

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Spending Cuts in Budget
- Staffing Changes Planned
- Questions from the Community

SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



MAY 2011

BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 17

6 a.m. — 9 p.m.

High School Gym

BUDGET HEARING

Tuesday, May 10

7 p.m. — HS Library



Erik Laurin is just one of many Schodack students who excel in music. After recording a perfect score at his audition, Erik was selected to participate in the NYS School Music Association Winter Conference in Rochester.

2011-2012 SCHOOL BUDGET:

Spending cut third year in a row

For the third year in a row, Schodack Central School District has cut spending in its 2011-12 budget, a \$20,125,047 budget that is \$362,673 less than the current year.

However, due largely due to a 10 percent cut in state aid, the budget requires a 2.71 percent increase in the tax levy. For a \$175,000 home, school taxes would increase approximately \$100 for the year.

District residents can vote on the budget on Tuesday, May 17 from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the high school gymnasium. Voters will also elect three school board members (see page 6).

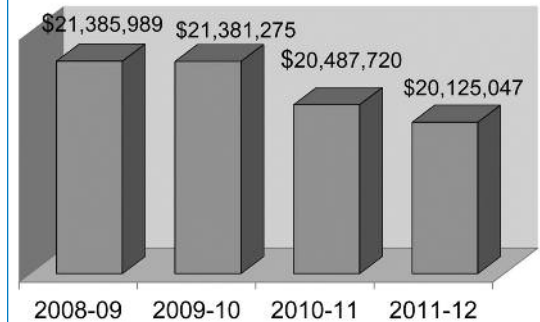
After cutting the budget by nearly \$900,000 over the last two years, the district looked closely at all areas of the budget to find further reductions due to a \$761,126 cut in state aid for 2011-12.

To help identify areas for cuts, community members provided guidance about what they value in their schools during the nine public meetings the district held on the budget.

“From our dedicated members on the Community Budget Advisory Team to residents who came out to Board meetings, I want to thank everyone who helped us with this budget process,” said Superintendent Robert Horan. “Our community’s input was critical in developing this budget.”

The 2011-12 budget would eliminate 12.8 FTE (full-time equivalency) positions, including 8 teaching assistants (including three retirements), 4.2 FTE teachers (including two retirements) and 0.60 FTE noninstructional support staff.

Budget Totals Over Last Four Years



Teaching assistant support would be reallocated district-wide to provide classroom assistance where it is most needed. First and second grade would be reduced by a section next year, bringing all elementary classrooms to three sections. Class sizes would average 24 students.

Some programs such as Connections at the Middle School and Family and Consumer Science at the High School would be eliminated, with key program components integrated as much as possible into existing courses. However, the Middle School will add several new course offerings to enhance student learning and reduce study halls (see page 3).

The district also achieved cost savings through restructuring, from the K-5 music and arts programs which will require no loss of student contact time to maintenance and transportation staffing changes.

“We face significant financial challenges,” said Mr. Horan. “Our goal is to provide our students with the outstanding education our community expects while continually looking at new, cost efficient ways to provide those opportunities.”

IN BRIEF:

BUDGET CHALLENGES AND RESPONSE

The Financial Challenge:

- \$761,126 cut in state aid for 2011-12
- \$1.9 million cut in state aid over last two years
- \$28 million drop in property tax base over last two years
- Increasing school operating costs
- Declining enrollment

The District's Response:

- Cut spending by \$362,673 for 2011-12
- Third year in a row budget has been cut
- 12.8 full-time equivalency positions cut
- 15% reduction in workforce over last two years
- Use of \$840,000 in fund balance and reserves
- Estimated 2.99% increase in school tax rate

Q. What spending cuts are included in the 2011-12 school budget?

Schodack CSD cut \$362,673 in spending from the 2010-11 budget. Here is a list of those cuts.

- Reduced two elementary teaching positions (one through retirement). Grades K-5 will now all be three sections, with an average class size of 24 students.
- Reduced eight teaching assistant positions (three through retirement). Teaching assistant support will be reallocated district-wide to provide classroom assistance where it is most needed.
- Eliminated Middle School Connections as a separate class. Service Learning opportunities will instead be integrated into grade 7 English Language Arts curriculum.
- Restructured K-5 Music and Art program delivery. Will have no impact on student contact time with teachers.
- Reduced High School foreign language program by phasing out third language (French) in Grade 9, discontinuing German class and restructuring Spanish classes.
- Eliminated High School Family and Consumer Science courses. Still offered in Middle School (mandated).
- Reduced Athletic Program budget by cutting spending on uniforms and equipment.
- Reduced daily schedule of Building Maintenance Mechanic.
- Reduced Automatic Mechanic from a 12 month position to 10 month plus 20 days in summer position.
- Reduced daily schedule of Driver/Courier.
- Reduced all general supplies budgets by 3 percent.
- Reduced district-wide staff development fund.
- Restructured custodial supervision.
- Reduced equipment purchases.



The annual Senior Citizen Reception at Maple Hill Middle School is always popular with the community where students serve desserts and refreshments to seniors and perform for them.



Maple Hill High School students have the opportunity to earn both high school and college credits for advanced math classes, giving students a jump start on college.

Bus Purchase on Ballot

A proposition on May 17 will ask voters to approve the purchase of two buses at a cost not to exceed \$212,000.

Because the state reimburses the district for 69 percent of bus purchases, the local taxpayers' share of the total cost would be an average of \$16,608 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. With new bus routes implemented last year, the district was able to reduce its bus replacement plan to purchase two buses each year instead of three.

As buses age 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 more than 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

With the reduction of a first and second grade class section, all grades at CES will be three sections next year. The average class size at CES will be 24 students. The delivery of music and art will be restructured; however student contact time with teachers will not change.

To ensure students get the help they need in critical learning areas, teaching assistants will be targeted to provide extra support in core areas such as Reading and Math.

The progress of students will continue to be closely monitored throughout the school year, providing support where children need it most. Starting in 2011-12, students also will have a block each day where they will receive support in areas where they're struggling or have an opportunity for learning enrichment.

"With the challenges of next year's budget, we are restructuring how we do things so that we can provide the best possible program for our earliest learners," said Principal Jason Chevrier. "Although there will be changes, we have worked hard to ensure that student needs are met while providing more opportunities for students."

Maple Hill Middle School

One of the biggest changes at MHMS will be the elimination of the 7th grade Connections as a separate class. However, students will still work with our community as service learning opportunities are integrated into English Language Arts classes.

In an effort to reduce the number of study halls, a number of new course offerings will be introduced at the Middle School including research skills, technology and cultural awareness. The new classes are made possible by the restructuring of some faculty and staff assignments.

Similarly, a new accelerated earth science class will be offered for eighth grade. This opportunity is a result of sharing high school faculty at the middle school.

"As we continue to manage the budget situation, we are working to continue to expand the opportunities for our students," said Principal Michael Bennett.

Maple Hill High School

At the High School, Family and Consumer Science classes will be discontinued, although still offered at the Middle School. Key program components such as nutrition and psychology will instead be integrated into existing classes such as physical education and social studies.

The use of Distance Learning will continue to provide more opportunities for students, including a new biotechnology class offered through a cooperative effort between Schodack, Averill Park and Saratoga Springs school districts and Hudson Valley Community College. The class, which students already are showing strong interest in, will allow students to earn up to three college credits during their normal school day.

Juniors and seniors will also be encouraged to take advantage of opportunities at local colleges or internships during their normal school day or the summer. A partnership between Schodack, HVCC and Rensselaer City School District, for example, will allow students to choose from eight college courses this summer at Rensselaer at a discounted tuition rate.

"Although we are faced with a challenging budget situation, we continue to work to find innovative ways to expand educational opportunities for students," said Principal Ron Agostinoni.

Q: What happens if the budget is defeated?

If voters do not approve the budget on May 17, 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 of school buildings and restrict spending on items such as equipment.

State law specifies that certain items cannot be included in a contingency budget so these items would need to be removed from the budget. The estimated contingent budget is \$20,078,478 before the calculation of the Administrative Cap, which would likely result in some further reduction. This is \$46,569 lower than the proposed budget.

Questions from Our Community

Over the course of four Community Budget Advisory Team meetings, a community budget forum and four 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.

Why doesn't the district freeze salaries for 2011-12 to reduce costs?

School districts cannot unilaterally freeze employee salaries because state law requires districts to engage in collective bargaining. As a result, employee unions must agree to freeze salaries. The Board of Education has made it very clear to all bargaining units that the community is not in favor of salary raises for 2011-12.

Why are employee benefits going up?

Employee benefits are increasing by \$444,620 in 2011-12 largely due to state mandated employee contributions to the state and teacher retirement systems. Mandated pension contributions represent 97 percent of the increase in employee benefit costs. Health insurance costs are increasing by 2 to 6 percent, well below the national average; this is due to a health care consortium the district participates in that obtains lower rates by joining other school districts.

Why doesn't the district cut athletics and co-curricular activities to reduce spending?

The district looked at athletics and co-curricular activities but chose to preserve these programs because they impact too many students. Forty-six percent of Middle School and High School students participate in a co-curricular activity. Forty-five percent participate in athletics. Maple Hill students who participate in athletics or co-curricular activities also have better school

attendance rates and academic grades. Colleges also want students who not only get good grades, but are involved in a number of activities.

Why is the athletics budget increasing?

The athletics budget is increasing due to higher costs for game officials, supplies and the addition of a high school lacrosse program. However, the lacrosse program is fully supported by donations from the Maple Hill Youth Lacrosse Foundation. No district funds support the lacrosse program and therefore it has no impact on taxes.

What is the risk of using more fund balance?

The district has already applied \$840,000 in fund balance and reserves to the 2011-12 budget. The district has to be cautious about using too much fund balance in a given budget year. It is similar to running a household by relying too much on a savings account; at some point the money will run out and you won't have funds to pay for recurring expenses. Depleting a fund balance can create a structural budget deficit, impact the district's credit rating and impact the ability to pay for unanticipated expenses.

What is the status of the property tax cap?

Governor Andrew Cuomo and the Senate are in favor of a 2 percent property tax cap. However, the Assembly has not yet committed to the proposal. If all three agree and property tax cap legislation is approved, it would start with the 2012-13 school year.

Student Achievement

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

Here are some examples:

- **92% of the Class of 2010 went on to a college or vocational school.**
- **The Class of 2010 currently attends colleges such as Boston University, Clarkson University, Cornell University, Emerson College, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Rochester Institute of Technology, Skidmore College and SUNY Geneseo.**
- **The Class of 2010 earned \$4,789,610 in scholarships and awards.**
- **Maple Hill High School's graduation rate was 91% for the 2009-10 school year, according to the NYS Report Card. No other school district in Rensselaer County had a higher graduation rate.**
- **All 10 Maple Hill fall and winter sports teams excelled in academics by earning at least a 90% team average for the first and second quarters, respectively. As a result, all 10 teams were named Scholar/Athlete Teams by the New York State Public High School Athletic Association.**
- **Maple Hill students were selected to perform in a number of prestigious musical concerts including sophomore Alec Hicks performing with the Empire State Youth Chorale and senior Erik Laurin performing at the New York State School Music Association Winter Conference.**

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

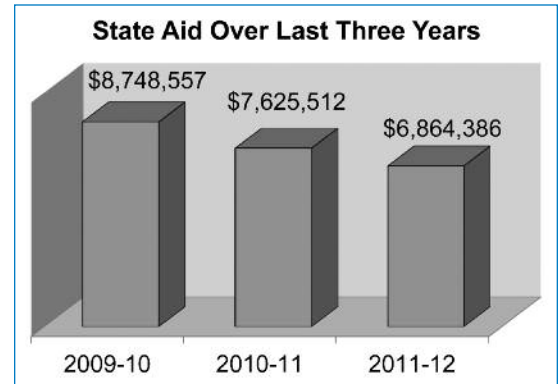
The 2011-12 school budget cuts spending by \$362,673 from the 2010-11 budget but requires an expected 2.99 percent increase in the tax rate. There are two major reasons for this.

First, school districts have two main sources for revenue: state aid and property taxes.

State aid was cut by \$761,126 for 2011-12. Over the last two years, state aid has been cut by nearly \$1.9 million. As a result, the \$362,673 in spending cuts was not enough to offset the \$761,126 cut in state aid. In order to avoid deep cuts to programs, the district increased property taxes by \$284,455 to partially offset the revenue shortfall created by the decrease in state aid.

Second, Schodack's property tax base has decreased by \$28 million over the last two years. This is largely a result of businesses in town challenging their property assessments.

As a result, homeowners bear a larger share of property taxes. Therefore, while the total money in property taxes the district will collect (the tax levy) is estimated to increase by 2.71 percent, the tax rate will increase by an estimated 2.99 percent due to projected loss of assessment.



This year's Middle School musical "The Emperor's New Clothes" was a big hit with the community. Students rehearsed for months afterschool to put on the performance.



Reading is a critical skill for students to learn at Castleton Elementary School. Guests readers, such as Superintendent Robert Horan, share stories with students to encourage them to read.

Estimated Tax Impact for Homeowner

Here is an example of how the 2011-12 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.

	2010-11	2011-12
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	18.836782	19.399993
School Taxes	\$3,767.36	\$3,880
Change in Taxes	\$113/Yr. or \$9/Mo.	2.99%



Castleton Elementary School students learned skills such as researching, note taking and public speaking through a number of research projects this year.

Board of Education Candidates

This year there are three people running for three open Board of Education seats. A Meet the Candidates Night will be held Tuesday, May 10 at 7 p.m. in the MHHS library.

Andrew Fleck

My wife Kalyn and I have lived in the Schodack Central School District for fourteen years. My son, Andrew, is in sixth grade at Maple Hill Middle School and my daughter, Mia, is in second grade at Castleton Elementary School. As you can see I am heavily invested in the future of our schools. I believe that even during these tough economic times, the community has the responsibility to provide a quality education to every student. I make my decisions at Board of Education meetings, based on what I believe is best for the children of our community.

Paul Puccio

These are difficult times for our District. Significant revenue losses have required more than \$2 million in budget cuts in just two years. Yet, these are also

times of significant innovation.

Schodack is discovering new ways to educate our children through technology, collaboration with other schools and colleges, and new approaches to the way we teach and are organized.

In this time of change and challenge, I hope to continue to share my talents and experience. I have served you for 30 years on the Schodack Board, 11 years on the BOCES Board, and five years as the President of the Tech Valley High School Board. I'm a lifelong resident of our District and now have grandchildren in our schools. I am also on the Town Planning Board and have worked to promote responsible development to address our shrinking tax base. While I have a passion for the Schodack community and our school system, I also recognize the need to preserve our quality of life through decisions that

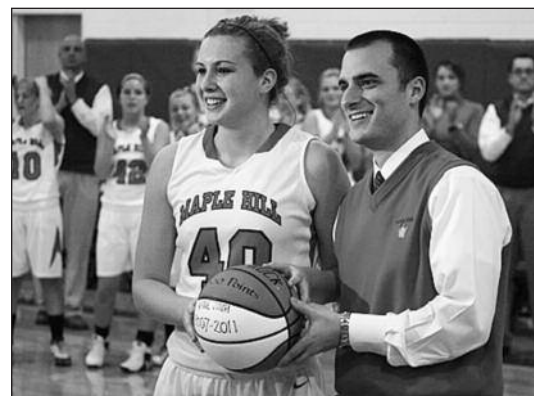
value and respect the concerns of property taxpayers. I hope you will allow me to continue to serve as a member of your Board of Education.

Mary Yurista

We chose a home in Schodack 24 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 and have successfully pursued college and beyond, while 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. My role in the workplace 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.



Schodack students had their artwork selected for numerous exhibits this year, including the High School Juried Regional Art Exhibition and Legislative Student Art Exhibition, winning a number of awards.



Maple Hill athletics teams are successful both on and off the court or field. Every Maple Hill fall and winter sports team was named a scholar athlete team this year by earning at least a 90 team average.

Community Budget Advisory Team Members

We would like to thank the members of this year's Community Budget Advisory Team. The group met four times over the course of several 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.

Matt Ancin
Laura Cook
Lisa Despart
Maria Eastwood

Dawn Gerrain
Nora Haran
Patty McKnight
John Myers

John Nicholas
Suzanne Paziienza
Robin Perry
Mike Racz

Dawn Renslow
Victoria Roberts
Bill Roe
Catherine Sager

Scott Schulz
Kara Smith
Lisa Stiles-Roy

Pam Timmons
Fred Wolff
Mary Yurista

Expenditures

Category	2010-2011	Proposed 2011-2012	Change from 2010-2011
Instruction	\$9,760,406	\$9,337,130	-\$423,276
Employee Benefits	\$4,576,143	\$5,020,763	\$444,620
Debt Service	\$2,598,537	\$2,165,246	-\$433,291
Operations & Maintenance	\$1,296,613	\$1,313,938	\$17,325
Transportation	\$1,039,517	\$1,013,829	-\$25,688
General Support	\$1,006,430	\$1,063,401	\$56,971
Interscholastic Athletics*	\$171,569	\$190,459	\$18,890
Interfund Transfers	\$37,344	\$18,062	-\$19,282
Community Services	\$1,161	\$2,219	\$1,058
Total Expenditures	\$20,487,720	\$20,125,047	-\$362,673

*Includes expenses for Lacrosse Program which are fully offset by donations in revenues

Revenues

Category	2010-2011	Proposed 2011-2012	Change from 2010-2011
Property Taxes	\$10,482,894	\$10,767,349	\$284,455
State Aid	\$7,625,512	\$6,864,386	-\$761,126
Fund Balance/Reserves	\$790,000	\$840,000	\$50,000
Pilot Revenue	\$693,932	\$717,574	\$23,642
Miscellaneous Revenues*	\$371,197	\$439,929	\$68,732
Charges for Services	\$214,185	\$210,809	-\$3,376
Federal Aid	\$160,000	\$135,000	-\$25,000
Debt Service Transfers	\$150,000	\$150,000	\$0
Total	\$20,487,720	\$20,125,047	-\$362,673

*Includes \$8,303 donation to fully support the Lacrosse Program

Q: Why doesn't the district eliminate extras and just teach the basics to reduce costs?

Graduates today need more than just good grades to get into college.

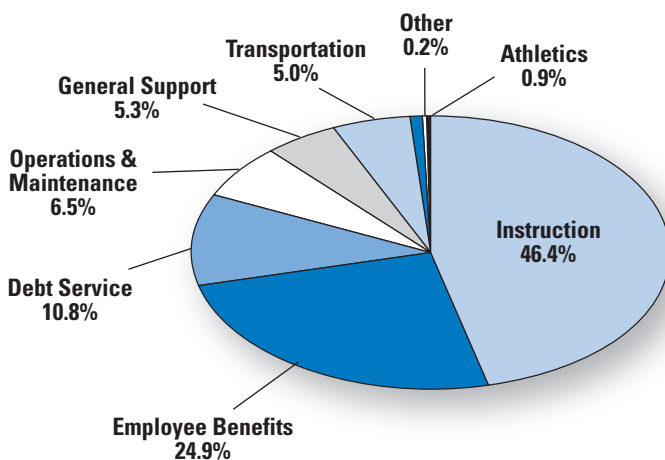
Colleges increasingly want students who are also involved in activities such as National Honor Society, Key Club or a sports team.

“Colleges are no longer just looking at grades and AP courses. Those days are over,” explained Superintendent Robert Horan. “Colleges are also looking for involvement in community activities, co-curricular activities and athletic participation.”

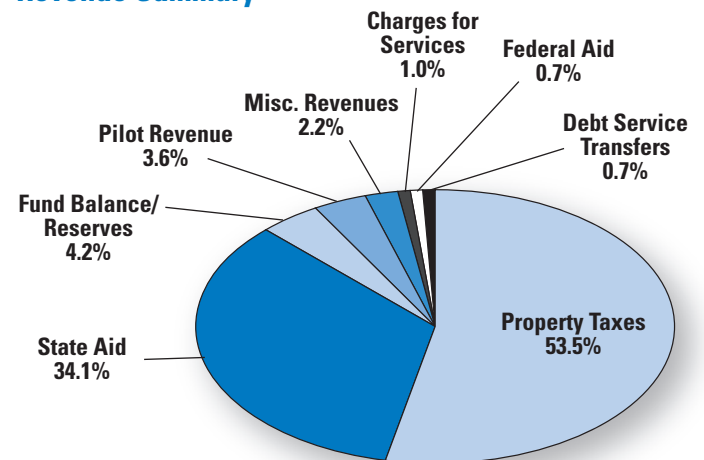
One of the reasons the Class of 2010 is attending colleges such as Cornell University and the Rochester Institute of Technology is students were able to include numerous activities on their college applications along with great grades, Mr. Horan said.

“It builds a well-rounded student and a good citizen,” said Mr. Horan. “We’re getting them prepared early for what college will be like and what is expected. Hopefully what we teach them will carry on into college.”

Expenditure Summary



Revenue Summary





From volunteering to clean up Main Street to working with children with disabilities to collecting hundreds of food donations for the Anchor Food Pantry, Schodack students are deeply involved in their community.

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 17. 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 \$20,125,047 budget for the 2011-12 school year, a proposition to purchase two school buses, and candidates for the school board.

When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, May 17 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 17 can cast their votes by absentee ballot. For an application, call the district office at 732-2297. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 17.

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, and click on our "Budget Information" link.

Schodack Central School District
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