

NEWS *from* Port Jervis

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Projected tax levy increase 5.5 percent

School budget vote May 16

On May 16, Port Jervis City School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a \$50,049,514 proposed budget for the 2006-07 school year. This represents a 6.4 percent spending increase over last year's budget, and a 5.5 percent tax levy increase – almost 27 percent lower than last year's proposed tax levy increase of 32 percent.

Residents will also vote on a \$483,700 bus purchase proposition and will elect three members to the Board of Education.

What did the district do to keep costs as low as possible?

"In order to keep the budget increase as low as possible, we eliminated unnecessary spending by evaluating our programs' effectiveness and looking at the district's needs," said Assistant Superintendent for Business Lorelei Case.

Underutilized programs such as after-school busing for alternative education, Orange/Ulster BOCES Audio/Video Repair services, Youth in Government, BOCES Alternative Education at the middle school, the JASON project, media library, and senior enrichment will be eliminated next year.

In addition, several positions – left vacant by retirement or resignation – will not be filled. This includes the positions for Assistant Superintendent for Pupil Personnel Services, administrative secretary, technology teacher, special education teacher, elementary teacher, and three support staff positions.

"Basically it came down to asking ourselves, 'Is this position necessary?' If it was determined that a particular program or position wasn't essential to maintaining student achievement, it was cut," said Case.

Why did the budget increase?

The increase over this current year's

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Students in Mrs. Elke O'Connell's seventh grade Social Studies classes create commemorative plates in observance of the United Nations' Holocaust Remembrance Day.

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Voting information

Who may vote?

You may vote if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, have been a district resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote, and are registered with either the school district or the county Board of Elections.

Voting by absentee ballot?

Absentee ballots are available if you are unable to vote in person because you are ill, plan to be away on vacation or business, are confined to prison due to conviction of an offense other than a felony, or are accompanying a spouse, parent, or child of the same residence who can't come to the polls for one of the above reasons.

You can obtain an absentee ballot by calling District Clerk Michele O'Donnell at 858-3175. Legally, ballots cannot be mailed after May 9. You may get a ballot in person until May 15 at the district office. Absentee ballots must reach the District's Clerk Office no later than 5 p.m. on election day, May 16.

District looks to restore items to educational programs

Instructional items, co-curricular activities will address students' needs

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Registration information

If you are registered to vote in general elections, you are automatically eligible to vote in school elections. If you are not registered, you can obtain a registration form at the district office or at any district school.

The last day for voter registration is May 10.

For more details, call District Clerk Michele O'Donnell at 858-3175.

budget is being driven by rising costs for fuel, heat and electricity, as well as special education services and mandatory contributions to employee pensions and health insurance premiums. These rising prices are increasing the 2006-07 budget by more than \$3 million.

"Any homeowner can identify with skyrocketing utility prices," said Case.

"Unfortunately, these costs are unavoidable – the homeowner must compensate for the additional expenses, and a school district must do the same."

"The only way to freeze rising costs for employee benefits is to cut a number of teacher and staff positions, which would result in a loss of educational and co-curricular programs and an inflation in class sizes," she said.

What's new for 2006-07?

Keeping in mind last May's budget defeat, administrators and the members of the Board of Education worked to present a budget that addresses the educational needs of students while keeping costs as low as possible.

The district is looking to add two full-time technology employees in order to replace three part-time BOCES posi-

Three-part budget comparison

	2005-06 Budget	2006-07 Budget
ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET		
General Support	1,063,227	1,178,709
Building Administration	2,315,078	2,235,194
Employee Benefits	1,175,353	1,089,809
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET	4,553,658	4,503,712
PROGRAM BUDGET		
Regular Instruction	14,179,111	14,943,762
Special Education	9,395,633	9,882,693
Instructional Support	3,141,977	3,384,562
Pupil Activities	456,644	508,368
Transportation	2,524,532	2,616,978
Employee Benefits	8,965,666	9,751,007
TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	38,663,563	41,087,370
CAPITAL BUDGET		
Operations and Maintenance	2,392,181	3,008,079
Debt and Legal	774,000	771,921
Employee Benefits	618,154	678,432
TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET	3,784,335	4,458,432
GRAND TOTAL	47,001,556	50,049,514

The proposed budget represents a 6.4 percent increase over last year's budget and a 5.5 percent projected increase in the tax levy.

tions. Revamping the three part-time BOCES positions into two full-time in-house positions will save the district approximately \$30,000.

If the budget is approved, full-day kindergarten will be instated next year. The full-day program will replace the district's current half-day program – but at no additional cost to the taxpayers. (Read more about the full-day kindergarten program on page 3).

The district also proposes to return certain services lost when the district adopted a contingency budget for the 2005-06 school year. This includes junior varsity sports,

summer school, the summer music program, and the Footings after-school program at Anna S. Kuhl Elementary School.

"The district has analyzed items that were eliminated in the wake of last May's budget defeat, and decided to add back what was determined critical to our students' educational needs," said Interim Superintendent John Xanthis.

"As a whole, the proposed budget was developed to maintain the quality of our educational programs while striving to preserve student achievement," he said.

On the Ballot

School Bus Proposition

In addition to the budget vote, members of the Port Jervis community will vote on a separate proposition to purchase six 65-passenger buses for the Transportation Department's fleet.

The cost of the six buses is approximately \$483,700, which will be spread over five years with no tax impact for the 2006-07 school year. The district will receive approximately \$409,440 in aid toward the purchase. This means that the total cost will be \$74,260 over five years, or **\$2,475 per bus per year.**

"The district will receive a large amount of state aid toward the bus purchase, with six new buses costing less than \$2,500 each

per year," said Assistant Superintendent for Business Lorelei Case.

"Presently, the district pays more than \$18,000 per year to maintain and repair the buses that we are looking to replace."

The new buses will replace two buses that are unusable because of high maintenance costs as well as damage from last spring's flood. The other four buses will replace vehicles that have extensive body damage because of age and exposure to the elements. (See bus referendum on page 4).

School Board Election

Residents will vote to elect three members to the Board of Educa-

tion. Three candidates will be elected for three-year terms starting July 1 to succeed Cathy Sadaghiani, Mike Bello, and Dawn Eickmeyer, whose terms expire on June. 30.

The Board of Education candidates were unavailable at the time this newsletter was printed. The candidates will be listed in the Gazette newspaper, as well as on the district website at www.portjerviscsd.k12.ny.us.



District proposes full-day kindergarten program for 2006-07

The district is recommending the addition of full-day kindergarten to its educational programs next year. The addition of this program will be of no expense to taxpayers.

In order to avoid any additional cost, several smaller elementary classes will be consolidated to an average of 22 students, with no class larger than 24 students. The Pre-first program will be eliminated, and a support system will be established for children who need help transitioning from kindergarten to the first grade.

"The addition of full-day kindergarten will reduce the number of students who need to attend a Pre-first program, since they will be allotted more time to understand the curriculum presented by their teachers," said Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum Richard Roberts.

There will be some cost associated with new materials and minor classroom renovations, but it will be covered by \$757,000 in aid, which was given to the district to help with the conversion to full-day.

Full-day kindergarten will also cut down on transportation costs since buses will no longer have to run four times a day to bring students back and forth for the two half-day classes.

What if the budget is defeated?

Under state law, if a budget proposal is defeated, the Board of Education can submit either the same budget proposal or a revised budget proposal to the public for a second vote.

If the budget is defeated twice, the Board must adopt a contingency budget, which would place a four percent spending cap on the budget. This presents a reduction of more than \$1.2 million dollars for the Port Jervis City School District.

If placed on contingency, the district would be required by law to maintain contractual obligations such as employee benefit contributions. However, all other programs would be under consid-

eration for reduction or even elimination.

Specifically, this could mean:

- Reductions in transportation, such as certain bus runs and extra-curriculum and athletic transportation runs
- Reductions in Buildings and Grounds
- Elimination of certain extra-curricular activities and athletic programs
- Elimination of up to 16 faculty and staff positions

Additionally, contingent budgets cannot contain money for non-essential equipment and certain student classroom supplies.

VOTE
Tuesday,
May 16

Noon to
9 p.m.

Polling
Locations

Election
District #1

Huguenot Fire House

Election
District #2

Deerpark Municipal
Building 2

Election
District #3

Sparrowbush
Fire House

Election
District #4

Port Jervis
Middle School

School district budget notice:
Overall budget proposal

	Budget adopted for 2005-06 school year	Budget proposed for 2006-07 school year	Contingency budget for 2006-07 school year
Total budgeted amount	\$47,001,556	\$50,049,514	\$48,837,379
Increase for 2006-07 school year		\$3,047,958	\$1,211,130
Percentage increase in each proposed budget		6.4%	3.9%
Change in consumer price index		3.4%	
Resulting estimated property tax levy for 2006-07 school year		\$22,026,475	\$20,814,340
Administrative component	\$5,107,856	\$4,503,712	\$4,392,539
Program component	\$37,714,160	\$41,087,370	\$40,111,408
Capital component	\$4,179,540	\$4,458,432	\$4,333,432

Should the proposed budget be defeated, the Board of Education anticipates approximately 16 employee layoffs to address the contingency cap. Mandated equipment reductions are \$157,407.

Basic STAR exemption impact

Estimated basic STAR exemption savings based on a hypothetical home within the school district with a full value of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)

	Budget adopted for 2005-06 school year	Budget proposed for 2006-07 school year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$576	\$578
School tax increase/(decrease)	\$230	\$121
Net Basic STAR tax savings	\$346	\$457

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2006-07 by the qualified voters of the Port Jervis City School District, Orange County, New York, will be held Tuesday, May 16, 2006, between the hours of 12 noon and 9 p.m., at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine at the following locations: Huguenot Fire House, Deerpark Town Municipal Building, Sparrowbush Fire House, and Port Jervis Middle School gym. For more information, call District Clerk Michele O'Donnell at 858-3134.

Proposed bus referendum

Resolved, that the Board of Education of the Port Jervis City School District/Orange/Sullivan County, New York is hereby authorized to purchase six (6) 65- passenger buses for a maximum aggregate cost not to exceed \$483,700; and that the aforesaid sum of \$483,700 or so much thereof as may be necessary to effectuate said purchases, shall be raised by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of the said Port Jervis City School District and collected in installments; and in anticipation of such tax collections, obligations of the said Port Jervis City School District shall be issued on such terms as the Administration and the Board of Education shall deem appropriate consistent with prevailing market conditions.

Board of Education

Steve Banks,
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Editor

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Port Jervis SCHOOL DISTRICT
9 Thompson Street
Port Jervis, New York 12771

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PORT JERVIS CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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