

Schoharie

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER

MAY 2023 BUDGET ISSUE • LEARNING IS THE MISSION • WWW.SCHOHARIESCHOOLS.ORG



District budget highlights

2023-24 Proposed Budget:
\$26,819,862

Budget Change:
\$924,158
3.57%

Tax Levy Change:
\$19,826
0.23%
(Meets the district's
0.23% tax levy limit)

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BUDGET NOTICE

May 16 vote set for 2023-24 budget

Schoharie Central School District residents will vote on a \$26.8 million proposed budget for the 2023-24 school year.

The fiscal plan has an overall increase of 3.57 percent – or \$924,158 – from the current year. Under the fiscal plan, which will be voted on by district residents from noon to 8 p.m., on Tuesday, May 16, the tax levy would change by 0.23 percent. This meets the state mandated tax levy limit, or “tax cap,” and equates to \$19,826 being spread out among all taxable parcels in the district. The tax levy is the overall amount raised throughout the entire district.

A 6.31 percent increase in New York State school aid over what was budgeted for in the current year will help allow the district to enhance student academic services and support, while limiting the overall local tax burden. State aid accounts for about 75 cents of every dollar spent by Schoharie CSD.

Voting will be held in the hallway outside of the Jr./Sr. High School gym, which can be accessed by the set of doors there.

Voters will also select two members of the Schoharie CSD Board of Education; decide on a school bus purchase proposition; and weigh in on a Capital Reserve Fund and support for the Schoharie Free Library. For more on those propositions and the school board election, please see pages 5 and 6.

The proposed budget for 2023-24 includes funding for science kits and

learning materials at the Elementary; math and business learning materials and textbooks at the Jr./Sr. High School; replacing desks at the Jr./Sr. High School; and science equipment at the Jr./Sr. High School.

A Focus on Reading

An elementary librarian and reading teacher are part of the spending plan, and reading will be in focus for the 2023-24 school.

“We have to actively teach kids the importance of reading. Next year, this really has to be the push,” Superintendent David Blanchard said.

At around third grade, students switch from learning to read to reading to learn; and if they haven’t picked up solid foundations in reading, it begins



Budget Q&A

What budget am I voting on?

On May 16, voters will be asked to authorize the total dollar amount of appropriations for the day-to-day activities involved in providing education for all Schoharie students during the 2023-24 school year. The proposed \$26,819,862 budget is a \$924,158 or 3.57 percent, increase from this year's budget.

What is a tax levy limit?

Although often referred to as a "2 percent tax cap," New York's tax levy "cap" law does not restrict any proposed tax levy increase to 2 percent. Under the law, a school district must follow an eight-step formula to calculate its individual "tax levy limit." That limit then determines what level of voter support is required for budget approval.

The law excludes certain portions of a school district's tax levy from the calculation. A district can add these exclusions to its tax levy limit, increasing the amount of taxes the district is allowed to levy while still needing only a simple majority of voters (50 percent plus one) for budget approval.

A proposed tax levy increase above the limit requires budget approval by a super majority of voters (60 percent). Schoharie's proposed budget includes a 0.23 percent tax levy increase, which meets the district's tax levy limit.

How is the tax levy different from a tax rate?

The tax levy is the total amount of money that the district raises from local taxpayers, while the tax rate is the amount of tax residents pay per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

School tax rates are determined in August after the district receives town property assessments and state equalization rates.

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2023-24 proposed budget - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

to show by fourth or fifth grade, he added.

"Reading teaches reasoning and encourages students to have analytical minds," Blanchard said. "The pandemic did play a role in learning loss, but children as a whole are not reading enough. Reading is a skill and you have to practice. We have to get more books in front of more children and demonstrate the benefits of nightly reading - just 20 minutes a day will make a difference."

In terms of other costs, the district is projecting a \$350,000 increase in contractual employee salaries. There is also an anticipated \$217,000 increase in employee health insurance and prescription drug costs. A \$121,000 increase in BOCES services is reflected in the plan.

Additional special education costs over the current year are tied to increased needs for students, particularly in the middle school grades, according to Blanchard. Two new special education positions are included in the proposed budget.

"The district is in a good place now and will be in a better place next year under this proposed budget. Our student enrollment is stable after a pandemic dip, and we are anticipating to be back at pre-pandemic staffing levels," Blanchard said. "We've been building back programs aggressively."

Inflation and Energy Costs

Schoharie CSD developed this proposed budget in a financial landscape where the Consumer Price Index was at 8 percent. It accounts for high energy and other materials and services costs that are expected to continue into the next school year.



We're proud of the examples our students set, whether it is sixth grade students reading stories they wrote about empathy to first graders, above, or seeing Zoey Lints battle to a state wrestling championship, below.



Tax Levy Limit

The tax levy limit, while sometimes referred to as a "2 percent tax cap," is set through a state-mandated formula and can be higher or lower than 2 percent based on the individual circumstances of each district.

This year, Schoharie CSD's state-mandated levy limit is 0.23 percent. The Board of Education is choosing to present a budget that meets this tax levy limit. For nine of the last 10 years, the district has kept the tax levy change under 2 percent (please see the chart on the next page). State aid and operational efficiencies that are under constant review will allow Schoharie CSD to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of our students while keeping the tax levy change under a half of a percentage point.

Because the district is proposing a budget that meets the tax levy limit, only a simple majority of voters - 50 percent plus one - is needed for it to pass. If approved, the budget would go into effect on July 1, 2023.

Capital Project Update: Phase 1 Begins

Phase 1 construction on Schoharie's \$25.9 million capital project approved by voters last May is underway.

This phase of the project includes an overhaul of much of the athletic field and recreational space outside of the school building. Beginning this month there will be limited access to certain area of the grounds.

"It's going to be a process," Superintendent David M. Blanchard said. "It's going to be very active once we become a construction site on a large piece of our property."

The athletic fields adjacent to the Elementary School will be redone with the original grass soccer and baseball fields replaced with synthetic turf. The softball field will be grass. Light towers will be added to the fields and the overall work will lead to greatly expanded opportunities for student-athletes. In addition, the tennis courts will be expanded from four to five separate courts. This work is expected

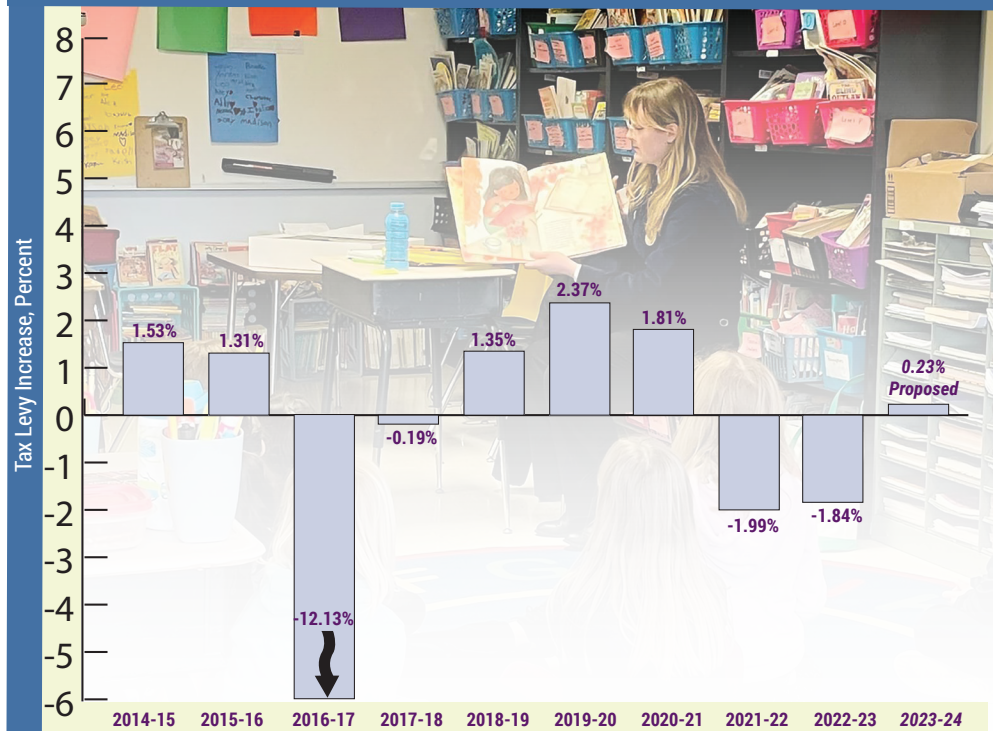


We love our outdoor spaces at Schoharie. They will get a makeover this summer with new turf fields and other amenities.

to be completed in August, ahead of the fall sports season.

Interior work on the school building is not expected to begin until spring 2024. Key components of that phase of the project for the Elementary School include converting the current gym, cafeteria and kitchen area into a full-size gymnasium with a stage at one end. New bathrooms, including some with secure outdoor entrances/exits; renovated locker rooms; roof work and window replacements are also included in the project.

10 Years of Tax Levy Change Data



Budget Q&A

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How can a STAR exemption reduce my school taxes?

Homeowners can reduce their school property taxes through a School Tax Relief (STAR) exemption or rebate. New applicants must apply online for this state tax break (Visit www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/).

How is my tax bill calculated?

Individual school tax bills are calculated using:

- the assessed value of each property (provided by towns);
- equalization rates;
- any applicable exemptions (e.g., STAR); and
- the proportionate share of the tax levy.

Why does the district use BOCES services?

By joining together, school districts are able to secure services through the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) that may be more costly if a district were to purchase the services on its own. Such services include career and technical education, health and safety, public information, special education, instructional technology and support services. Schoharie qualifies for a reimbursement from the state for a percentage of its BOCES expenses in the year following the expenditures.

What happens if the budget is defeated?

If a school district's proposed budget is defeated by voters on May 16, a school board has three options:

- Put the same budget up for a second vote in June.
- Put a revised budget up for a vote in June.
- Adopt a contingent budget.

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Budget Q&A

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What is a contingent budget?

If the Board of Education presents a budget — revised or not — for a second vote and it is defeated, the board must adopt a contingent budget for 2023-24. The contingent budget must include a tax levy amount that is no greater than the tax levy amount set by the Board of Education for 2022-23. Certain expenditures would not be allowed in a contingent budget, such as non-aided purchases of equipment, consumable supplies for students, non-essential maintenance, public use of school facilities (unless user fees are paid) and transfers from the operating budget to other monetary funds. The administrative component of the budget would also be subject to certain restrictions. For 2023-24, the contingent budget would be \$26,597,362.

How can I vote if I can't be there on May 16?

Eligible district residents who are unable to go to the polls on May 16 can cast their votes by absentee ballot. For an application, call the Schoharie Central School District office at (518) 295-6679 or visit the office at 136 Academy Drive, Schoharie. Completed applications must be received by the District Clerk at least seven days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or the day before the election if the ballot is to be delivered personally. Absentee ballots must be received by the District Clerk at the polling place, no later than 5 p.m. on May 16.

What if I have questions about the budget vote?

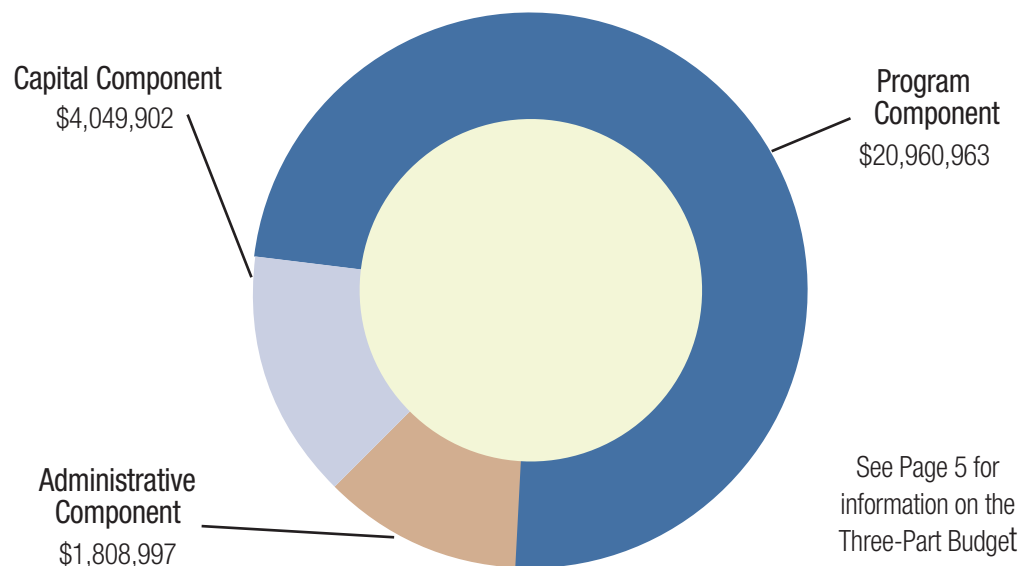
For more information, call the Schoharie Central School District office at (518) 295-6679 or visit the district's website at www.schoharieschools.org.

Budget Revenue: Where does the money come from?

DESCRIPTION	2022-23 BUDGETED	2023-24 PROPOSED BUDGET	% CHANGE YEAR TO YEAR
Miscellaneous Revenues	\$300,200	\$349,401	16.39%
State Aid	\$13,531,609	\$14,384,919	6.31%
Medicaid and Federal Aid	\$75,000	\$75,000	0.00%
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$1,955,132	\$2,017,953	3.21%
School Tax Levy/STAR	\$8,472,763	\$8,492,589	0.23%
Fund Balance Allocation	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	0.00%
Total Revenue	\$25,895,704	\$26,819,862	3.57%

Budget Appropriations: Where does the money go?

DESCRIPTION	2022-23 BUDGETED	2023-24 PROPOSED BUDGET	% CHANGE YEAR TO YEAR
Employee Salaries	\$10,644,379	\$10,786,425	1.33%
Employee Benefits	\$7,253,120	\$7,554,277	4.15%
Debt Service/Fund Transfers	\$2,170,737	\$2,366,781	9.03%
BOCES Costs	\$2,593,058	\$2,731,529	5.34%
All Other Costs	\$3,234,410	\$3,380,850	4.53%
Total Expenses	\$25,895,704	\$26,819,862	3.57%



See Page 5 for information on the Three-Part Budget



Residents to elect three to Board of Education

On May 16, residents will vote to fill two seats on the Board of Education for three-year terms beginning July 1, 2023. The seats are currently held by John Florussen and Laraine Gell, who are running for re-election. Their terms expire June 30, 2023.

The Board is comprised of seven residents who serve overlapping, unpaid terms of three years each. Together, they establish district policies, approve an annual budget proposal, approve or disapprove the superintendent's recommendations on personnel matters and contracts, review courses of study and textbooks, and act as a communication link between residents and the school district. Board of Education candidate information is provided below. They are listed in ballot order.



Amber McDermott-Dickson is seeking her first term on the Schoharie CSD Board of Education. She is a 2003 graduate of the school district and holds an associate's degree from Schenectady County Community College; studied elementary education at SUNY Plattsburgh; and holds a bachelor's degree in business administration from SUNY Cobleskill. She is the co-owner of Mimi's Little Posy Place and has been a florist in Schoharie since May 2022. She also serves as pianist for the Esperance Presbyterian Church and the Esperance-Sloansville United Methodist Church. She has been active in the school community by inviting UPK classes to mail letters to Santa and handed out flowers and goodie bags. She has provided flowers for school concerts and graduation. As a local florist she has donated arrangements to local businesses to brighten their day and share beauty. She is also involved in ministry through church. With her spouse, Eric, she has five children. Adam is in 8th grade; Phoebe is in 6th grade; Sadie is in 3rd grade; Leo is in kindergarten; and her youngest child is Heidi, who is 2.



Laraine Gell is seeking re-election to the Schoharie CSD Board of Education. She holds a master's degree in counseling psychology from Teachers College, Columbia University and a bachelor's degree in philosophy from the University of New Hampshire. She has worked as a high school counselor for the last 24 years, 19 of which have been at Ravena-Coeymans-Selkirk High School. She advises young people through academic, personal and college admissions counseling. She works cooperatively with students, family and administrators to serve students through important decision-

making years. Outside of her professional career, she served as a member of the EPTSO for nine years and spent five years as secretary. She has served six years as a school board member. With her spouse, Barry, she has two children who attend Schoharie CSD. Jesse is a senior and Annabel is in 10th grade. She is an assistant coach for her daughter's softball team.



John Florussen is seeking re-election to the Schoharie CSD Board of Education. He attended Springwood State High School in Queensland, Australia; holds a bachelor's degree in film and TV production from Queensland College of Art; holds a master's degree in English from SUNY Albany. He is employed at Capital Region BOCES, where he manages science instructional materials, non-public textbook loans and the inter-library courier service. In addition to his service as a school board member, he contributes to Schoharie Friends of Fine Arts and the Schoharie Sports Booster Club. He

presented on Australian history and culture at "We are Schoharie Fest." Outside of his contributions to the school community, he is a member of the Gallupville House Association and is a volunteer performer at Lily Park Beverage Fair. He and his spouse, Heidi, have three children who attend Schoharie CSD. Noah is in 8th grade; Kieran is in 6th grade; and Gabriel is in 4th grade.

Three-Part Budget

New York state requires school districts to present budgets in three parts. The proposed 2023-24 Schoharie Central School District budget to be voted on May 16 includes the following:

Program Budget

\$20,960,963 – The salaries and benefits of all certified faculty and staff, teacher aides, monitors and nurses. Also included are in-service training, library costs, transportation, co-curricular programs and interscholastic athletics.

Capital Budget

\$4,049,902 – Debt service on building additions and renovations, bus purchases, property assessment challenges and court-ordered costs, and operations/maintenance costs, including staff.

Administrative Budget

\$1,808,997 – The salaries and benefits of all professional staff members who spend 50 percent or more of their time in administration, finance and supervision. Also included are clerical staff, public information, curriculum development and supervision, research, planning and evaluation, legal services, and school board-related costs.

District residents may vote on the proposed 2023-24 budget, Board of Education candidates and the bus purchase, Schoharie Free Library tax levy and capital reserve propositions from noon to 8 p.m. on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 in the hallway outside the Schoharie Jr./Sr. High School gym.

Ballot Propositions

Residents of Schoharie CSD will be asked to decide on the following propositions at the voting booth from noon to 8 p.m., Tuesday, May 16.

Proposition 1 - If approved, would authorize the Board of Education to expend the sum of \$26,819,862, for the 2023-24 school year. (See Page 1.)

Proposition 2 - If approved, would authorize the purchase two 66-passenger buses, two 24-passenger buses, and a 7-passenger vehicle in an amount not to exceed \$545,000.

Proposition 3 - If approved, would increase the Schoharie Free Library tax levy from \$106,000 to \$126,000.

Proposition 4 - If approved, would authorize the Board of Education to establish a Capital Reserve Fund for the purpose of financing the local share of capital projects and of general improvements, renovations or additions to the Schoharie Central School District, including site work and the acquisition of original furnishings, equipment, machinery and apparatus for the purpose for which such buildings are used.

The amount of the fund shall not exceed \$2.5 million and would be drawn from available fund balance. The duration of the fund shall not exceed 10 years.

Residents to vote on bus purchase proposition

A proposition on the May 16 ballot will ask voters to consider authorizing the purchase of five replacement school buses/other vehicles—two 66-passenger buses, two 24-passenger buses and a 7-passenger vehicle in an amount not to exceed \$545,000.

If the bus purchase proposition is approved, the district would receive approximately 75 percent of the purchase price in state aid.

The school district would use its Transportation Capital Reserve Fund to purchase the buses, resulting in no additional cost to taxpayers.

Why does the district purchase buses every school year?

The proposed bus purchases are part of an ongoing bus replacement plan designed to ensure students are transported on buses that meet the latest safety standards. The plan also allows the district to trade in or phase out older, high-mileage vehicles to avoid the cost inefficiencies related to keeping them in service.

What about the new state requirement that school districts transition to electric buses?

The state budget adopted in April requires all new school bus purchases to be 'zero emission' by 2027, and all school buses in use be 'zero emission' by 2035. Schoharie CSD will begin incorporating this requirement into its planning when it receives more guidance from the state. The Energy Performance Project also on the ballot will help the district as it moves to meet the new requirements. The buses that would be purchased under this proposition would not be electric buses.



Library funding sought for Schoharie Free Library

New York State Education Law allows libraries to place a funding proposition on school district ballots and requires school districts, at the libraries' request, to levy and collect taxes for libraries. The amount of the tax levy collected by a school district for a library remains the same each year until the library requests a proposition to change that amount.

On May 16, Schoharie CSD residents will be asked to vote on a proposition to increase the annual tax levy for the Schoharie Free Library Association from \$106,000 to \$126,000. If the proposition is approved, Schoharie Central School District would annually levy and collect taxes in the new amount for the library beginning in the 2023-24 fiscal year.

Taxes levied for the Schoharie Free Library go directly to the library to fund services provided to Schoharie Central School District residents. The library is a separate legal entity with its own funding and budget. The amount authorized for library services is listed as a separate line on tax bills.

Capital Reserve Fund is on the May 16 ballot

The Schoharie CSD Board of Education will ask voters to approve the creation of a Capital Reserve Fund using available fund balance from the district. The amount of the fund shall not exceed \$2.5 million. The duration of the fund shall not exceed 10 years. The establishment of the fund will not impact the district's tax levy.

SCS recognizes Class of 2023's top students

Morgan Phelan Phelan has been named the valedictorian of Schoharie Jr./Sr. High School's Class of 2023. Morgan is the daughter of Katherine and Andrew Phelan and has attended Schoharie Central School since kindergarten.

Morgan is active in school extracurriculars as Class of 2023 treasurer, National Honor Society president, Key Club president, Varsity Club president, and a member of the select choir. She has been a dedicated member of the Girls' Varsity Soccer Team since 8th grade and was named a captain in her senior year. Morgan was named Western Athletic Conference (WAC) 1st team soccer All-Star and a Section 2 All-Star.

Morgan has also participated in school musicals throughout her time at Schoharie. She has performed in "Shrek," "Newsies," "Once Upon a Mattress," "The Little Mermaid," and "Catch Me if You Can." Outside of school, Morgan has been participating in travel soccer since she was eight years old. She also enjoys swimming competitively, and spends her summers life guarding and instructing swim lessons at the local pool.

After high school, Morgan plans to go to college and major in engineering. She also plans to study abroad. Morgan would like to thank her parents and teachers for supporting and contributing to her success.

Alyssia Bleau has been named salutatorian of Schoharie Jr./Sr. High School's Class of 2023. She has attended Schoharie Central School since she was in kindergarten. Alyssia is the daughter of James Bleau and Amber Bleau-Green, the sister of Alexis Bleau, and now the aunt to Asmerelda Bleau.

While outside of school, Alyssia prefers to spend her time outdoors. She has been skiing through Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, and Canada since she was eight years old. She tends to find herself skiing through the double black trees to try to challenge herself. During the summertime, Alyssia is out hiking, mountain biking, and camping. She has participated in varsity soccer since she was in 9th grade as the right outside defender. On Wednesdays and Sundays, she spends some of her time at Life Church with her friends.

After high school, Alyssia plans to attend a university to pursue a double major in Financial Analysis and Business. After graduating she plans to move to either Utah or New Hampshire and have a family of her own.

Alyssia would like to thank her parents and step-parents for constantly supporting her throughout her entire life. She would also like to give a huge thanks to all of her teachers while she has been at Schoharie. These teachers never gave up and continuously pushed her to become the best student she could be.



Energy Costs

Much like in a household, the cost of heat and power play an important role in how school districts plan and manage their budgets.

In planning next year's budget, Schoharie CSD had to account for continued high energy prices and inflation in general. As an example, the cost of a gallon of diesel in March 2023 declined about 90 cents per gallon from March 2022, but it is still up 34 percent from March 2021, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Not only have gas, diesel and other energy costs remained high, but the future cost to schools and households are impossible to predict. This is because of factors such as market volatility and uncertainty surrounding global events, as well as not knowing if it will be a cold or mild winter.

As families know, spending more in one area could mean there is less money to spend elsewhere. In the case of the school budget, it is important to avoid a situation where energy cost increases affect programs and services for students. For this reason, the school district is accounting for high energy costs for next year.

In addition to planning for the future, energy cost increases have already impacted the district's finances. The budget proposal reflects that reality as well. All of this is part of being prepared for some uncertainty while continuing to prioritize student programs and services.



BOARD of EDUCATION

Terry Burton, *President*

Daniel Guasp, *Vice President*

Tara Barton

John Florussen

Laraine Gell

Lance Hellstrom

Lynda Lewandowski

David M. Blanchard,
Superintendent of Schools

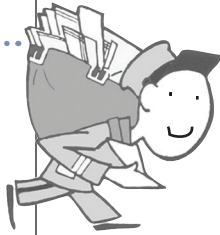
David J. Baroody,
Business Administrator

*Produced in cooperation with the
Capital Region BOCES
Communications Service.*

Schoharie

Central School District

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Schoharie Central School District Budget Notice			
	Budget Adopted for the 2022-23 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-24 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$25,895,704	\$26,819,862	\$26,597,362
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$924,158	\$701,658
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.57%	2.71%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$8,472,763	\$8,492,589	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$8,472,763	\$8,492,589	\$8,472,763
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$179,103	\$0	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$8,293,660	\$8,492,589	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/ or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$8,293,660	\$8,492,589	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$1,814,610	\$1,808,997	\$1,808,997
Program Component	\$20,285,207	\$20,960,963	\$20,890,963
Capital Component	\$3,795,887	\$4,049,902	\$3,897,402
* If the Board of Education must adopt a contingent budget for 2023-24, the following non-mandatory items in the proposed budget would need to be modified: equipment purchases that are not aided by New York State Aid; non-essential minor maintenance; personal supplies for students; use of facilities by outside entities (unless user fees are paid); local subsidy of the food service program. Also, the administrative budget component cannot exceed that of the previous year, and the tax levy cannot exceed the amount of the previous school year.			
**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	
	Purchase of School Transportation Vehicles	\$545,000	
	Schoharie Free Library Levy	\$126,000	
	New Capital Reserve Fund	\$2,500,000	
		Under the Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year	
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹		\$571.00	

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Schoharie CSD, Schoharie County, New York, will be held at Schoharie Jr./Sr. HS in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 between the hours of noon and 8 pm, prevailing time in the Schoharie school(s), 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.