

C u r r e n t s

LEARNING BY ALL

2005-06 BUDGET STRUGGLES TO PRESERVE PROGRAMS WHILE FIXED COSTS JUMP

▼ BUDGET AND SCHOOL SECURITY PROPOSITION TO BE DECIDED BY THE COMMUNITY ON MAY 17

Rising costs for state-mandated employee pensions, health insurance, transportation and fuel are eating a hole in the Cohoes City Schools' 2005-06 budget.

After weeks of reviewing budget figures, the Board of Education has approved two proposals to be considered by the community on May 17:

- \$29,288,488 budget for the 2005-06 school year. Spending in the proposed budget is up by 3.36% or \$953,086 over the current budget.
- \$725,000 school security proposition.

If approved, taxes for both propositions would increase by 7.75% – 5.5% for the budget and 2.25% for the school security proposition. Nearly two-thirds of the cost of the proposition would be paid by the state.

For the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000, taxes would rise by an estimated:

- \$149 per year or \$12.42 per month for the budget *before* calculating the STAR savings (*see story, page 3*);
- \$60.39 per year or \$5.03 per month for the security proposition *before* calculating the STAR savings (*see story, page 3*).

The Board of Education sets final tax rates in July.

BUDGET HAS BEEN CUT BY \$750,000

To ease the tax increase, the Board of Education has agreed to approximately \$750,000 in budget reductions, including the

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Grade 6 students Salaam Knight, left, and Kevin Hume, both students in Debbie Wood's English Language Arts class, catch up on some reading and writing in the Middle School library.

What will I consider May 17?

- \$29,288,488 budget for 2005-06:
The plan would increase spending by 3.36% and taxes by an estimated 5.5%
- \$725,000 School Security Proposition
The district would install cameras, door alarms and other measures to keep students and staff safe (see page 3). 61.2% would be paid by the state; local taxpayers would pay the difference. That would add 2.25% to the tax increase.

Tax increase for both proposals: 7.75%

- Selection of two candidates for the Board of Education:

Christopher Briggs and Ann Marie Hume are unopposed for re-election to three-year terms on the Board of Education.

Voting will be held in three new voting districts. Their boundaries are the same as the three elementary attendance zones

(see page 4).

Noon to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17

FOR SCHOOL INFORMATION, VISIT THE DISTRICT WEB SITE AT WWW.COHOES.ORG



SCHOOL DISTRICTS ARE REQUIRED BY THE STATE TO SHOW THEIR PROPOSED BUDGETS IN THREE CATEGORIES: ADMINISTRATIVE, PROGRAM AND CAPITAL:

PROGRAM

This part of the budget includes the salaries and benefits of all teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, social workers, etc., materials, contracted services, library costs, in-service training and pupil transportation.

2005-06 costs \$20,479,771
(69.9% of budget)

CAPITAL

This part of the budget includes repairs to buildings, debt service, tax certiorari and court-ordered costs, operations and maintenance costs, such as salaries and benefits of janitorial staff.

2005-06 costs \$5,215,126
(17.8% of budget)

ADMINISTRATIVE

This part of the budget includes general administrative costs, such as central administration, principals, secretaries, tax collection and Board of Education expenses.

2005-06 costs \$3,593,591
(12.3% of budget)

PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	2004-05 Budgeted	2005-06 Estimated Budget	% change from 04-05 to 05-06	\$ change from 04-05 to 05-06
General Support	\$3,756,264	\$3,894,706	3.69%	\$138,442
Instructional	\$15,489,329	\$15,521,333	0.21%	\$32,004
Public Transportation	\$682,192	\$765,680	12.24%	\$83,488
Recreation	\$1,300	\$1,500	15.38%	\$200
Census	\$4,500	\$0	-100.00%	-\$4,500
Employee benefits	\$5,934,637	\$6,708,488	13.04%	\$773,851
Debt service	\$2,433,180	\$2,362,781	-2.89%	-\$70,399
Interfund transfers	\$34,000	\$34,000	0%	\$0
Total expenditures	\$28,335,402*	\$29,288,488	3.36%	\$953,086

*The budget adopted for the 2004-05 school year includes a budget amendment of \$727,158 for state mandated retirement system payments.

PROJECTED REVENUES	2004-05 Budgeted	2005-06 Estimated Budget	% change from 04-05 to 05-06	\$ change from 04-05 to 05-06
Property taxes	\$10,399,270	\$11,055,007	6.31%	\$655,737
Other tax items	\$915,500	\$915,500	0%	\$0
Consumer utility tax	\$565,000	\$565,000	0%	\$0
Charges for services	\$269,890	\$275,025	1.9%	\$5,135
Use of money and property	\$93,000	\$93,000	0%	\$0
Sale of property	\$26,000	\$26,000	0%	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$194,703	\$194,703	0%	\$0
Interfund revenues	\$45,000	\$45,000	0%	\$0
State aid	\$14,157,039	\$14,769,253	4.32%	\$612,214
Federal aid	\$425,000	\$450,000	5.88%	\$25,000
Fund balance	\$1,245,000	\$900,000	-27.71%	-\$345,000
Total revenues	\$28,335,402	\$29,288,488	3.36%	\$953,086

COHOES CURRENTS

SPENDING PLAN KEEPS LID ON COSTS, FROM PAGE 1

elimination of up to 15 full-time positions and significant cuts in supplies and equipment.

Superintendent Charles Detrick said increases in fixed costs put a difficult burden on city schools. Tax bases in city schools do not tend to produce a large amount of new tax revenue each year. While the tax base in Cohoes has improved, costs have climbed faster.

Four areas account for major increases in spending: mandated teacher retirement system payments are up by \$1 million or 337%; energy costs are up by \$172,421 or 35%; health insurance costs are up by \$428,012 or 12.8%; and special education transportation costs have climbed by \$105,010 or 22.69%.

In addition, Title I funding from the federal government has been cut by \$100,000 or 15%. An increase in state aid – \$612,214 – has helped ease the cost increases a bit, said Detrick.

CONTINGENCY BUDGET WOULD REQUIRE DEEPER CUTS

He also noted that a contingency budget – required if the budget were defeated twice – would require a \$100,000 reduction to comply with the state's 3.24% spending cap. That reduction would shave 1% off of the tax increase.

As well, public use of all school facilities and grounds by non-school groups would be eliminated, he added. ●

WHAT IS IN THE SCHOOL SECURITY PROPOSAL ON MAY 17?

The \$725,000 proposition on the ballot May 17 will pay for a variety of items to keep your children and grandchildren safe at school. About 61.2 percent or \$442,183 of the proposal will be reimbursed to the district through state aid.

The proposition includes:

- 15 added cameras at high school, middle school and three elementary schools for a total of 80 cameras;
- Alarms will be placed on all doors. If a person leaves the school after the doors are locked, the alarm will sound to let administrators know someone has left;
- Hand-held metal detectors to be used at special events, like sporting games or concerts, as needed.
- Security staff to be used throughout the district.
- An emergency notification system to alert parents of problems that may arise, such as weather issues.
- An 800 number hot line to be used by residents, parents and students to report suspicious activity.

"These are important additions to our current school safety program," said Superintendent Chuck Detrick. "We are doing our best to keep everyone safe and this project will help immensely."

About 61% or \$442,183 of the cost of the proposition would be paid by the state.

Local taxpayers would pay the difference. That would mean a tax increase of \$60.39 per year or \$5.03 per month for the typical homeowner with a \$100,000 assessment. ●

STAR SAVINGS TO CONTINUE FOR HOMEOWNERS

Cohoes city residents who applied for the state's STAR school property tax reduction program will again receive a reduction on their 2005-06 bills.

Residents who applied for the Basic STAR exemption will pay taxes on \$27,930 less than their home's actual assessment.

For instance, the owner of a home assessed at \$80,000 will pay taxes on a \$52,070 assessment.

STAR savings depends on the final tax rate set by the Board of Education in July.

Many Cohoes homeowners older than age 65 with incomes of less than \$60,000 per year have also received "Enhanced" STAR savings since 1998.

Homeowners with the Enhanced STAR savings will pay taxes on \$46,550 less than their home's assessment.

Because of this, many Cohoes families eligible for the Enhanced STAR program will continue to pay no school property taxes next year.

While it is too late to sign up for STAR for the 2005-06 school bills due this fall, the deadline to apply for the 2006-07 school tax bills is March 1, 2006.

Call the Cohoes city assessor's office at 233-2112 for more information. ●

BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBERS ARE UNOPPOSED FOR RE-ELECTION

In addition to considering the 2005-06 school district budget and school security proposition, community members will also elect two members to the seven-member Board of Education. The incumbents are running unopposed.

Each is seeking re-election to a three-year term. The candidates are:

- **Christopher Briggs**, who is seeking a third term
- **Ann Marie Hume**, who is seeking a second term

Board members are unpaid. ●

AM I ELIGIBLE TO VOTE ON MAY 17?

Only qualified school district residents who are registered are permitted to vote in school district elections.

To be eligible, you must be a U.S. citizen, at least age 18 and a resident of the Cohoes City School District for at least 30 days preceding the vote date.

For information, call the district clerk at 237-0100 ext. 2362. ●

NEW VOTING DISTRICTS IN EFFECT FOR MAY 17 VOTE

As detailed in the Spring Currents newsletter, the Board of Education has consolidated voting districts. There are now three and they are the same as the elementary voting zones. Voting will NO LONGER BE HELD at the Middle School or High School.

Here are the three voting locations for voting in the May 17 budget, school safety proposition and Board of Education vote:

- **Abram Lansing Elementary School**
26 James Street
- **Harmony Hill Elementary School**
Madelon K. Hickey Way
- **Van Schaick Grade School**
150 Continental Avenue

The new voting boundaries, which parallel the elementary school zones, are listed on the district's Website: www.Cohoes.org.

Anyone unsure of their voting location may call Kathy Twiss, Tara Dessingue or Robert Libby at the Cohoes Schools' Business Office, 237-0100 extension 3 or Michele Smith in the attendance office at 237-0100 ext. 2299. ●

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Absentee ballots are available for community members who will not be able to vote at their regular polling locations on May 17. Please call the district clerk at 237-0100 extension 2362 for more information. ●

PLEASE EXERCISE
YOUR RIGHT TO
VOTE!

2005-06 DISTRICT
BUDGET, SCHOOL
SECURITY
PROPOSITION AND
BOARD OF
EDUCATION VOTE

POLLS ARE OPEN
NOON TO 9 P.M.
ON TUESDAY,
MAY 17

Superintendent of Schools
Charles S. Dedrick - 237-0100 ●

**Assistant Superintendent
for Business & Operations**
Robert K. Libby - 237-0100 ●

**Assistant Superintendent
for Educational Services**
Peggy O'Shea - 237-0100 ●

Director of Special Programs
Karen Kemp - 237-0990 ●

Board of Education
Christopher Briggs, *President* ●
Jeff Bradt, *Vice President* ●
Patrick Butler ●
Anne Marie Hume ●
Walter Kolakowski ●
Steve Lackmann ●
V. Mark Pascale ●

Currents Editor - Robert Hanlon ●

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