

Currents
LEARNING BY ALL

2006-07 BUDGET TIGHTENS SPENDING IN THE FACE OF RISING COSTS

▼ BUDGET, BUILDING MAINTENANCE PROPOSITION TO BE DECIDED BY THE COMMUNITY ON MAY 16

Rising costs for heating fuel, employee benefits and testing are driving virtually the entire spending increase in the proposed Cohoes City Schools' 2006-07 budget.

The proposed budget totals \$30.7 million, a 1.18 million or 4 percent increase over this year's \$29.52 million budget.

The budget carries an estimated *maximum* increase of 7.69% in the tax rate.

For the typical home in Cohoes assessed at \$100,000, that means a *maximum* increase of \$223 per year or \$18.58 per month before reductions from the state's STAR program.

Two areas of spending – instruction and employee benefits – account for \$1.11 million of the proposed spending increase in next year's budget. Spending declined in the areas of general support and public transportation.

"While this has been a very difficult budget year at Cohoes, we've been able to keep our spending increase at the state-recommended cap of 4 percent," said Superintendent Charles Dedrick.

He pointed to these areas as representing other large spending increases in the budget:

- **Heating fuel** – costs are expected to climb 42.5 percent from \$221,124 this year to an estimated \$315,000 next year;
- **Electric costs** – costs are expected to climb 7.8 percent from \$349,473 this year to an estimated \$376,800 next year. That includes savings from the energy

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Blake Smith, left, and Bryan Thieu, both in Linda Murray's grade 3 class at Lansing Elementary, create designs that would become mini tiles. The "Showcasing Arts and Enrichment" program – through the Capital Region BOCES – helped Lansing and the Middle School students discover the value and excitement of the arts.

What will I consider May 16?

✓ **\$30,703,642 budget for 2006-07:**

The plan would increase spending by 4.0% and taxes by a maximum of 7.69%

✓ **\$9 million Building Maintenance Proposition**

Repairs and improvements would be made at all schools. The project is summarized on page 3.

State aid would pay for at least 93% of the project; local taxpayers would be responsible for paying 7%. That local cost will be covered by the district's recent energy savings project.

✓ **Selection of two candidates for the Board of Education:**

Patrick Butler and Steve Lackmann are unopposed for re-election to three-year terms on the Board of Education.

Voting districts are the same as the three elementary attendance zones

(see page 4).

Noon to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, May 16

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.

2006-07 costs \$21,677,065
(71% 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.

2006-07 costs \$5,595,415
(18% 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.

2006-07 costs \$3,431,162
(11% of budget)

PROJECTED EXPENDITURES	2005-06 <i>Budgeted</i>	2006-07 <i>Estimated Budget</i>	% change from <i>05-06 to 06-07</i>	\$ change from <i>05-06 to 06-07</i>
General support*	\$4,121,217	\$4,119,485	-0.04%	-\$1,732
Instructional	\$15,486,991	\$16,243,299	4.88%	\$756,308
Public transportation	\$765,680	\$760,253	-0.71%	-\$5,427
Recreation	\$1,500	\$1,500	0%	\$0
Community service	\$0	\$0	0%	\$0
Employee benefits	\$6,751,319	\$7,106,000	5.25%	\$354,681
Debt service	\$2,362,781	\$2,431,105	2.89%	\$68,324
Interfund transfers	\$34,000	\$42,000	23.53%	\$8,000
Total expenditures	\$29,523,488	\$30,703,642	4.0%	\$1,180,154

*The district is in the third year of a three-year equipment (copier) lease.

PROJECTED REVENUES	2005-06 <i>Budgeted</i>	2006-07 <i>Estimated Budget</i>	% change from <i>05-06 to 06-07</i>	\$ change from <i>05-06 to 06-07</i>
Property taxes	\$11,290,007	\$12,193,614	8.0%	\$903,607
Other tax items	\$915,500	\$828,700	-9.48%	-\$86,800
Consumer utility tax	\$565,000	\$621,000	9.91%	\$56,000
Charges for services	\$275,025	\$227,025	-17.45%	-\$48,000
Use of money and property	\$93,000	\$93,000	0%	\$0
Sale of property	\$26,000	\$26,000	0%	\$0
Miscellaneous	\$194,703	\$257,703	32.36%	\$63,000
Interfund revenues	\$45,000	\$45,000	0%	\$0
State aid	\$14,769,253	\$15,357,000	3.98%	\$587,747
Federal aid	\$450,000	\$454,600	1.02%	\$4,600
Fund balance	\$900,000	\$600,000	-33.33%	-\$300,000
Total revenues	\$29,523,488	\$30,703,642	4.0%	\$1,180,154

BUDGET TIGHTENS SPENDING, FROM PAGE 1

conservation project begun by the district this year.

■ **Health insurance** costs have climbed 10.8 percent from this year's \$3,772,998 to a projected \$4,180,820; and

■ **Testing costs.** During this school year, under provisions of the federal No Child Left Behind legislation, children in grades 3-8 took standardized tests. Including the cost of substitutes needed so teachers can grade the tests, it works out to \$18-\$25 per child per test.

PROPOSED BUDGET IS CLOSE TO SPENDING CAPS UNDER A CONTINGENCY BUDGET

After months of trimming expenditures, the Board of Education adopted a budget that is very close the level required for a contingency budget.

If the budget were defeated twice, the board is required to adopt a contingency budget. That budget would require a spending reduction of \$3,876 to comply with the state's 4.0% spending cap.

The estimated tax increase with a contingency budget would be 7.66 percent. That translates to a tax increase of \$222 for the owner of a typical \$100,000 home in Cohoes.

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

WHAT IS IN THE BUILDING MAINTENANCE PLAN ON MAY 16?

The \$9 million proposition on the ballot May 16 will pay for a variety of improvements at every district building.

At least 93 percent of the spending would be reimbursed through state aid. The remaining 7 percent would be paid by savings from the energy conservation program, begun this year, and through a new state aid for city schools.

Many of the items in need of replacement are inefficient to operate, costly to maintain and have outlived their intended useful life. For example, the following items are original to their respective buildings

- Three 39-year-old boilers at Cohoes High School;
- Four water heaters, also at CHS;
- Roofs at the 19-year-old Harmony Hill School; and
- 11 classrooms at the 75-year-old Van Schaick Grade School.

Items that have outlived their useful life include:

- Portions of the CHS roof; and
- Cohoes Middle School roofs.

In addition, the project includes items such as gym and stage upgrades and replacing the playground at Abram Lansing; roof replacement and classroom modernizations at Harmony Hill; gymnasium and stage upgrades at Van Schaick; boiler replacements at the Middle School; and gymnasium, cafeteria and music/chorus room upgrades at the High School. ●

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 2006-07 bills.

Residents who applied for the Basic STAR exemption will pay taxes on \$26,530 less than their home's actual assessment.

For instance, the owner of a home assessed at \$100,000 will pay taxes on a \$73,470 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 \$50,240 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 2006-07 school bills due this fall, the deadline to apply for the 2007-08 school tax bills is March 1, 2007.

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 2006-07 school district budget and building maintenance 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:

- **Patrick Butler**, who is seeking a fourth term
- **Steve Lackmann**, who is seeking a third term

Board members are unpaid. ●

AM I ELIGIBLE TO VOTE ON MAY 16?

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. ●

REMINDER – MAY 16, 2006 VOTING DISTRICTS ARE THE SAME AS ELEMENTARY ATTENDANCE ZONES

For the second consecutive year, election districts are identical to elementary attendance zones (there are no polling places at the middle school or high school).

Voting will be held at:

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

The voting boundaries are listed on the district's website: www.Cohoes.org.

Anyone unsure of their voting location may call Tara Dessingue, Kathy Twiss or Robert Libby at the Cohoes City School District's 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 16. Please call the district clerk at 237-0100 extension 2362 for more information. ●

**PLEASE EXERCISE
YOUR RIGHT TO
VOTE!**

**2006-07 DISTRICT
BUDGET, BUILDING
MAINTENANCE
PROPOSITION AND
BOARD OF
EDUCATION VOTE**

**POLLS ARE OPEN
NOON TO 9 P.M.
ON TUESDAY,
MAY 16**

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
Jeff Bradt, *President* ●
V. Mark Pascale, *Vice President* ●

Christopher Briggs ●
Patrick Butler ●

Anne Marie Hume ●
Walter Kolakowski ●
Steve Lackmann ●

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