

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE: MAY 19

NOON-9 P.M. IN JR/SR HS GYM LOBBY

Middleburgh

Budget Newsletter May 2015

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Voters to decide on \$20,765,915 budget May 19

Proposed budget retains all student programming and staffing; meets new state requirements

Middleburgh Central School District residents will vote on a proposed \$20,765,915 budget for the 2015-16 school year on Tuesday, May 19.

The proposed budget, which preserves all existing student programming and staffing, increases spending by \$340,964 (or 1.67 percent), from the current school year and carries a tax levy increase of 2.38 percent, or \$219,732.

Because the proposed tax levy is at the district's maximum allowable limit increase under the state's tax "cap" law, support of a simple majority (50 percent plus one) is required for the budget to be approved.

"We are thankful to be able to present a budget for next year that does not include a single cut to any student programming or staffing," Superintendent Michele Weaver said.

What will I see on the ballot?

- ✓ **Proposed budget:** \$20,765,915
Budget Change: + 1.67%
Tax Levy Change: + 2.38%
- ✓ **Board of Education Election**
- ✓ **Bus Proposition**
- ✓ **Sale of district property**

Voting will be held from noon to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, May 19, in the Jr./Sr. High School gym lobby.

www.middleburghcsd.org



Changes in the budget

The biggest changes in the proposed budget include adding funds to meet new state regulations for English Language Learners and for independent evaluators required for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR). An increase in special education spending reflects the projected needs of incoming students.

"Our terms are not finalized as we are awaiting further instruction from the state, which is expected by June 30, regarding the new APPR rules. Therefore we need to make sure the budget contains the monies necessary should we need to use an outside evaluator for reviews," Weaver said.

Closing the Gap

When the budget development process began, MCS administrators faced a projected budget gap of approximately

\$577,000 due to increasing contractual and operational expenses and new state mandates. Once final figures for state aid, insurance costs, benefit expenses, staff retirements and special education were factored in, the district still faced a gap of about \$256,600.

Last year, the board of education applied \$535,942 in fund balance toward the 2014-15 budget. However year-end projections estimate a savings of nearly \$236,000.

"The estimated savings from the 2014-15 budget will be able to be applied to the proposed 2015-16 budget, which left us with a budget gap of about \$20,600," School Business Manager Terry Gillooley said.

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Budget

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Instead of making reductions, the board of education voted to use additional fund balance to close the gap.

Looking toward the future

"Next school year will be the first time in eight years that we will maintain current staffing levels," Weaver said.

It will also be the district's first full

year working under the reorganization that was finalized this school year.

"It will be an exciting year, full of positives as we continue to capitalize on all the work we've done to maximize our district's resources to continue to offer our students an outstanding experience at Middleburgh Central Schools," Weaver added.

Budget Q&A

What has been cut?

There are no reductions or eliminations in the proposed budget.

What expenses increased?

- An increase in English Language Learner students coupled with new requirements means that the district must hire an additional teacher.
 - Because of a projected increase in special education enrollment, it is necessary to hire additional staff to meet the individual education requirements of MCS students.
 - New state regulations require money to be allocated for outside evaluators for APPR.
 - Necessary upkeep of the buildings and grounds under the capital project.
- Additional increases were driven by contractual obligations.

Will the district still get the state aid increase if a new evaluation plan isn't approved?

The budget that state lawmakers approved included new requirements for the annual evaluation of teachers and principals that school districts must meet in order to receive a state aid increase for 2015-16. While the parameters of the new evaluations are not known at this time, updated regulations and guidelines are expected from the state by June 30. Districts are required to have a new, state-approved evaluation in place by November 15. District leaders fully expect to work in partnership with their teachers and principals to meet the requirements

and receive the aid increase.

What would a 2.38% levy increase do to my tax bill?

School districts establish the tax levy but cannot determine what portion of the tax burden is placed on any one property owner. What will happen to individual tax bills is determined by the tax rate, which cannot be predicted until a number of factors outside the control of the district are determined, such as equalization rates, assessments and STAR exemptions.

How will STAR affect my school taxes?

The New York State School Tax Relief Program provides New York homeowners with partial exemptions from school property taxes. Basic STAR is available for owner-occupied, primary residences where the owners' total income is less than \$500,000, and exempts the first \$30,000 of the full value of a home from school taxes. For qualifying seniors, Enhanced STAR exempts the first \$65,300 of the full value of a home from school taxes. Applications are available from your assessor's office.

Your opinion matters!

MCS invites voters to complete a voluntary, anonymous exit survey after voting on May 19. Your participation helps the district gather feedback and will help inform future budget decisions.

Land Sale Proposal

Residents will vote on a special proposition whether to authorize the sale of district-owned real property consisting of 3.2 acres of vacant land located on Cotton Hill Road (part of Tax Map 106.20-2-11.1).

Bus Proposal

Residents will vote on a special proposition to purchase school buses—three 66-passenger buses (\$337,976) and one van (\$22,024)—at a total cost not to exceed \$360,000.

Ten years is considered to be the useful life of a school bus in New York State, where the use of corrosive materials on snowy and icy roads accelerates rusting in vehicles. As buses age, maintenance cost increase for the district in order for the buses to meet strict NYS DOT standards.

The financing of the buses would be paid through property taxes and would be collected in annual installments for five years. The buses would have an average annual cost of \$16,500 after state aid reimbursement of 77.7 percent on both principal and interest expenses. The estimated cost for taxpayers would be \$5 per year.

BOE elections

On May 19, voters will elect two candidates to the Board of Education to fill the expiring terms of Pamela Standhart and Becky Binder. The three-year term commences with the reorganization meeting in July. There are six candidates running. A random drawing was held to determine the order in which the candidates will appear on the ballot:

- Becky S. Binder
- Doralee Mickle
- Michael A. Parker
- Thomas N. Wargo
- Pamela Standhart
- Laura Arnwine

Middleburgh Central School District Budget Notice

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE: TUESDAY, MAY 19, NOON TO 9 P.M.

| 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 | \$20,424,951 | \$20,765,915 | \$20,546,183 |
| Increase/Decrease for the 2015-2016 School Year | | \$340,964 | \$121,232 |
| Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget | | 1.67% | 0.59% |
| Change in the Consumer Price Index | | 1.62% | |
| A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount | \$9,241,172 | \$9,460,904 | |
| B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable | n/a | n/a | |
| C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable ** | n/a | n/a | |
| D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy | n/a | n/a | |
| E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D) | \$9,241,172 | \$9,460,904 | \$9,241,172 |
| F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit | \$236,799 | \$293,757 | |
| G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions | \$9,004,373 | \$9,167,147 | |
| H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, Excluding Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E - B - F + D) | \$9,004,373 | \$9,167,147 | |
| I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) ** | \$0 | \$0 | |
| Administrative Component | \$1,141,854 | \$1,179,122 | \$1,172,122 |
| Program Component | \$16,300,337 | \$16,552,086 | \$16,454,354 |
| Capital Component | \$2,982,760 | \$3,034,707 | \$2,919,707 |

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)

| Description | Amount |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Bus and van proposal | \$360,000 |
| | |
| | |

**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.*

| | Under the Budget Proposed for the 2014-15 School Year |
|---|---|
| Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹ | \$599 |

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

If voters do not approve the proposed 2015-16 budget within two tries, the board must adopt a contingent budget, which limits the property tax levy increase to zero percent, with no exclusions. As a result, the board would be required to reduce the budget by \$219,732 to \$20,546,183. In addition to these reductions, outside groups would not be able to use the school facilities without paying a usage fee, and the district would be unable to make equipment purchases or capital reserve transfers.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2015-16 by the qualified voters of the Middleburgh Central School District, Schoharie County, New York, will be held in the lobby of the Middleburgh Jr./Sr. High School Gymnasium in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, between the hours of 12 p.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time, at which time the polls will be open to vote by machine. Absentee ballots are available and must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the vote.

School districts are required by New York State law to mail this information to all households within the district. If you would like more information about the budget, please call the superintendent's office at 827-3625 or visit the district website at www.middleburghcsd.org



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Pamela Standhart, *President*
Becky Binder, *Vice President*
Michael Fisher IV
Ernest Kuehl, Jr.
Donald Wood

DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Superintendent of Schools
Michele R. Weaver

Business Manager
Terry Gillooley

School Administrators
Tracy Davidson – Elementary School
Lori Petrosino – Jr/Sr High School
Michael Teator – Jr/Sr High School
Maura Green – DPPS

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**Visit www.middleburghcsd.org
for more budget information**

Voter Information

Who is eligible to vote?

Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age, and a resident of the Middleburgh School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote is eligible.

What should I bring with me on May 19?

Personal identification/proof of residency is required (e.g., driver's license with current address or utility bill showing your name and current address).

Can I vote by using an 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, stop in at the district office, located in the high school, or call 827-3625. If the ballot is to be mailed, the application for the ballot must be received by May 13. If the ballot is to be delivered in person, the application must be received by May 18. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 19.

What if I have questions?

For further information, please call 827-3625 or 827-3620 or visit www.middleburghcsd.org.

**School budget vote day is Tuesday, May 19
from noon to 9 p.m. in the Jr./Sr. gym lobby.**

What about the tax freeze credit?

In 2014, the state legislature passed a two-year Property Tax Credit that would provide a rebate check to eligible homeowners for a portion of school taxes paid if the school district met certain criteria. In the first year of the program, school districts were required to stay within their 2014-15 tax levy cap in order for residents to receive a rebate. Homeowners in Middleburgh Central School District were among those to receive checks last fall. In order for residents to receive a rebate check in the second year of the program, school districts must stay within their 2015-16 tax levy cap and receive state approval for a shared services/ efficiency plan that achieves savings equivalent to 1 percent of the tax levy each year for three years. MCS is putting forth a budget to voters this May that stays within its "tax cap," and the district is currently in the process of preparing its efficiency plan. The completed plan must be submitted to the New York State Education Department by June 1. Pending approval by SED, eligible district homeowners should once again receive a rebate check as part of the "tax freeze" program.