

Winter storms deal second blow in Marblehead

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Voters will face second Prop. 2 1/2 override question, this one to fund seawall repairs

The final estimates for repairs to the town's seawalls and fences damaged during a string of March storms is in --- and it adds up to just over \$900,000 and could equal a second override vote.

When the Board of Selectmen approved Article 10 during the annual warrant hearing, Town Administrator John McGinn said it came with a caveat. Final repair estimates had not yet been tallied for all the storm damage and he said he would likely revisit the article once the costs came in.

At the time, the board approved the typical request for \$7,500 along with an additional \$45,594, which McGinn said was leftover from an Ocean Street project undertaken the previous year. Wednesday, April 4 selectmen approved an additional \$871,894 for Article 10 Walls and Fences to be funded through a debt exclusion override.

Residents are already looking at one potential override in Article 36 for roughly \$9 million to fund repairs to Abbot Hall.

During its regular Wednesday meeting, McGinn told the selectmen, "What you have before you are the totals by project."

The largest expense is repairs to Fort Sewall, which include fortifying the retaining wall and earth embankments that McGinn said took a beating during the March 4 storm. The Front Street seawall that runs along Fort Beach was also

dealt a costly blow during the March nor'easters. Much of the fence was washed away, the seawall and stairs needs to be rebuilt and the sidewalk repaired and in some places, replaced altogether.

Add in the removal of temporary rip rap shoring, curb repair and replacement and roadway resurfacing and the price of that fix is estimated at \$269,496. The Grace Oliver Beach seawall, Chandler Hovey, the brick surface at State Street Landing and the Gallison Avenue revetment also all need attention, McGinn said.

The total repair cost is estimated at \$917,488 but minus the \$45,594 the board already set aside and the potential override to go before voters will be for \$871,894, McGinn said. The amount is too high to fund through the budget, hence the need for an override, he added.

"Does the cost include any reinforcement or height changes?" asked Selectman Moses Grader.

McGinn both options are being looked at in terms of strengthening the barriers, but those decisions will likely come down to what will be allowable under permitting bylaws.

Selectman Judy Jacobi asked about the fence that ran along the top of the seawall on Front Street. McGinn said a temporary fence had been erected and they were looking to replace it with a significantly more substantial fence than the one that had previous adorned the wall.

Selectmen Jim Nye asked about emergency management funding on both the state and federal level and McGinn explained that it's a matter of waiting to see if the money will be made available.

"Because it's a seawall, there might also be grant money available," he added.

McGinn said if the override is approved, first at Town Meeting and then at the ballot box, he would have work start immediately.

"Because it will only get worse," he said.

The Finance Committee will meet on the issue on Monday, April 23 at 7 p.m. in the downstairs conference room in the Mary Alley Municipal Building, 7 Widger Road.