

# RCS chalkboard

family • school • community • success

## New budget vote slated for June 20

*Board reduces spending proposal; seeks voter approval of \$39.1 million plan*

RCS residents will head to the polls on June 20 to consider a restructured 2006-07 school year budget.

The \$39.1 million proposal is \$183,500 less than the budget voters defeated on May 16.

In making a series of reductions, the administration and Board of Education reduced the tax levy increase a full percentage point - from 8.2 percent to 7.2 percent.

For a complete breakdown of what was reduced, see the sidebar article on this page.

*“The district worked diligently to reduce the budget in a manner that respects what we have heard.”*

*- John Bonafide,  
BOE president*

“We listened to the message the community sent us on May 16 and at the meetings that followed,” said Board of Education presi-

dent John Bonafide. “The district worked diligently to reduce the budget in a manner that respects what we have heard.”

School Superintendent Vicki Wright said approval of this budget would keep after-school clubs and activities at their current levels.

Additionally, passage of the revised budget proposal would:

- Maintain athletic programs at their current levels.

*Continued on page 2*

## Reductions focus spending on students

Two years of tough financial situations have focused the district’s spending on initiatives that directly ensure student success.

More than \$500,000 in cuts have been made to administrative and BOCES spending in recent years as the district addresses cost increases in a host of areas, Superintendent Vicki Wright said.

At the start of the 2004-05 school year, RCS had 14 administrators. The pro-

posed 2006-07 school year budget calls for 10 administrators, Wright said. That move has translated into a 22 percent, \$215,259, savings in administrative salaries.

During that same time frame, \$12,874 was cut in spending on supervisor positions. Even with the addition last year of deans,

who are paid through a stipend, the district is projecting a savings of \$112,189 in administrative spending for next year.

“While job titles and faces have changed, no new layers of administration have been added. In fact, the ranks of administrators have decreased as we look to better focus spending on programs that directly affect students,” said school Superintendent

*Continued on Page 2*

### What’s been cut?

Here’s what’s been eliminated from the defeated budget:

- \$25,000 - In overtime spending.
- \$70,000 - In salaries and benefits through the reduction of 1.75 custodial positions.
- \$8,000 - In reduced communications and District Office budgets.
- \$20,000 - In equipment purchases.
- \$12,250 - In busing by eliminating the 5 p.m. bus runs on Mondays.
- \$6,275 - In field trips through a reduced schedule.
- \$11,440 - In extracurricular expenses by keeping activities at their current levels.

## New vote ...

*Continued from page 1*

- Maintain a full schedule of concerts.
- Restore most field trip funding.
- Keep the aquatics director and health office aide positions.
- Keep 5 p.m. bus runs on three of the four nights they are currently offered.

The reductions made by the Board of Education and administration and outlined on page 1 followed extensive input from the public, faculty and staff.

“It is now up to the community to decide what

happens next,” Bonafide said.

State law mandates that RCS adopt a contingency budget should the budget be defeated a second time on June 20.

A contingency budget would require another \$225,000 in cuts and would yield a tax levy increase of about 5.5 percent, Interim Business Administrator Gene Grasso said.

“This is by no means meant to be a threatening statement. It’s just the reality of the situation RCS may face,” Wright said.

## The value of clubs and after-school activities

The RCS school district has a long history of providing students with opportunities to excel outside the classroom.

From a rich past of athletic championships to an honorable history of instilling civic responsibility and pride, RCS students can expand their horizons not just in the classroom, but outside as well.

Passage of the proposed budget would allow more than three dozen after-school programs in RCS’ schools to continue to provide the community with these benefits and its youth with experiences that help mold them into successful students and future leaders, said school Superintendent Vicki Wright.

“Getting into a good college when you come from a small school can be tough. I was lucky to be able to put on my transcript a lot of clubs and sports. I think that was a big reason I was able to get into a good college,” said 2005 graduate Ryan McCarthy, who attends Northeastern University.

Beyond helping graduates get into quality colleges, studies have cited other benefits of after-school activities. Those include:

- Supporting working families by ensuring that children are safe and productive when the school day ends.
- Strengthening communities by involving students, parents, business leaders, and volunteers.

## Focus spending

*Continued from page 1*

Vicki Wright.

At the same time, BOCES spending has decreased. The 2004-05 budget called for \$3.5 million in BOCES spending. During the current budget year, \$3.13 million was spent on BOCES. That number is projected to decrease to \$3.06 million next year.

Meanwhile, spending on educational programs at RCS has increased.

During the 2004-05 school year, \$18.3 million was spent on educational programming, which includes everything from teacher salaries to clubs and sports. That increased to \$19.3 million this year and is projected to increase to \$20.1 million during the 2006-07 school year.

Not all savings have been able to be focused on educational programs. Rather, some of the savings are used to deflate increases in other areas, Wright said.

An example is RCS’ effort to conserve energy and use less electricity.

While the district has taken numerous steps in recent years to conserve energy - from installing motion detectors to turn-off lights when rooms are empty

to turning down the temperature in buildings this past winter, the savings from those efforts won’t be found in the proposed budget.

Rather, the savings have been applied to reduce the impact of dramatic spikes in energy costs.

The district also saved a projected \$30,000 this year through the Ravena Village Off-Campus Suspension Program. The projected savings resulted from bringing suspended students to one room and providing tutoring for them there, instead of sending tutors to the homes of each of the students. Those funds are being utilized to offset rising costs elsewhere in the budget.

### NOT SITTING IDLY BY

“It’s important to note that the Board of Education, administration and faculty and staff have not sat idly by while costs have skyrocketed,” said Wright. “Everyone has looked far and wide to find savings and develop outside-the-box ideas to reduce costs and better serve our students.”

“These efforts have resulted in a lean education system that is focused on doing the best with what we have,” she added.

## Important vote information

*Voting on the revised budget proposal will take place from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the High School music room.*

*The same entrance used during prior votes will be used.*

## Grants total \$1.3 million

RCS has secured \$1.3 million in grants to fund programs in the 2006-07 school year and continues to pursue alternative revenue sources.

The grants fund such programs as technology education, literacy, pre-kindergarten and fitness initiatives in all four schools.

“We are always on the lookout for alternative sources of funding that allow us to increase or improve the educational experience for our students while also easing the burden on our taxpayers,” said school Superintendent Vicki Wright.

Examples of grant-funded programs at RCS include:

- \$127,299 for the Project

## Budget passage meaning

With the funding provided by passage of the budget on June 20, RCS would be able to:

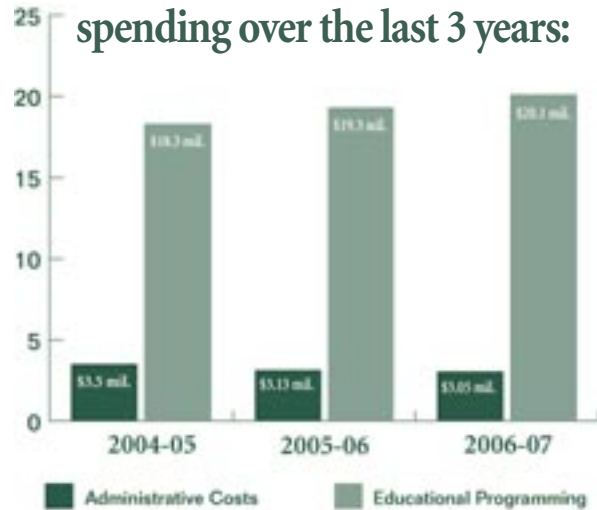
- Continue offering quality educational programs and classes.
- Provide opportunities for students to bolster college applications to further their chances of acceptance upon graduation.
- Provide opportunities to students interested in exploring various career choices.
- Continue serving at the highest levels all students, despite their needs .

Adventure physical fitness program.

- \$323,686 to train, perform in-service programs for, and recruit top teachers,
- \$156,884 for pre-kindergarten programs, and
- \$105,849 to enhance teaching through technology.

Other grants help pay for the salaries of faculty and staff, said Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Diane Albano, Ed.D.

## Educational vs. administrative spending over the last 3 years:



## How much would the budget cost?

Based on the most recent information available on equalization rates and assessments applied to a \$100,000 value property.

Town	2005-06 Tax bill	2006-07 Projected	Increase/Decrease
Coeymans	\$2,102	\$2,394	\$292
Bethlehem	\$2,704	\$1,795	*-\$909
New Baltimore	\$2,106	\$2,362	\$256
New Scotland	\$2,517	\$1,795	*-\$722

This information is subject to change based on the final town assessments and equalization rates.

\* As a result of a reassessment in the towns of Bethlehem and New Scotland, these dollar amounts may not be reflective of the true decrease or increase in tax bills based on new assessments of a property.

## Projected tax rates by town

Projected tax rate increase per \$1,000 assessed property value based on the most recent assessment and equalization rate information available, as well as the difference in the rate if a contingent budget is implemented.

Town	2005-06 Tax rate	2006-07 Projected	Increase/Decrease	Contingent Budget	'06-07 Proposed vs. Contingent
Coeymans	\$21.02	\$23.94	\$2.92	\$23.67	27 cents per \$1,000
Bethlehem	\$27.04	\$17.95	-\$9.09	\$17.75	20 cents per \$1,000
New Baltimore	\$21.06	\$23.62	\$2.56	\$23.36	23 cents per \$1,000
New Scotland	\$25.17	\$17.95	-\$7.22	\$17.75	17 cents per \$1,000

This information is provided to residents to ensure the public is informed about the difference between the proposed budget and a contingent budget.

# RCS School District Budget Notice

This is the official budget notice RCS is required to send to all district residents. The content of this page is mandated by the state.

• **Administrative costs** include costs for the salaries and benefits of all certified staff who spend 50 percent or more of their time in administration, plus the salaries and benefits of clerical staff. Also included are school board costs, as well as those associated with a host of other areas.

• **Program costs** include the salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, library and athletics), text books, etc.

• **Capital costs** include the salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, plus debt service, bus purchases, etc.

	2005-06 Budget	2006-07 Revised budget	2006-07 Contingency
Total budget	\$37,408,224	\$39,155,050	\$38,929,538
Increase/decrease for 2006-07		\$1,746,825	\$1,521,313
Percentage increase /decrease		+4.67%	+4.07%
Change in the consumer price index		+3.4%	
Resulting estimated property tax levy		\$20,130,216	\$19,904,704

## The realities of a contingency budget:

Under state law, school boards can submit a budget to voters a maximum of two times. If the budget is defeated twice, the board must adopt a contingency budget, which would put a cap on new spending at 4.07%, which would require the district to reduce the proposed budget by \$225,512. That could mean:

- Increased class sizes
- No concerts
- Equipment in the budget would be eliminated
- Fees for faculty usage would be required
- Sports teams could be reduced
- Clubs would be eliminated

## Three-part Budget Breakdown

	2005-06	2006-07	Contingency
Administrative	\$3,030,569	\$ 3,128,786	\$3,101,205
Program	\$28,185,841	\$29,167,049	\$28,969,112
Capital	\$6,191,814	\$6,859,215	*\$6,859,221

\*This reflects the addition of debt service, which RCS is mandated to pay even under a contingency budget.

## Basic Star Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR savings based on a hypothetical \$100,000 home.

	2005-06	2006-07 proposed
Basic STAR savings	\$528	\$555
School tax increase/decrease	\$27	\$45
Net basic STAR tax savings	\$501	\$510

## Final chance!

June 20 is the final opportunity for residents to vote on the future of the RCS Community.

State law *prohibits* another budget vote.

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