to keep services at the same level and possibly restore some critical services.
- This could be done by benefiting from the many unused potentials we have in Amherst: people. We have many great citizens who would be ready to avail their expertise and time to cover the areas that need to be filled. Instead of increasing property taxes or service fees let's try this scenario: 1) an expert retired group of teachers who are residents of Amherst can replace one FTE position at Amherst schools by volunteering their time on . 2) A group of residents in one neighborhood to help covering the job (or part of it) of one police officer to be hired in the future. 3) to ask UMASS/Amherst College/Hampshire College to increase their contribution to the Town and in return Amherst town provides them with expert retired educators (on a volunteer basis) to fill a needed area. As a citizen and resident of this town for the last 14 years, i do not want people to be paying for the mistakes of our federal government (wars, etc) when there is lack of funding for the state. Let's find alternative ways for raising the taxes.
- Time to face facts. We don't have a budget shortfall. The town has consistently overspent. Instead of "renting," we buy. We now have the best equipped DPW and the worst roads in the valley. Use that 2.5M equipment slush fund to fix our roads and sidewalks.
- To be a "pay as you go" municipality; no funds, no dice.
- To educate people that town taxes have to be higher and to explain that unlike fed and state taxes (which were both cut!!) this money would be used directly in our own town.
- To sharpen the pencil work to get more or some economic development.
- Town should live within its means--like any family budget.
- Treating existing businesses better, encourage controlled business growth in town center, tax overrides.
- Union benefits should be re-evaluated. Leaner government offices.
- Wage increases have to be kept to a minimum, school and staff step increase should be a modest figure, say 250 to 500 per step, staff need to increase health care contributions, fees should be increased, some services need to be reduced or eliminated (within LSSE), combine more school/town/library services (payroll, IT) as has begun with maintenance, explore regional dispatch service, equitable cost for ambulance service has to be paid by each town, eliminate assistant principals in elementary schools (past rule of thumb, ass't for schools with 500 students, what elem. school has more than 500?) When junior high had three grades there were two administrators, now there are two grades in middle school and three administrators, one too many. Same in high school. Do staff get paid 40 hours for 40 hours work or paid 40 hours for 37.5 hours of work. If so why pay for lunch?
- We cannot make it without an override. I don't have an answer for those who say they will have to leave town if taxes increase. The other side of this is why would we want to live here if services deteriorate as they will without an override. Of course we go after economic development and other means to increase revenue. The sooner we bite the bullet and accept that our local taxes have to increase, the better off we'll be.
- We don't need so many supervisory personnel. Combine departments. More worker bees, fewer queen bees.
- We must stop subsidizing ambulance services to Hadley and the other towns, and not accept a long-term contract in lieu of actual cost payments. We must foster economic development and business growth so that property owners are not the principal source of revenue.
- We need to adjust our expectations to financial realities and budget with available resources, respecting the need to maintain affordability for residents.
- We need to stop spending and who responsibility for maintaining a balanced budget or we will continue to have financial difficulties. This is very difficult but it MUST happen! We must have a responsible leader who is able to make these incredibly difficult decisions. With the US economy in such poor shape, the time has come to stop spending. Less government, more accountability.
- Well, it wouldn't FIX the problem, but a big help would be a liquor tax - like a meals tax, but geared towards addressing the multiple problems college drinking causes the town. Drunken students are a liability to the town - if they want to drink, they should have to pay taxes on it to help underwrite the

costs of the police and ambulance services, destruction of public property, etc. I like the idea of a meals tax, too, but would hate to see Amherst restaurateurs lose business to other towns. I don't think that would happen with bars or liquor stores as much - the students lined up outside the Spoke or Delano's might think twice about ordering that third or fourth drink!

- What this committee has done should be made part of the regular budget review process for the Town. We need to know what the needs are and what the options are. Good work!
- Whatever a sensible solution is, it is NOT funding Ques. 1, 3, and 4 at the Scenario 3 level but cutting municipal services that are essential support services for the town as a whole.
- Whittle down both town and school administrative costs by elimination or combination.
- Why wasn't the option of higher cuts presented? While our schools have suffered heavy cuts in teachers, library staff, programs, lack of repair and renovation -- our town hall has been beautifully renovated and cared for, expensive sidewalks have been put in downtown. Our priorities as a community seem to have turned away from caring for and educating our children. My idea for fixing the budget problem is to pay for the services we need -- and pay it as a community through taxes. Unlike federal and state taxes, local taxes directly benefit my family. I'd rather spend more in taxes on local government, then federal or state taxes.
- Work to reform the state tax code and if necessary the state constitution to permit local income taxes to fund municipal government and schools. This would be more progressive and align taxes with ability to pay. Increase state revenue sharing, especially for schools, so that all communities can offer quality education.