

- Continuing Opportunities for Students
- Foundation to Support Academic Programs
- Working with Business and Community Partners



2016-17 SCHOOL BUDGET

Continuing Programs Despite Negative Tax Cap

Creating student opportunities through efficiencies and partnerships despite a negative tax cap is the main focus of the 2016-17 school budget, which for the third straight year requires no cuts to programs or staffing.

The \$22,075,681 budget reduces the tax levy by an estimated 0.3%. The reduction is a result of New York's Property Tax Cap, which is negative next year due to the formula the district is required to use (see page 8).

"Even though we have a negative tax cap (-0.3%), our administrative team put a lot of time and energy into finding efficiencies that do not reduce programs for students," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "If anything, we continue to enhance and improve instruction to ensure our students are successful."

Mr. Horan noted that while Schodack schools will continue to emphasize science, technology, engineering and math, the district places equal importance on the arts.

"This budget helps us continue to move together towards a STEAM environment," said Mr. Horan. "We know through all our meetings with faculty, staff and students that many of our students are into the arts. Our students have so many tal-

ents and strengths. Just focusing on STEM won't help them be well-rounded."

Because the budget is within the tax cap, most homeowners who qualify for the state's School Tax Relief (STAR) program should receive a \$185 check from New York State in the fall as part of the revised Property Tax Freeze program (see story below).

The ending of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA) was significant for the district. For the past five years, New York State used the GEA to cut aid to schools. It was finally eliminated in the state budget passed in April.

"We are extremely thankful to our community who helped advocate for the end of the GEA and to our state legislators who heard our concerns and made it a priority to end the cuts to school aid this year," said Mr. Horan.

To help reduce costs, the district will continue to share its 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 for the district next year.



Jennifer Carlson was honored by Maple Hill alumna Nicole Bureau as the most influential teacher in her life this spring. The honor came during an event at the Rochester Institute of Technology where Ms. Bureau was named an Outstanding Scholar, given to the top 1% of her class.

Budget Helps Qualify Homeowners for Rebate

Most homeowners should receive a \$185 rebate check from New York State in the fall due to the school's budget staying within the Property Tax Cap.

New York State revised its Property Tax Freeze Program to provide a \$185 rebate to upstate homeowners who qualify for the state's School Tax Relief (STAR) program. In previous years, qualifying homeowners received a rebate equal to the difference in taxes they paid from different years.

"The district had an option of overriding the tax cap but the Board of Education and administration listened to our community and decided against it," said Superintendent Bob Horan.

"We understand taxes are high so it is important for us to ensure homeowners qualify for the rebate check by staying within the tax cap."

To qualify for STAR, and the rebate check, a homeowner's property in the district must be their primary residence. The homeowner's total household income also must be \$500,000 or less.

New York State has indicated that the rebate checks should be mailed in the fall to qualifying homeowners. For questions about STAR or the Property Tax Freeze Program, please contact the state Department of Taxation and Finance.

BUDGET VOTE
Tuesday, May 17
6 a.m. – 9 p.m.
Maple Hill High School Gym

Improving Instruction Through Teacher Support at CES

CONTINUING TO SUPPORT TEACHERS in areas such as technology and math will help Castleton Elementary School improve instruction for all students next year.

“We know investing in our teachers at the end of the day is an investment in our students,” said Principal Jason Chevrier.

Last year, Castleton Elementary School invested in putting technology in the hands of students by purchasing more than 100 tablets for K-2 classrooms and 100 Chromebooks for Gr. 3-5 classrooms.

Next year’s tight budget will allow the school to focus on helping teachers utilize the technology in even more ways that enhance instruction, said Mr. Chevrier. He credited the



Math teacher Amy Hirschhoff keeps a fourth grade student engaged in math by using a SmartBoard.

“We know investing in our teachers, at the end of the day, is an investment in our students.”

work of Educational Technology Specialist Tim Ryan, who will continue to work with teachers next year to use technology to engage students.

“Sometimes it’s good to take a breath and see how we can better use what we already have,” said Mr. Chevrier. “Tim’s ability to support technology in the classroom has been a tremendous help to our teachers.”

Similarly, High School math teacher Janice Balogh, who is a New York State master teacher, will continue her work supporting faculty in math instruction at Castleton Elementary School next year.

“We’ve been able to work with our math teachers to provide them support that helps them improve instruction for all students,” said Mr. Chevrier. “It has been extremely appreciated and valuable for our teaching staff.”

Creating Opportunities for Middle School Students

BUILDING ON OTHER CLUBS Maple Hill Middle School has added in recent years like Robotics and Computer Club, a new Student Help Desk next year will allow students to help others with their technology knowledge.

“We have a lot of students who are interested in technology and computers,” said Principal James Derby. “This will give them an opportunity to troubleshoot computer problems for teachers and students while helping students develop problem solving, communication, and other soft skills.”

For students with other interests, the school will continue to offer opportunities in areas such as the arts. This year, Capital Repertory Theatre in Albany performed “A Midsummer Night’s Dream” for students, which they read in class. Educators plan to invite the theatre group back next year.

“While we continue to use technology to create learning opportunities and engage our students, we haven’t lost sight of the importance of the arts,” said Mr. Derby. “We changed our STEM Day this year to STEAM to integrate arts into science, technology, engineering and math. We will continue that next year.”

The Middle School will also continue to focus on other core subject areas such as Social Studies and English Language Arts while helping young learners with their transition from elementary school.

“One of the biggest things we try to do is foster independence in students and help them build their organizational skills,” said Mr. Derby. “Students have more and more responsibilities. We need to help them succeed here and prepare them to be successful in high school.”



Middle School students take part in a science experiment led by a Hudson Valley Community College student as part of STEAM Day.

High School Adds Classes and Internship Program

STUDENTS WILL HAVE MORE AP classes, distance learning courses, and a new internship program to choose from next year at Maple Hill High School.

"We're adding AP physics and we'll host and receive more distance learning classes than ever before," said Principal Ron Agostinoni. "We're also bringing back accounting next year which we haven't been able to offer in a long time."

The additional offerings are made possible largely by rearranging schedules to provide students as many options as possible at little to no cost to the district. Mr. Agostinoni credited the Guidance Office staff and teachers for their efforts to expand student opportunities despite budget challenges.

"We're adding AP physics and we'll host and receive more distance learning classes than ever before."



Maple Hill High School students Aric Coster, Payton Ferreira and Alysa Kelly had their artwork selected for the 27th Annual High School Invitational Art Exhibit at Hudson Valley Community College.

Maple Hill High School will also start a new Career Exploration Internship Program next year that will offer juniors and seniors the opportunity to work with local businesses. Educators started developing the internship program over the past year by building relationships with local businesses.

"Students will be able to explore careers prior to going to college so they have a better sense of what they might be interested in," said Mr. Agostinoni. "It's also a great opportunity to build even stronger connections with our community."

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, 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, National Junior Honor Society, Newspaper Club, Maker Club and modified sports

MAPLE HILL HIGH SCHOOL

- 9 AP classes, including: Biology, Calculus, Environmental Science, Government, Language, Physics, Psychology, U.S. History and World History
- 10 college-credit classes, including: Calculus, Chinese I, Contemporary Math, Creative Writing, Environmental Science, Media and Culture, 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

Foundation to Support Academic Programs

To help create educational opportunities at no cost to taxpayers, a group of Board of Education members, administrators, and community members have created a foundation to support the district.

“We in Schodack have so much to be proud of, a great school, great kids and a great community. But we have never had a foundation dedicated to supporting the academic programs of our school district,” said Foundation Secretary Paul Puccio. “Well, we now have established The Schodack Wildcat Foundation, Inc., a charitable, not-for-profit organization dedicated to supporting our schools.”

Like other school foundations, such as those in Averill Park and East Greenbush, The Schodack Wildcat Foundation can accept tax deductible donations. Community members can designate how they want their donation spent, such as for the science program or a scholarship.

The Foundation has already registered with AmazonSmile, which allows online shoppers of Amazon to donate 0.5% of their purchases to charity. Shoppers simply go to smile.amazon.com and search for The Schodack Wildcat Foundation to make it their designated charity.

The Foundation will provide funding in the form of grants for projects, programs, equipment or professional development that support academic programs for students.

The Foundation’s Board of Directors spent more than a year creating the legally-recognized organization. They plan to create a website and make more announcements in the months ahead.

“Please consider making a contribution to the Foundation by contacting the district office,” said Mr. Puccio. “You will see your donations enrich academics at Schodack Central School District.”



Bus Purchases Part of Replacement Plan

A proposition on the May 17 ballot would allow the district to purchase one 66-passenger and two 30-passenger buses as part of the district’s long-term bus replacement program.

The 66-passenger bus would be powered by propane, making it the fifth propane bus the district owns. Propane buses produce almost no emissions. They cost less to run than diesel buses and require less maintenance. Propane 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.

“We have purchased propane buses the past two years because they run cleaner than diesel buses,” said Superintendent Bob Horan. “We were one of the first local districts to purchase them but more and more districts are following our lead. They are designed to be just as safe as diesel buses and our drivers love them.”

The local cost for the three buses would be approximately \$16,248 a year for five years. New York State reimburses the district for 67% of bus purchases. The total cost would not exceed \$223,800.

Student Achievement

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

Here are some examples:

- **89% of the Class of 2015 continued their education after graduation.**
- **The Class of 2015 went on to attend colleges such as Rochester Institute of Technology, Siena College, University at Albany, College of the Holy Cross, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, University of Rochester, Ithaca College, Chapman University and Clarkson University.**
- **The Class of 2015 earned more than \$5,916,811 in scholarships and awards.**
- **Students had artwork selected for regional art exhibits such as The Arts Center in Troy and Hudson Valley Community College.**
- **Senior Kyle Hurysz helped his New Visions Law and Government team win the New York State “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution” competition.**
- **Maple Hill alumna Nicole Bureau was honored as an Outstanding Scholar at Rochester Institute of Technology, given to the top 1% of students.**

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.

BRUCE ROMANCHAK

Like many of you I grew up in Schodack and I and my children graduated from Maple Hill. Like all of you I want our schools to not only remain good, I want them to be the best schools in the area. Like you I realize we need to do all this while making every dollar count, to keep in mind that school taxes are a heavy burden for many, especially our elderly. If you allow me to continue to serve you on the school board I promise to bring my many years of experience on the board focused on doing just that.

GEORGE WARNER

Ensuring that our children have a solid education has always been a key value of this community. A Maple Hill graduate, I benefited from that value as have my family's four sons. Employed as an IT Director, I see firsthand the skills needed by today's graduates. As a Board member, I have brought today's needs back to our District so we can prepare our students for their future. However, we have a taxbase that is not growing enough. Every cent must be squeezed for its maximum value and state aid fully leveraged. I believe it is important we prepare our students for their future and ensure fiscal discipline.

MARY YURISTA

A resident of Schodack for nearly 30 years, I hold degrees in technology and business along with industry certifications. I currently serve the community on the Board of Education's Audit Committee and have been a past member of the Board. I believe the private sector offers beneficial guidance and progressive ideas that will allow us to sustain and improve the quality of education and everyday life for all of our children. Through technology, innovation, and careful use of all of our resources, I want to ensure the same success for every student that my children (Chris, Ryan, and Casey) have benefited from. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

DAN GRANDINETTI

It has been my privilege to represent our community on the BOE for the past three years. My wife (Karen) and I are raising three kids in the community and district (Megan 18, Michael 15 and Maya 5). I have spent (27 years) my entire professional career in the field of "Youth Development". I remain committed/passionate in this field and strive to make a difference in the lives of our children. The "Community" is the School District and our School District is the "Community". It would be an honor to serve our District and Community for another three years on the BOE.

Working With Business and Community Partners

Whether it's working with local businesses to provide internships for our students or leasing classrooms to Story Place Preschool and Questar III BOCES, business and community partners are an important part of Schodack schools.

"A lot of schools say their doors are open to the community but they're not," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "We have created so many opportunities for our students simply by partnering with local businesses who are excited to work with us and our students."

Maple Hill High School students Allison Felt and Shirah Strock, for example, gained first-hand experience working for a local company this year through an internship with Next Advance. The Averill Park company was so impressed with Allison's graphic and web design

work that it created a second internship for Shirah, who helped test the company's products.

Castleton Elementary students were taught about nanotechnology and energy this year during a visit by EnerMat Technologies, a local company founded by RPI graduates. Students also learned about science through hands-on activities from SmartKids NY, which was sponsored in part by Monolith Solar that installed solar panels at the school for no cost.

Relationships with community partners such as Story Place Preschool and Questar III allow the district to continue to bring in additional revenue by leasing unused classroom space. The district expects to bring in approximately \$193,000 in revenue from lease agreements with the organizations next year.

"We have created so many opportunities for our students simply by partnering with local businesses . . ."

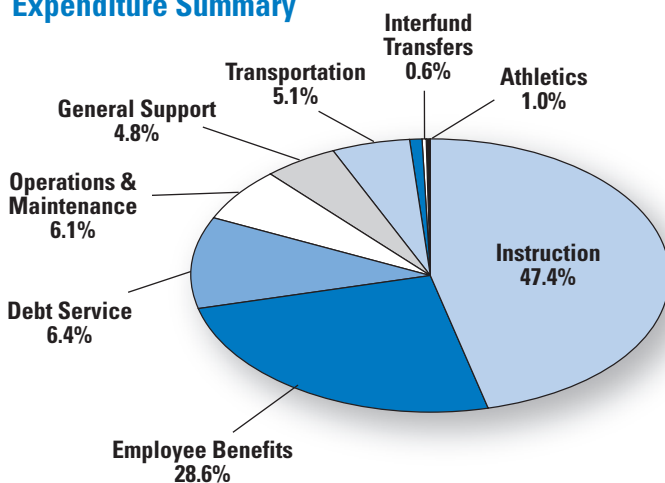
Expenditures

Category	2015-2016	Proposed 2016-2017	Change from 2015-2016	% of Budget
Instruction	\$9,915,474	\$10,462,568	\$547,094	47.4%
Employee Benefits	\$6,064,646	\$6,312,735	\$248,089	28.6%
Debt Service	\$2,112,886	\$1,431,617	-\$681,269	6.4%
Operations & Maintenance	\$1,387,488	\$1,338,314	-\$49,174	6.1%
Transportation	\$1,034,075	\$1,128,341	\$94,266	5.1%
General Support	\$983,488	\$1,068,788	\$85,300	4.8%
Athletics	\$207,622	\$211,168	\$3,546	1.0%
Interfund Transfers	\$19,075	\$122,150	\$103,075	0.6%
Total Expenditures	\$21,724,754	\$22,075,681	\$350,927	100.0%

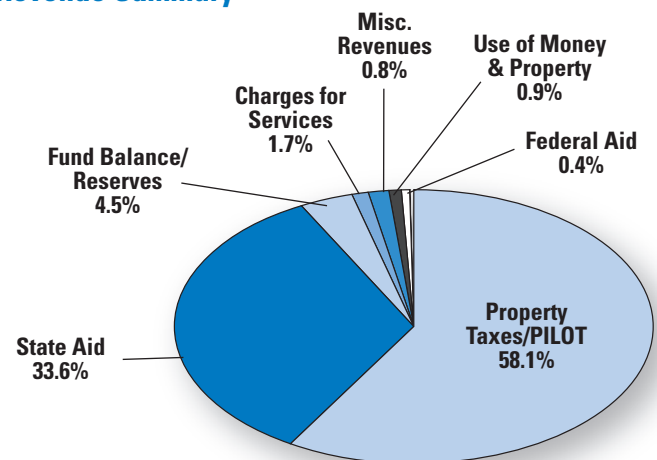
Revenues

Category	2015-2016	Proposed 2016-2017	Change from 2015-2016	% of Revenues
Property Taxes/PILOT	\$12,888,783	\$12,815,312	-\$73,471	58.1%
State Aid	\$7,303,330	\$7,423,424	\$120,094	33.6%
Fund Balance/Reserves	\$752,000	\$1,000,000	\$248,000	4.5%
Charges for Services	\$354,641	\$375,500	\$20,859	1.7%
Miscellaneous Revenues	\$158,000	\$170,445	\$12,445	0.8%
Use of Money & Property	\$193,000	\$206,000	\$13,000	0.9%
Federal Aid	\$75,000	\$85,000	\$10,000	0.4%
Total	\$21,724,754	\$22,075,681	\$350,927	100.0%

Expenditure Summary



Revenue Summary



School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2015-16 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2016-17 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2016-17 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 21,724,754	\$ 22,075,681	\$ 21,883,864
Increase/Decrease for the 2016-17 School Year		\$ 350,927	\$ 159,110
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.62 %	.73%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		0.12 %	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount, Net of Reserve	\$ 12,785,245	\$ 12,747,084	
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)	\$ 12,785,245	\$ 12,747,084	-0.3%
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$ 605,775	\$ 422,840	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$ 12,206,773	\$ 12,324,244	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$ 12,141,309	\$ 12,324,244	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$ 65,464	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$ 2,488,494	\$ 2,715,942	\$ 2,634,942
Program Component	\$ 14,910,967	\$ 15,978,284	\$ 15,973,284
Capital Component	\$ 3,817,831	\$ 3,381,458	\$ 3,275,458
<p>* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2016-17 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. 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>			
<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 1 large and 2 small buses		\$223,800
<p>NOTE: Please submit an electronic version (Word or PDF) of this completed form to: emscmgts@nysed.gov</p>			Under the Budget Proposed for the 2016-17 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹			\$ 636

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2016-2017 by the qualified voters of the Schodack Central School District, Rensselaer County, New York, will be held at Maple Hill High School in said district on Tuesday, May 17, 2016 between the hours of 6:00am and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Maple Hill High School, 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.

Produced by Questar III Communications Service

Why Is the District's Tax Cap Negative?

When New York State created the Property Tax Cap law, elected officials often touted it as a "2% tax cap"

But in reality the tax cap rarely equals 2% because schools must use an eight-step formula to determine how much they can increase their tax levy by.

This year, due largely to a low Consumer Price Index, many school districts have a tax cap number near 0%. Schodack CSD's tax cap is actually negative due to debt for a previous Capital Project being paid off.

"School districts are put in a very difficult spot because we don't know what our tax cap number will be from year to year," said Superintendent Bob Horan. "It makes long-term financial planning very difficult."

Mr. Horan, who chairs Questar III's Legislative Committee, has joined other school superintendents this year to urge New York State to revise the tax cap law to make it more predictable.

"We've been working with our elected officials to try to make the tax cap truly 2%, similar to the Massachusetts model that New York's tax cap is modeled after," said Mr. Horan.

Voter Information

What am I voting on?

A \$22,075,681 budget for the 2016-17 school year, a proposition to purchase three school buses, and three candidates for the BOE.

When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, May 17 from 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. in the Maple Hill High School gym. **Please note, New York State requires schools to use optical scanners this year, similar to other elections.**

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, 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 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.