

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- How the District Reduces Costs
- Staffing Changes Planned
- Questions from the Community

# SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



MAY 2010

## BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 18

6 a.m. — 9 p.m.

High School Gym

## BUDGET HEARING

Tuesday, May 11

7 p.m. — HS Library

### 2010-2011 SCHOOL BUDGET:

## Spending Down 4.2 Percent

On Tuesday, May 18, residents in the Schodack Central School District will vote on a \$20,487,720 budget for the 2010-11 school year that reduces spending by \$893,555 and carries an estimated 2.9 percent increase in the tax rate.

Voting will take place from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Maple Hill High School gymnasium. Residents will also vote on a school bus proposition (see page 2) and elect three Board members (see page 6).

Faced with \$42 million in assessment challenges and nearly a \$1 million reduction in state aid, school officials cut spending significantly to limit the tax rate increase.

The district's rollover budget – what it would cost to offer the same programs and services in 2010-11 – would have been \$22.5 million due to rising costs. The district cut more than \$2 million from that rollover budget.

“In my 14 years as school superintendent, I have never had to make such deep cuts,” said Superintendent Doug Hamlin. “However, we’ve made some changes in how we operate that will provide significant savings. We’re confident our core educational programs will remain as strong.”

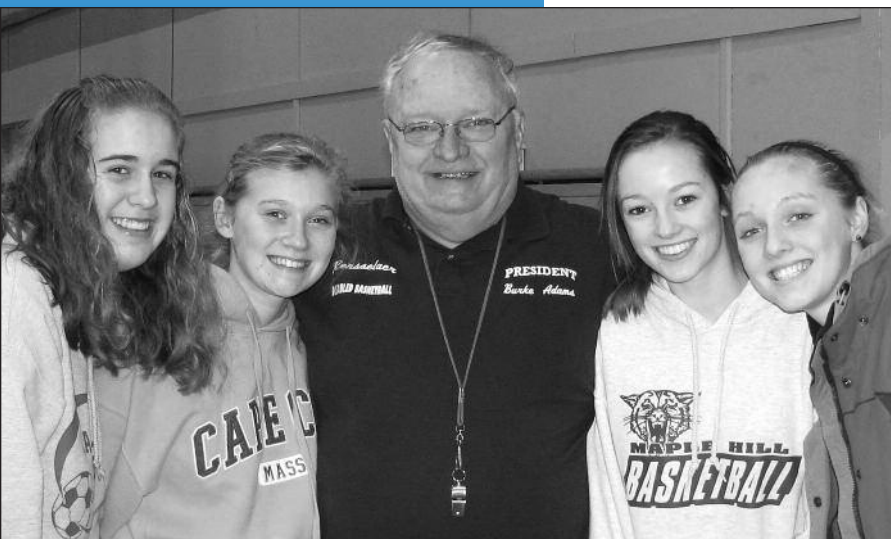
Nearly 70 percent of the school budget is personnel costs. Many of the proposed cuts, therefore, are in staffing. A total of 21 positions are scheduled to be eliminated, including an administrator, 10 teachers, six teaching assistants and four staff members.

Class sizes in K-1 will remain at approximately 18 students. Grades 2-5 will be 23 students on average. However, a new plan at CES will provide targeted instruction in math and reading that will reduce class sizes for that learning time to approximately 18 students (see page 3).

Class sizes at the Middle School will be approximately 25 students. Grades 9-12 will remain largely unchanged (see page 3).

Other changes that will provide savings include keeping fourth graders at Castleton Elementary School for fifth grade next year, building administrators forgoing salary increases, and reducing curriculum and staff development, contracts, supplies, equipment and technology purchases (see page 2).

“Schodack will have to continue to reduce spending in the years ahead as we face less revenue from our shrinking assessment base,” Hamlin said. “We’ll continue to look at all areas to minimize the impact on taxpayers while also maintaining the outstanding schools our community expects.”



Maple Hill's girls basketball team was honored with the Lisa Seney Award this year for volunteering their time to help mentally and physically handicapped children play basketball.

### IN BRIEF:

## BUDGET CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

#### The Financial Challenge:

- \$987,661 cut in state aid, due to NYS fiscal crisis
- \$42 million in property assessment challenges affecting multiple tax years
- \$564,000 loss in projected tax revenue due to tax claims, reducing revenues for 2010-11 and future years
- Increasing school operating costs
- Declining enrollment

#### The District's Response:

- \$2 million in cuts to programs and services; core educational programs maintained
- 21 positions eliminated
- Use of \$899,000 in reserves, fund balance and debt service transfers to balance the budget
- Proposed 2010-11 budget lower than 2009-10 budget by \$893,555 or 4.2%
- Estimated 2.9 percent increase in school tax rate

## Q. What spending cuts are included in the 2010-11 school budget?

Schodack CSD cut more than \$2 million from its rollover budget – what it would cost to provide the same programs and services in 2010-11. Here is a list of those cuts.

### Administration

- Eliminated a full-time administrative position by combining the Director of Curriculum and Instruction and Director of Pupil Personnel Services positions. Duties such as teacher evaluation, curriculum management and regulatory reporting will be shared by building principals and other administrators.
- Reduction in secretarial and clerical support for administrative and guidance offices. District/Business Office secretarial/clerical support will be reduced by one full-time position. Building level secretarial and technology support will also be reduced and restructured.
- Building administrators will forgo salary increases for the 2010-11 school year.
- Shared service arrangements with other districts for the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds and Transportation Supervisor positions are planned.

### Faculty

- The equivalent of 10 teaching positions will be eliminated.
- Grades 2-7 will be three class sections. Grades K-1 and 8 will be four sections. Current K-8 music and art program will be maintained, with minimal restructuring of student lessons and fewer sections.
- At the middle school, Technology, Languages Other Than English, English Language Learners, Family and Consumer Science and Connections sections are reduced. However, course offerings will remain unchanged. One introductory foreign language course in French will be eliminated.

- At the high school, some sections of business and art will be reduced as enrollment drops. A science teacher on a leave of absence will not be replaced.
- Reduction of one full-time K-12 Reading teacher.
- Reduction of a half-time Guidance Counselor.
- Teaching assistant and teacher aide support is reduced due to lower enrollment and fewer sections.
- Reduced instructional support and staff development including eliminating middle school team leaders and reducing teacher mentor and staff development funding.

### Staff

- A High School Monitor position will be eliminated.
- A full-time School Bus Driver-Custodial Worker position will be eliminated and replaced with a part-time School Bus Driver.
- A Senior Custodian position will be eliminated and custodial supervision will be restructured. Staffing levels and overtime for custodial and grounds maintenance will be reduced.

### Miscellaneous

- Eliminated remedial summer school programs, except for mandated special education programs.
- JV Boys and Girls Tennis teams will be eliminated. Students can compete on Varsity Tennis teams.
- Reduction in student placements in BOCES Special Education programs.
- A change in employee health insurance plans, voluntarily agreed to by all bargaining units.
- Reduced equipment, supplies and materials and contractual purchases.



*Schodack students had their artwork selected for numerous art shows this year, including the NYS Art Teachers Legislative Student Exhibit, the High School Art Invitational Exhibit at HVCC & the High School Regional Art Exhibit at Proctor's Theatre.*

## Bus Purchase on Ballot

A proposition on the May 18 ballot will ask voters to approve the purchase of two 65-passenger buses at a cost not to exceed \$195,863.

Because the state reimburses the district for 74 percent of bus purchases, the local taxpayers' share of the total cost would be an average of \$16,060 per year for both buses for the next five years.

### Why does the district purchase buses on a regular basis?

This proposition is part of an ongoing bus replacement plan designed to keep the district's fleet in safe, working order. New bus purchases replace old buses based on the vehicle's mileage, age, repair history and condition.

Once buses exceed 130,000 miles they become more costly to maintain and less efficient to run. Older engines can average only about six miles per gallon; new buses should average nine miles per gallon. That difference can add up to considerable savings given the number of miles our school buses travel each year.

## Q: How will staffing changes impact Schodack schools?

With personnel costs making up nearly 70 percent of the school budget, much of the budget cuts are in staffing. Here are details about some changes planned for Schodack schools.

### Castleton Elementary School

One of the biggest changes at CES is current fourth graders will stay at CES as fifth grade is taught at CES instead of MHMS. This change keeps fifth grade in an elementary school setting, reduces maintenance costs at MHMS and provides greater flexibility in scheduling.

To ensure our youngest learners receive the greatest attention, kindergarten and first grade will remain at four sections with approximately 18 students in a class. Grades 2-5 will now be three sections, with class sizes between 22 and 25 students.

However, a plan for scheduling will allow the teaching of math and reading in class sizes of approximately 15 students. The school will utilize current special education teachers and reading specialists to help teach math and reading. As a result, students will learn these core areas in smaller groups than they are taught currently.

“This will allow us to focus on the more difficult areas of learning by using our resources more effectively,” said Principal Jason Chevrier said. “We really want to focus on the academic needs of the students in each grade.”

### Maple Hill Middle School

Like CES, the biggest change at MHMS will be the move of fifth grade to the elementary school. Principal Michael Bennett noted that with only grades 6-8 at MHMS, the school will be able to utilize faculty and staff in a similar way as CES.

For the 2010-11 school year, there will be three sections for grades 6 and 7. Class size will be approximately 25 students. However, due to the needs of next year’s eighth

grade class, school officials decided to keep the grade level at four sections. Class size will be approximately 20 students.

Teachers at MHMS will continue to teach across grade levels in their certified areas.

“We won’t have a big change in our programs,” Bennett said. “I have great confidence in the folks we have at the Middle School. We have a very solid program next year that we feel excited about.”

### Maple Hill High School

Principal Robert Horan explained MHHS is preparing for a large drop in enrollment that will start with next year’s freshman class. This year’s freshman class is 114 students; next year’s class is 79 students.

Class size will continue to be approximately 25 students at MHHS. However, the school will examine electives with low enrollment. Computer Aided Design and Architectural Drawing, for example, currently have eight and nine students indicating interest, respectively. Such classes with low enrollment may be combined or eliminated as the cost to run a class for so few students is prohibitive.

Teacher assignments will be restructured where possible to provide students the opportunities they’re most interested in. Making the senior year more vigorous will also be a focus, Horan said, with more attention on developing researching skills and exploring college course work from HVCC and Sage College.

“We are going to have to do things differently,” Horan said. “But we have great, caring people here at Maple Hill. There still will be plenty of outstanding opportunities for our students.”



MHMS students qualified for the state Science Olympiad Competition this year after their performance at the regional competition, where they finished first in two events and in the top five in eight other events.

# Questions from Our Community

Over the course of five Community Budget Advisory Committee meetings, two community forums and three budget presentations at Board of Education meetings, our community asked many excellent questions about our schools. Here are some commonly asked questions from our community with answers.

## How does the district choose where to make cuts?

The district first examines ways it could change how it operates to reduce spending. The district then looks at areas that would have the least impact on students to preserve core educational areas. With personnel costs making up nearly 70 percent of the school budget, staffing has to be considered when the district needs to make significant spending cuts.

## Are other school districts facing similar financial challenges?

State aid cuts are impacting all schools this year. It is the primary reason so many schools are forced to consider employee layoffs. However, Schodack CSD also faces an additional revenue problem created by a shrinking assessment base as a result of five businesses challenging their property assessments by a combined \$42 million.

## Has the district offered retirement incentives?

Schodack considered offering retirement incentives but our faculty and staff are relatively young. The few employees we have who are close to retirement age are in positions that we would have to replace so savings would be minimal. The district will continue to consider this option in future years.

## Why don't school employees take a salary freeze?

The district approached all three unions that represent Schodack employees about freezing salaries for the 2010-11 school year. The Administrators Association agreed to open their contracts and forgo a salary increase. Among the many topics discussed with the other two unions, there was no agreement on freezing salaries.

## How much does the district spend on sports?

Sports cost the district approximately \$200,000, or less than 1 percent of the total budget. The district eliminated the JV tennis team in the 2010-11 budget; interested students will be able to compete on the varsity team. The district proposed cutting

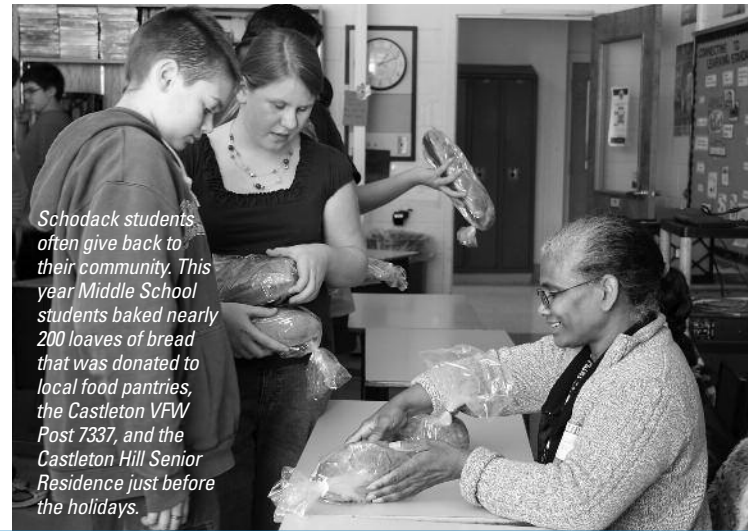
modified sports but reinstated them after considering the value of activities for students.

## Did the district restore funding for arts?

After considering options, the district reinstated the majority of proposed cuts to art programs. The budget still includes some cuts to art but with enrollment at the high school dropping significantly next year, the cuts should have a minimal impact on student opportunities.

## What is a fund balance? Why doesn't the district use it all?

A fund balance is reserve funds used for stabilizing the tax rate and paying for unexpected expenses. Each year, the district uses part of its fund balance as a revenue in the budget to maintain consistency in the tax rate and avoid spikes. Using all the fund balance in one year would create a funding deficit for the following year that would have to be made up by program cuts and/or tax rate increases.



*Schodack students often give back to their community. This year Middle School students baked nearly 200 loaves of bread that was donated to local food pantries, the Castleton VFW Post 7337, and the Castleton Hill Senior Residence just before the holidays.*

## Student Achievement

The best measure of the education Schodack CSD offers is the success of our students.

Here are some examples:

- In 2008-09, 85% of Schodack students in grades 3-8 met New York State learning standards in English Language Arts, the highest percentage in four years. The percentage of students meeting the standard has increased in each of the last four years.
- In 2008-09, 92% of Schodack students in grades 3-8 met New York State learning standards in Math, the highest percentage in four years. The percentage of students meeting the standard has increased in each of the last four years.
- In 2008-09, 83% of MHHS juniors (the grade level New York State tests) met state learning standards in English Language Arts. The state average is 75%.
- In 2008-09, 87% of MHHS juniors (the grade level New York State tests) met state learning standards in Math. The state average is 75%.
- 89% of the class of 2009 went on to a college or vocational school.
- MHHS seniors have been accepted this year into such colleges as Brown University, Clarkson University, Cornell University, Emerson College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and SUNY Binghamton.
- Last year, MHHS seniors earned \$4,545,240 in scholarships and awards.

## Estimated Tax Impact for Homeowner

Here is an example of how the 2010-11 proposed budget is estimated to affect an average homeowner in the Town of Schodack. This example does not reflect the impact of other exemptions a homeowner may qualify for including the Basic or Enhanced STAR exemption or exemptions for senior citizens, veterans, disabilities and other exemptions.

	2009-10	2010-11
Market Value	\$200,000	\$200,000
Current Equalization Rate	1.0	1.0
Taxable Assessed Value	\$200,000	\$200,000
Projected Tax Rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Value	18.301781	18.836782
School Taxes	\$3,660.36	\$3,767.36
<b>Change in Taxes</b>	<b>\$107/Yr. or \$8.91/Mo.</b>	<b>2.92%</b>



A MHMS student performs at this year's International Dessert Night which was attended by hundreds of community members.

## Q: How will proposed changes to STAR impact school taxes?

Governor David Paterson has proposed significant changes in the School Tax Relief Program (STAR) that could impact homeowners.

Enacted in 1997, STAR reduces taxes of New York State residents by exempting a portion of their home's value from school taxes. Under current law, every primary residence, regardless of how much it is worth, is eligible to receive a STAR exemption benefit.

However, under the Governor's proposal, the Basic and Enhanced for Seniors exemption programs would be calculated differently. This proposed change could reduce the value of school property tax exemption.

As a result, residents could see an increase in how much school taxes they pay. Many taxpayers experienced a similar

change in 2009-10 when the state modified the calculation of the STAR exemption in April 2009.

While the Governor is once again proposing changes in the calculation, the changes are contingent upon state legislative approval. As a result, the district will not know the full impact until the proposal is finalized and information becomes available from the State Office of Real Property Services, which sets equalization rates.

We will keep our community informed about this and other state proposals. Anyone who has questions about STAR should call their town assessor or go online to [www.orps.state.ny.us](http://www.orps.state.ny.us).

## Q: Why are taxes going up when spending is going down?

The 2010-11 school budget cuts spending by \$893,555 from the 2009-10 budget but requires an expected 2.9 percent increase in the tax rate. There are two major reasons for this.

First, Governor David Paterson's state budget proposal cuts state aid to Schodack schools by nearly \$1 million. This is an 11.47 percent cut from 2009-10. In past years, the state legislature has restored cuts to state aid. But given New York State's budget deficit, it appears unlikely state aid will be increased significantly.

Second, five businesses in Schodack are challenging their property assessments by a total of \$42 million. These businesses are 5 of the 10 largest assessed properties in the district.

Several of these challenges are anticipated to be resolved in 2010, resulting in an estimated loss of \$564,000 in annual tax revenue as well as potential tax refunds. As a result, the district will lose significant revenues and a greater share of the tax burden will be shifted to homeowners.

Schodack CSD cut more than \$2 million from its rollover budget – what it would cost to provide the same programs and services next year – and applied \$899,000 in reserves and fund balance to the budget to minimize the tax impact to homeowners.

# Board of Education Candidates

This year there are seven people running for three open Board of Education seats. The candidates will appear on the ballot in the following order as determined by a random drawing. A Meet the Candidates Night will be held Tuesday, May 11 at 7 p.m. in the MHHS library.

## Mary Yurista

We chose a home in Schodack 23 years ago because of the quality of the schools and the nature of the community. Of our three young men, Chris and Ryan have graduated Maple Hill, successfully pursuing college and beyond. Casey will graduate in 2012. Our community is faced with immense challenges that impact our ability to sustain the quality of education and everyday life for all of our children. In the workplace, my role as an IT Project Leader (MBA) requires critical thought, collaboration, and innovation; skills that I hope could benefit the community. Thank you for your consideration.

## Lisa Lafferty

I have lived in the Schodack School District since 1995. My husband Patrick and I have twin boys in 5th grade and a daughter in 3rd grade. I have enjoyed being involved in the school district as a volunteer, a room parent at C.E.S., and currently as Treasurer of the C.E.S. P.T.O. Today, circumstances continue to erode our ability to provide our students with the standard of education we have become accustomed to. I hope as a member of the BOE I can help find solutions to funding the school budget in a sustainable manner that is realistic to the residents.

## Christine DiGiulio

My husband Dave, son Derrick (5th grade) and I live in this town because of the wonderful community and top-notch school. I am committed to community service as a current audit committee member, volunteer and coach. The children of

this community are our future. If elected, I will bring 18 years of experience as a finance executive with non-profit organizations including private and private act schools. I will be able to assist this community in overcoming obstacles, providing a quality education and balancing the needs of all community members. I will honor your vote with commitment, objectiveness and transparency.

## AnnMarie Zimmerman

AnnMarie Zimmermann has been a resident of Schodack for nearly 42 years. She resides in Schodack Center with her husband of 16 years and their three children; two of which currently attend the Schodack Middle and Elementary schools, and another starting Kindergarten in the fall. AnnMarie has been employed by a local financial institution for 20 years, today as the Vice President of Finance and throughout her tenure she served on many occasions as a committee volunteer, supporting several not-for-profit organizations throughout the area. She holds an undergraduate degree from SUNY Plattsburgh and an MBA from the University of Albany.

## Margaret Siciliano

I am a Court Clerk at Saratoga County Family Court and have been a Schodack resident for over 9 years. My husband, Chris, and I have one child attending CES and another starting in the fall. I am presently a Girl Scout leader, a cheerleading coach and I attend many functions at the high school. If elected, I will strive to maintain the sense of community that cur-

rently exists in our school district, the extraordinary education our children receive and will continue to support the extra curricular opportunities that our schools provide, while keeping our taxes at a reasonable rate.

## Bruce Romanchak

I grew up in Schodack and I and my daughters graduated from Maple Hill. Like you I am concerned about our ability to continue to provide high quality education to our children without bankrupting our citizens. Schodack faces a very difficult period with declining state aid, loss of commercial tax support and increasing educational challenges. Given all this and a new superintendent I thought that I should offer my ten years of experience on the Board of Education to work with Mr. Horan and the other board members to find fair and equitable solutions to the problems facing the district.

## Cynthia Farone

I have loved living in Castleton since 1982 with my husband, Joe. Our children, Angela, Joe and Nick, are graduates of Maple Hill. I am a Medical Technologist working for Community Care Physicians in Latham. I previously served on the school board from 1990- 2001. My own learning was enriched through my participation with district, state and CASDA committees during those years. In these times of fiscal uncertainty I would again accept the challenge to help the school and the community work together while continuing to provide a safe and engaging educational experience for all children at a reasonable cost.

## Budget Advisory Committee Members

We would like to thank the members of this year's Community Budget Advisory Committee. The group met five times over the course of four months, learning about the school's finances and offering advice for the Board of Education to help develop this year's budget. We thank them all for their time and valuable input.

---

Scott Aitken	Nancy Daoust	Sandy Hall	Jerry Marotta	Coleen Papas	Lisa Samarija	Pam Timmons
Jim Bult	Mark Dausch	Jill Hanrahan	Patty McKnight	Robin Perry	Scott Schulz	Michael Tuttle
Deb Charlebois	Lisa Despart	Darcy Janowski	Carol Morley	Lorrie Pizzola	Ann Scott	Fred Wolff
Kevin Civerolo	Maria Eastwood	Brenda Kelliher	John Nicholas	Dawn Renslow	John Sober	Debra Young
Laura Cook	Jen Felts	Diane Knight	Laura Palmer	Vicki Roberts	Judy Teliska	Mary Yurista
Dave Crouse	Dawn Gerrain					

## Q: What happens if the budget is defeated?

If voters do not approve the budget on May 18, the district has three choices: put the same budget up for a second vote, put a revised budget up for a second vote or adopt a contingency budget.

- If the budget is defeated twice the Board is required to adopt a contingency budget. The contingency budget, by state law, would have to be lower than the budget presented.
- Under a contingency budget, New York State places budgetary restrictions on how schools operate including a Spending Cap tied to inflation and an Administrative Cap. The law also requires that the district charge groups for the full value use of school buildings and restrict spending on items such as equipment.
- The proposed budget is \$846,042 lower than the mandated Spending Cap for contingency budgets. However, when a proposed budget is below the Spending Cap, special rules apply.
- State law specifies that certain items can not be included in a contingency budget so these items would need to be removed from the budget. Schodack CSD's contingency budget would be \$20,422,380, \$65,340 less than the last budget presented.

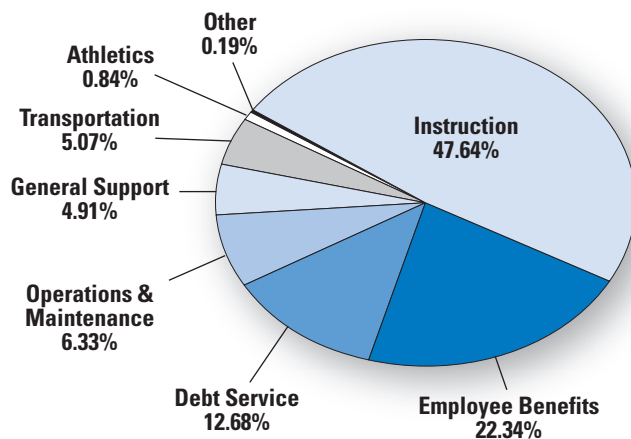
## Expenditures

Category	2009-2010	Proposed 2010-2011	% Change from 2009-2010
Instruction	\$10,370,060	\$9,760,406	-5.88%
Employee Benefits	\$4,546,700	\$4,576,143	0.65%
Debt Service	\$2,646,050	\$2,598,537	-1.80%
Operations & Maintenance	\$1,505,171	\$1,296,613	-13.86%
General Support	\$1,070,051	\$1,006,430	-5.95%
Transportation	\$1,056,248	\$1,039,517	-1.58%
Athletics	\$168,733	\$171,569	1.68%
Interfund Transfers	\$16,448	\$37,344	127.04%
Community Services	\$1,814	\$1,161	-36.00%
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$21,381,275</b>	<b>\$20,487,720</b>	<b>-4.18%</b>

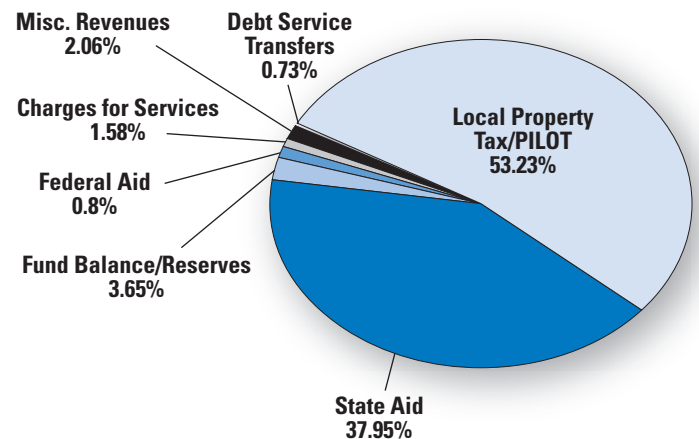
## Revenues

Category	2009-2010	Proposed 2010-2011	% Change from 2009-2010
Local Property Tax	\$10,501,739	\$10,409,395	-0.88%
PILOT Revenue	\$668,263	\$496,703	-25.67%
State Aid	\$8,748,557	\$7,775,512	-11.12%
Fund Balance/Reserves	\$755,711	\$749,000	-0.89%
Charges for Services	\$198,138	\$324,541	63.80%
Federal Aid	\$155,000	\$160,000	3.23%
Debt Service Transfers	\$50,000	\$150,000	200.00%
Misc. Revenues	\$303,867	\$422,569	39.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,381,275</b>	<b>\$20,487,720</b>	<b>-4.18%</b>

### Expenditure Summary



### Revenue Summary





*Schodack students help out the district's recycling program which is both environmentally friendly and saves money. This year, students expanded the program by collecting plastic bottle caps.*

## Poll Watchers Needed

***Are you interested in being a poll watcher for this year's school vote?***

The district is currently in need of poll watchers to work on Tuesday, May 18. Voting takes place from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Maple Hill High School gymnasium. If interested, please contact Schodack Central School District Clerk Liz Chipman at 281-2676.

## Voter Information

### What am I voting on?

A \$20,487,720 budget for the 2010-11 school year, a proposition to purchase two school buses, and candidates for the school board.

### When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, May 18 from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the Maple Hill High School gymnasium.

### Who is eligible to vote?

Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older, and a resident of the Schodack Central School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

### How can I vote by absentee ballot?

Qualified district residents who are unable to go to the polls on May 18 can cast their votes by absentee ballot. For an application, call the district office at 732-2297. If the ballot is to be mailed, the application for the ballot must be received by May 11. If the ballot is to be delivered in person, the application must be received by May 17. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 18.

### What if I have questions?

For further information, please call the District Office at 732-2297 or visit our school website, [www.schodack.k12.ny.us](http://www.schodack.k12.ny.us), and click on our "Budget Information" link.

**Schodack Central School District**  
1216 Maple Hill Road  
Castleton-on-Hudson, NY 12033

NON PROFIT ORG.  
Postage Paid  
Permit # 10  
Castleton, NY 12033

Postal Customer