

BALLOT QUESTION

Shall this City of Somerville amend its acceptance of sections 3 to 7, inclusive of chapter 44B of the General Laws, as approved by its legislative body, a summary of which appears below?

SUMMARY

The City of Somerville accepted Sections 3 to 7 of Chapter 44B of the General Laws of Massachusetts, also known as the Community Preservation Act, and established a “Community Preservation Fund” with a dedicated funding source. Fund monies may be spent to (1) acquire, create and preserve open space, which includes land for park and recreational uses and the protection of public drinking water well fields, aquifers and recharge areas, wetlands, farm land, forests, marshes, beaches, scenic areas, wildlife preserves and other conservation areas, (2) rehabilitate and restore land for recreational use, (3) acquire, preserve, rehabilitate and restore historic buildings and resources, (4) acquire, create, preserve and support affordable housing and (5) rehabilitate and restore open space and affordable housing that was acquired or created with community preservation funds.

The funding source is a 1.5% surcharge on the annual property tax assessed on real property. The city/town has adopted the following exemptions from the annual surcharge: (1) property owned and occupied as a domicile by any person who qualifies for low income housing or low or moderate income senior housing in Somerville as defined in Section 2 of the Act; (2) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of residential real property; and (3) \$100,000 of the value of each taxable parcel of class 3, commercial property and class 4, industrial property as defined in Section 2A of Chapter 59.

This amendment will increase the surcharge from 1.5% to 3%. This amendment will take effect starting in fiscal year 2026, which begins on July 1, 2025. At least 10% of the funds for each fiscal year will be spent or reserved for later spending on each of the Act’s three community preservation purposes: (1) open space, (2) historic resources and (3) community housing.

The surcharge will continue to be calculated in the same manner by multiplying the real estate tax on the parcel by the adopted percentage. A taxpayer receiving a regular property tax abatement or exemption will also receive a pro rata reduction in the surcharge.