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SCHODACK

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



MAY 2015

2015-16 SCHOOL BUDGET

Strengthening Programs for Students

Strengthening programs for students is the main focus of the 2015-16 school budget, which for the second straight year requires no cuts to programs or staffing.

The \$21,724,754 budget increases the tax levy by an estimated 2.5%. That is below what New York's Property Tax Cap allows (see page 8). Voters will also decide on two additional propositions, one to create a Capital Reserve Fund and one to purchase two school buses (see page 4).

Qualifying homeowners should receive a refund check from New York State for the difference in taxes from 2013-14 through 2015-16 due to the Property Tax Freeze program. The state program rewards communities in school districts that stay within the tax cap and meet efficiency requirements, which Schodack CSD fully expects to do.

"We're excited about this budget. It allows us to maintain and even enhance opportunities for students following four difficult years financially," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "Many of the student opportunities are at no cost due to our business and community partnerships. This helps us stay under the tax

cap which helps homeowners qualify for state refunds."

Mr. Horan credited the community for its advocacy efforts which helped convince state legislators to restore cuts to school aid in the state budget this year.

"I can't thank our community enough for all the emails, phone calls and visits they made to our representatives. It really made a difference," said Mr. Horan. "While the Gap Elimination aid cuts weren't completely eliminated, they remain a top priority for our legislators. We truly appreciate their support."

To help reduce costs, the district will continue to share its buildings and grounds superintendent, transportation supervisor, dispatcher and mechanic with other school districts. Unused classrooms will continue to be leased to StoryPlace Preschool and Questar III BOCES, helping to bring in an expected \$193,000 in additional revenue to the district next year.

Another savings next year will be in employee benefits, which will cost less next year. The reduction is a result of a decrease in required contributions to the state pension system.



Each year, Maple Hill Middle School students visit local VFW Post 7337 to talk with veterans and learn about their service to our country as part of an annual research project.

Budget Helps Qualify Homeowners for Refund

Most homeowners should receive a refund check from New York State next school year for the difference in taxes from 2013-14 through 2015-16 due to the Property Tax Freeze Program.

The state program reimburses qualifying homeowners for increases in local property taxes in school districts that remain within the NYS Property Tax Cap and meet efficiency requirements. Schodack CSD qualified for the program last year and is within the tax cap again next year.

Schodack CSD fully expects to meet the state's efficiency requirements given the number of sharing agreements it has with other school districts and other efficiency initiatives it has pursued.

"The district and Board of Education understand the tax fatigue in our community," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "We have made sure to stay below the tax cap and continue to pursue all possible efficiencies. This not only lowers our operating costs but should qualify homeowners for the state's Property Tax Freeze Program."

To qualify for the state program, homeowners must already receive the STAR property tax exemption. The property must be the homeowner's primary residence and the total household income must be \$500,000 or less.

For information about the program, please visit the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance's website.

BUDGET VOTE
Tuesday, May 19
6 a.m. — 9 p.m.

Maple Hill High School Gym

Reading and Math Support for Elementary Students

STRENGTHENING READING AND MATH support for all students will be a top priority at Castleton Elementary School next year where class sizes are expected to stay essentially the same.

This past year, the school transitioned to a new reading program for kindergarten and grades 3-5 that helped improve students English Language Arts skills. That program will expand to all grades next year.

"Helping students build strong reading skills is so important to their education, particularly at the elementary level," said Principal Jason Chevrier. "We're excited to have the funding next year to expand our reading program to all students."

Castleton Elementary will also introduce two initiatives next year to help students build stronger math skills.

Remedial math support will help the school's youngest learners from kindergarten through grade 3 through a targeted intervention program. Students in all grades will benefit from a K-5 math coach who will work alongside teachers to help improve instruction.

"We've talked for a few years about adding math support but were unable to due to funding," said Mr. Chevrier. "We want to be able to support students and be proactive instead of reactive in the area of math."



CES students learned about writing from renowned author Chris Grabenstein who visited the school in March.

Continuing Opportunities for Middle School Students

ENGAGING PROGRAMS such as STEM Day and We Read on Wednesdays will continue next year at Maple Hill Middle School despite a state grant that sparked the initiatives running out.

For the past three years, a \$600,000 competitive grant funded the Middle School's WRAPS program. The targeted program supports writing, reading, advisory, positive behavior support and STEM opportunities.

"We want to preserve most of those opportunities despite the grant running out."

"The WRAPS grant helped us create some great programs for students in very difficult financial times," said Principal James Derby. "We want to preserve most of those opportunities despite the grant running out."

The Open Source Computer Club and Robotics Club, two extracurricular activities developed this year, will also continue next year. The Computer Club was started by one of the district's business incubators, which volunteers

time each week to teach students how to repair computers.

Modified sports will also continue next year. Over the past three years, the Booster Club has raised more than \$35,000 to support the program which faced elimination due to budget cuts. The district will fully fund the modified sports program next year.

"I can't thank the Booster Club enough for keeping our students active and engaged outside the classroom," said Mr. Derby. "It means a lot to our students and our community for the Booster Club to work so hard to preserve these opportunities."



MHMS students in the Open Source Computer Club presented at the University at Albany in April about how they fix old computers.

More College Credit Courses at High School

NEXT YEAR, STUDENTS WILL HAVE even more options to earn college credits during the school day as Maple Hill High School grows its course offerings to offer the potential for more than 60 college credits including eight AP classes.

"We've had students earn 30 college credits by the time they graduated from here," said Principal Ron Agostinoni. "That not only saves parents money, it bolsters a student's college

"We've had students earn 30 college credits by the time they graduated from here."

application and prepares them for the rigors of college level work."

Maple Hill High School has long partnered with Hudson Valley Community College. But this year it also became the first school to partner with Excelsior College. The college even picked up the cost for the first year.

College partnerships not only help students planning to go to college but it helps students who might not have considered it an option.

"That's the best part. Maybe a student didn't plan to go to college or thought they couldn't do it," said Mr. Agostinoni. "Now they take a class with a teacher they know and receive a college transcript showing the credit they earned. It really can open a student's eyes that they can do it."

The budget also funds the development of a Career Exploration and Internship Program to create internship opportunities for students in the future. Other additions next year include a third lab science class that teaches students to think critically and a sign language class offered through Distance Learning (which meets the language requirement).



MHHS teachers Nate Porter and Kaitlin McGann (not shown) created more engaging science labs for students by working with college and business researchers.

Continuing Opportunities for Students

Here are some examples of what our schools will continue to provide students next year:

CASTLETON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

- Average classroom size: 24 students
- Two hours of reading time each day for K-3
- 75 minutes of core instruction (Math, Reading, Science/Social Studies) each day for grades 4-5
- Specials (Art, Music, Physical Education) each day for all grades
- Enrichment and intervention time each day for all grades
- Afterschool activities such as K-Kids, Drama Kids, CES Agricultural Project and intramural sports for grades 4-5

MAPLE HILL MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Average classroom size: 24 students
- Music opportunities for all students beyond what is mandated
- Art opportunities for all students beyond what is mandated
- Advanced classes in earth science and math
- Exploratory classes offer additional opportunities in technology, research, culture and other areas
- Co-curricular activities including Drama Club, Builder's Club, Computer Club, Robotics Club, Student Council, Schodack-Castleton Community Partnership and modified sports
- Small learning communities for grades 6-8 to help students needing extra assistance

MAPLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL

- 8 AP classes, including: Biology, Calculus, Environmental Science, Government, Language, Psychology, U.S. History and World History
- 10 college-credit classes, including: Accounting, Algebra/Trigonometry, Calculus, Chinese I, Contemporary Math, Environmental Science, Pre-calculus, Psychology, Spanish IV, Topics of Biology.
- Sequence in Art, including classes in: Drawing & Painting, Advanced Drawing & Painting, Photography, Sculpture & Ceramics, Studio Art and Advanced Studio Art.
- Music opportunities include band and chorus, electives such as Music Theory 1 & 2, Music in Our Lives and History of American Pop Music
- Co-Curricular Activities, including: Environmental Club, Key Club, National Honor Society, Newspaper Club, SADD, Science Olympiad, Student Council and Yearbook
- Small learning communities for students who require more engagement

Proposition Would Create Capital Reserve Fund

A proposition on the May 19 ballot would create a Capital Reserve Fund that would reduce the amount of borrowing for the Capital Project and help pay for repairs, maintenance and facility improvements.

Here are some frequently asked questions about Capital Reserve Funds.

Q: Why create a Capital Reserve Fund?

A: Creating a Capital Reserve Fund allows the district to set aside savings at the end of the school year to pay down debt for the Capital Project and help finance other facility repairs and maintenance.

Q: : How much money could be set aside in the fund?

A: The district could set aside up to \$2 million over the next 10 years in the Capital Reserve Fund.

Q: Where does the money for the Capital Reserve Fund come from?

A: Funding would primarily come from fund balance.

The school district's proposed budget is an estimate of costs for the upcoming year. When expenditures are less than projected or revenues are higher than expected, some of those savings could be placed in the Capital Reserve Fund.

Q: How will the community know what the district uses the funding for?

A: Voter approval is required for the district to use money from the Capital Reserve Fund. The district will provide details on such spending so community members can vote in the future whether to allow the district to use money in the fund.



Bus Purchases Part of Long-Term Plan

A proposition on the May 19 ballot would allow the district to purchase two additional propane buses as part of its long-term bus replacement program.

The district currently owns two propane buses which produce almost no emissions. They also cost less to run than diesel buses; each bus saves the district approximately \$3,500 a year in fuel costs as well as reduced maintenance costs.

The buses are fueled at a propane station near the bus garage, which was built through a lease agreement with a local company that maintains the station.

"Many school districts are moving to propane powered school buses because they run cleaner than diesel buses," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "We studied them carefully. They are designed to be just as safe as diesel buses. We've been very pleased with them. Our drivers love them."

The local cost for the 66-passenger bus and 30-passenger bus that is wheelchair accessible would be approximately \$23,000 a year for the next five years. New York State reimburses the district for 62.2% of bus purchases. The total cost would not exceed \$249,500.

Student Achievement

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

Here are some examples:

- 91% of the Class of 2014 continued their education after graduation.
- The Class of 2014 went on to attend colleges such as Roger Williams University, Tulane University, Siena College, University at Albany, SUNY Purchase, SUNY New Paltz, Pratt Institute and Rochester Institute of Technology.
- The Class of 2014 earned more than \$3,355,500 in scholarships and awards.
- Students had artwork selected for regional art exhibits such as The College of Saint Rose and Questar III.
- Junior Michaela Mueller was named the Capital District YMCA Outstanding Student for all of Rensselaer County due to her volunteerism and making a positive impact on her community.
- Seventh grader Hannah Brewer won first place in the Patriot's Pen Youth Essay Competition for her essay on "Why I Appreciate America's Veterans."

Board of Education Candidates

This year there are four people running for three open Board of Education seats. Each seat is a three-year, non-paid term.

MICHAEL TUTTLE

My wife, Liz, and I are Maple Hill graduates (1987) and our kids, Sidney (2020) and Jace (2022) attend Maple Hill. I retired from the Marine Corps as a Chief Warrant Officer after 24 years and served a combat tour in Iraq. I hold a bachelor's degree in Physical Therapy from Stony Brook University. I'm co-owner in an environmental inspection company (Long Island based) and a mining services company (Congo, Africa based). I feel my varied skills will be an asset to the BOE and look forward to the opportunity to help guide the future direction of our children's education.

GEORGE WARNER

A Maple Hill graduate, it's been my privilege to represent our community on the BOE for the past 18 years. Over that time, the challenges have been many; 2 recessions, inadequate state aid, outdated SED regulations. But, the goal has remained the same, to prepare students for their future. Working together, we've accomplished that goal. Always an innovator, Schodack is leading the integration of education with businesses. I pioneered the establishment of connections with business groups and found our incubator's first client. So we can continue to address challenges while ensuring to prepare our students, I ask for your vote.

MICHAEL CHARSKY

I've been an active member of Schodack's academic, athletic and religious community for 20+ years. I have financial, Information Technology, educational and project management expertise that is beneficial as the future of Schodack schools is discussed. My financial background stems from experience creating and managing budgets at Sacred Heart Church, Maple Hill Booster Club and 30+ years of financial IT application expertise. I held certification as a Math Teacher, taught mathematics, participated in Schodack CSD's Kindergarten curriculum study, participated in Instrumental classes and coached soccer and basketball for 20 years. I've been a Board member for the past 3 ½ years.

MICHAEL HISER

Over the last 24 years, my wife and I have raised two children in this community and district. We've had many similar experiences as our neighbors – we've volunteered in youth athletics, church functions, scouting and other community activities. Through it all, the school has been a constant, positive presence. The next three years will be particularly exciting for the district and community, as we make decisions that will best serve us for the next 10-15 years. I'd like to remain involved to help make those important decisions, so it remains a constant positive presence for the next generation as well.

Working With Business and Community Partners

Whether it's leasing classrooms to Story Place Preschool or working with Open Source Initiative to create a computer club for students, community and business partners have become an important part of Schodack schools.

"We're bringing in additional revenue and creating opportunities for students simply by opening our doors to community and business partners," said Superintendent Bob Horan.

Next year, Schodack CSD expects to bring in \$193,000 in additional revenue from leasing empty classroom space to Story Place Preschool and Questar III BOCES. The YMCA also donated exercise equipment to the Middle School for student and community use.

"We really enjoy being here," said Story Place Preschool Director Michele Rose. "Schodack is so positive and welcoming, from the administrators to the faculty and staff. It really is just a giving district. We feel 100% like a part of the school community."

The district's business incubator program now has six businesses working in Schodack schools. In exchange for space



Story Place Preschool moved its entire program to Schodack schools this year through a partnership that brings revenue into the district.

to grow their companies, businesses work with teachers and students to create real world opportunities.

This year alone, the Solar Sal boat project taught High School students about renewable energy, MICROrganics Technologies worked with Middle School students at STEM Day and Elementary School students had hands-on learning opportunities with SmartKids NY.

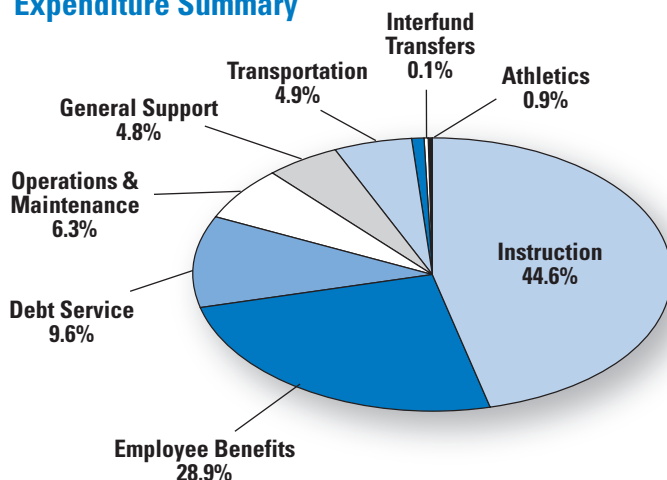
Expenditures

| Category | 2014-2015 | Proposed 2015-2016 | Change from 2014-2015 | % of Budget |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Instruction | \$9,466,901 | \$9,915,474 | \$448,573 | 44.6% |
| Employee Benefits | \$6,135,547 | \$6,064,646 | -\$70,901 | 28.9% |
| Debt Service | \$2,027,172 | \$2,112,886 | \$85,714 | 9.6% |
| Operations & Maintenance | \$1,333,425 | \$1,387,488 | \$54,063 | 6.3% |
| Transportation | \$1,031,860 | \$1,034,075 | \$2,215 | 4.9% |
| General Support | \$1,017,438 | \$983,488 | -\$33,950 | 4.8% |
| Interscholastic Athletics | \$185,874 | \$207,622 | \$21,748 | 0.9% |
| Interfund Transfers | \$19,075 | \$19,075 | \$0 | 0.1% |
| Total Expenditures | \$21,217,292 | \$21,724,754 | \$507,462 | 100.0% |

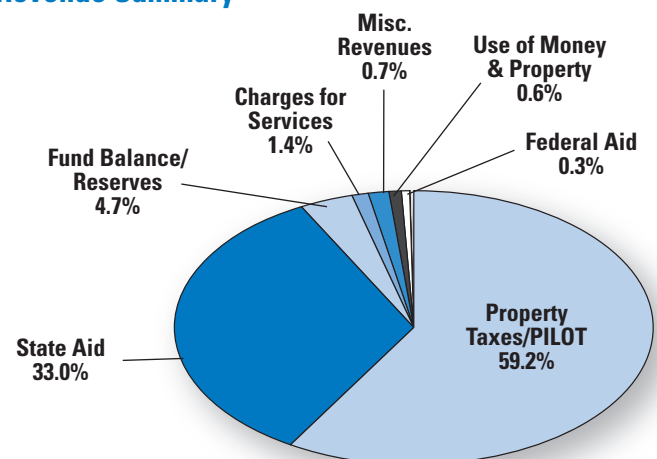
Revenues

| Category | 2014-2015 | Proposed 2015-2016 | Change from 2014-2015 | % of Revenues |
|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| Property Taxes/PILOT | \$12,563,806 | \$12,888,783 | \$324,977 | 59.2% |
| State Aid | \$6,996,845 | \$7,303,330 | \$306,485 | 33.0% |
| Fund Balance/Reserves | \$1,000,000 | \$752,000 | -\$248,000 | 4.7% |
| Charges for Services | \$304,641 | \$354,641 | \$50,000 | 1.4% |
| Miscellaneous Revenues | \$158,000 | \$158,000 | \$0 | 0.7% |
| Use of Money & Property | \$129,000 | \$193,000 | \$64,000 | 0.6% |
| Federal Aid | \$65,000 | \$75,000 | \$10,000 | 0.3% |
| Total | \$21,217,292 | \$21,724,754 | \$507,462 | 100.0% |

Expenditure Summary



Revenue Summary



School District Budget Notice

| Overall Budget Proposal | Budget Adopted for the 2014-15 School Year | Budget Proposed for the 2015-16 School Year | Contingency Budget for the 2015-16 School Year * | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|-------------|--------|-----------------------------------|-----------|---------------------------------------|-------------|--|--|--|--|
| Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions | \$ 21,217,292 | \$ 21,724,754 | \$ 21,446,343 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Increase/Decrease for the 2015-16 School Year | | \$ 507,462 | \$ 229,051 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget | | 2.39% | 1.08% | | | | | | | | | | |
| Change in the Consumer Price Index | | 1.62% | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount | \$ 12,473,355 | \$ 12,785,245 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable ** | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D) | \$ 12,473,355 | \$ 12,785,245 | 2.5% | | | | | | | | | | |
| F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit | \$ 549,530 | \$ 605,775 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions | \$ 11,923,825 | \$ 12,206,773 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, <u>Excluding</u> Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E - B - F + D) | \$ 11,923,825 | \$ 12,179,470 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) ** | \$0 | \$ 27,303 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Administrative Component | \$ 2,488,494 | \$ 2,511,184 | \$ 2,426,055 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Program Component | \$ 14,910,967 | \$ 15,225,192 | \$ 15,077,910 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Capital Component | \$ 3,817,831 | \$ 3,988,378 | \$ 3,942,378 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <p>* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2015-16 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.</p> <p>Allowable exclusions for capital and debt service payments have been deducted in calculating the limit on Total Spending. In making reductions for a contingency budget, equipment and other non-contingent items would be removed from the proposed budget and the Administrative Cap would be applied in accordance with New York State Education Law requirements.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="text-align: left;">Description</th> <th style="text-align: left;">Amount</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Purchase of two (2) Propane Buses</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$249,500</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Establishment of Capital Reserve Fund</td> <td style="text-align: right;">\$2,000,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> <tr> <td> </td> <td> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>** List Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)</p> | | | | Description | Amount | Purchase of two (2) Propane Buses | \$249,500 | Establishment of Capital Reserve Fund | \$2,000,000 | | | | |
| Description | Amount | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Purchase of two (2) Propane Buses | \$249,500 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Establishment of Capital Reserve Fund | \$2,000,000 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

NOTE: Please submit an electronic version (Word or PDF) of this completed form to: emscmgts@nysed.gov

Under the Budget Proposed for
the 2015-16 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings¹

\$ 692.62

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2015-2016 by the qualified voters of the Schodack Central School District, Rensselaer and Columbia Counties, New York, will be held at the Maple Hill High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2015 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Maple Hill High School gymnasium at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

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

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Why Is a 2.5% Increase Below the Cap?

When New York State passed the Property Tax Cap law, elected officials often touted the new law as a “2% tax cap”.

But the law they passed instead requires schools to use an eight-step formula to determine how much they can increase their tax levy by. Very few school districts actually have a 2% tax cap because the formula causes the cap to vary from district to district.

New York State set Schodack CSD’s property tax cap at 2.72% next year. The 2015-16 budget is below the cap with an estimated 2.5% increase in the tax levy.

The main reason for Schodack CSD’s tax cap number is its tax base growth factor, one of the eight steps in the formula. Due to building growth in the district, Schodack CSD has the third highest growth factor in the county.



Follow us on Facebook

Receive information about budget news, student success stories and emergency announcements on the district’s Facebook page at www.Facebook.com/SchodackCSD. Already, more than 800 community members have “liked” our page. Please note this service is at no cost to the district.

Voter Information

What am I voting on?

A \$21,724,754 budget for the 2015-16 school year, a proposition to create a Capital Reserve Fund, a proposition to purchase two school buses, and three candidates for the BOE.

When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, May 19 from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 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 19 can cast their votes by absentee ballot. For an application, visit the district website or call the district office at 732-2297. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 19.

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.