

## School improvement project at a glance

**VOTERS HAVE ALREADY SAID YES –**  
In 2004, residents of the school district approved a \$1.67 million capital improvement project.

**HOW WELLS WILL PAY FOR THE WORK –**  
The district is eligible for \$493,000 in state aid reimbursement over the 16 years that this project will be financed. In addition, Wells can expect an annual savings of about \$32,000 in utility and other costs. Beginning in 2006-07, residents will begin paying the remaining local share of the costs, which next year will be \$165,456. The school district will receive 30 percent of that cost – or \$49,637 – as state aid in 2007-08.

**TAX IMPACT –** Residents can expect to see a tax increase of about \$32 a year for a typical home assessed at \$84,000. For senior citizens with STAR, the tax impact would be \$13 a year for a house with a similar value.

**WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE PROJECT –**  
Residents approved a variety of repair and maintenance work – including replacing outdated plumbing, heating and electrical fixtures, windows and skylights; paving; replacing old bleachers; ventilation and air conditioning improvements; asbestos abatement and more. All of the work included in the project is in the original portion of the school that was built in 1963, along with repairs to the parking lot. No repairs or improvements are needed in the new wing of the school that was completed in 1997.

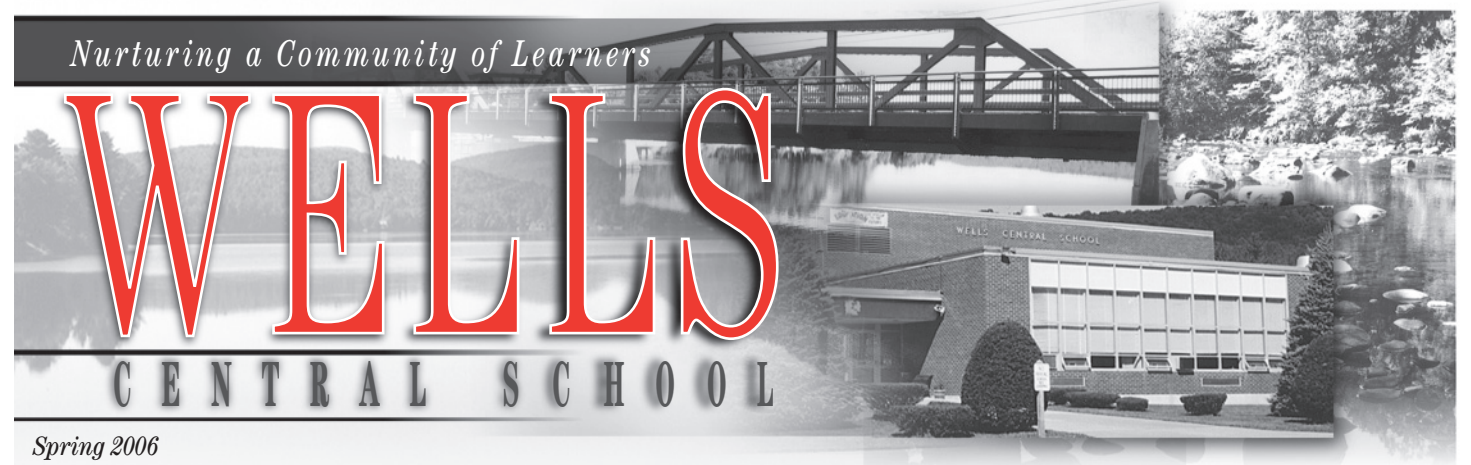
**WHEN WILL THE WORK BE COMPLETED –** All work will be done between June 1 and Oct. 1, 2006. Asbestos abatement will be the first priority, and this work will be done on nights and weekends when there are no students in the building.

## Residents to elect candidate for Board of Education

Two candidates are vying for one seat on the Wells Central School District Board of Education. Residents may vote for only one candidate when they go to the polls on Tuesday, May 16.

- The two candidates include:
- Incumbent Dorman Reese and
  - Cathie Rust.
- Board members are elected to serve five-year terms. The new term begins July 1, 2006.

**Residents may vote from 12:30-8:30 p.m. on May 16 in the school cafeteria.**



Spring 2006

**Proposed Wells budget calls for 6.6% increase in spending**

## Residents vote May 16 on school budget

Wells Central School District residents will go to the polls on May 16 to vote on a proposed \$4,560,438 school budget for the 2006-07 year.

The budget calls for a 6.6 percent spending increase – and a projected 5.5 percent increase in the tax levy. The actual tax increase will not be calculated until summer when town assessors submit assessment rolls to the district. (See story at right for more information about the recent property value reassessment in the Town of Wells.)

With a slight decrease in state aid projected for the 2006-07 school year, Wells' budget also reflects a 15 percent increase in the cost of health insurance – rising from \$520,000 in 2005-06 to an anticipated \$600,000 next year. The budget also includes a 39 percent increase for mandatory contributions for teachers' retirement benefits, which will increase from \$95,000 this year to \$132,800 next year. Fuel costs are also projected to rise by 54 percent – from \$22,000 to \$34,000 – while heating oil costs should be stable following repairs and replacement work this summer.

Next year, residents will begin paying the local share of the \$1.67 million capital improvement project approved by voters in 2004.

Turn to Page 4 for more details.

## New property assessments may confuse some taxpayers

In early March, property owners in the Town of Wells received notices from the town assessor's office that included new assessment figures. For many, their property values have increased dramatically – but does this mean their tax bills will also increase?

"Not necessarily," explained Bill Hotaling, Hamilton County's real property tax director. "Because property values throughout the region have been increased to reflect current market value, about half of all owners will see no increase in their school taxes, even though their assessments are higher. About 25 percent will see lower tax bills, while 25 percent of the bills will be higher."

**Keep in mind:** School districts do not determine property values; townships do. Here is a short course in how the process works:

### How property values are assessed

Each spring, every township in New York prepares an assessment role that lists all property owners and the assessed value of each parcel of land. In most years, only a relatively few properties will have new assessment values – typically because those properties have been sold, subdivided or been the site of new construction. However, after a reassessment like the recent one in the Town of Wells, nearly every parcel of land will have a new assessment value attached to it.

Although property values as a whole have increased in the Town of Wells, this does not affect how much

money the school district needs to raise to meet its expenses. The total amount of school taxes to be collected for 2006-07 in Wells is the same as it would have been without the reassessment. The reassessment merely redistributes who pays how much, by shifting more of the tax burden to those whose property values have risen faster than average.

### How tax bills are determined

Residents cannot simply multiply their new assessment by the old tax rate to figure out how much their new tax bills will be. Calculations must be done on an individual basis, based on three things:

- The new assessment;
- How it compares with all other assessments in the district; and
- The projected new school tax rate.

Hotaling said that under the recent reassessment in the Town of Wells, the average property value increased by 78 percent. Thus, for those property values that increased by **less** than 78 percent, the relative tax burden in the coming year will be less than it was in previous years. For those property values that increased by **more** than 78 percent, the relative tax burden will be more than it was in previous years.

Property owners who believe their property assessments are incorrect may file a written grievance with the town's Board of Assessment Review between May 1 and May 25. Grievances will be heard on May 26.

Nurturing a Community of Learners

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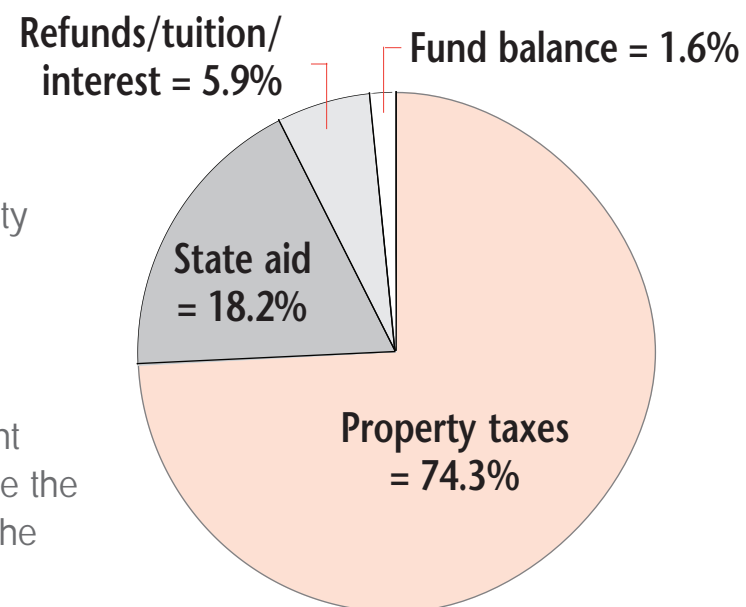
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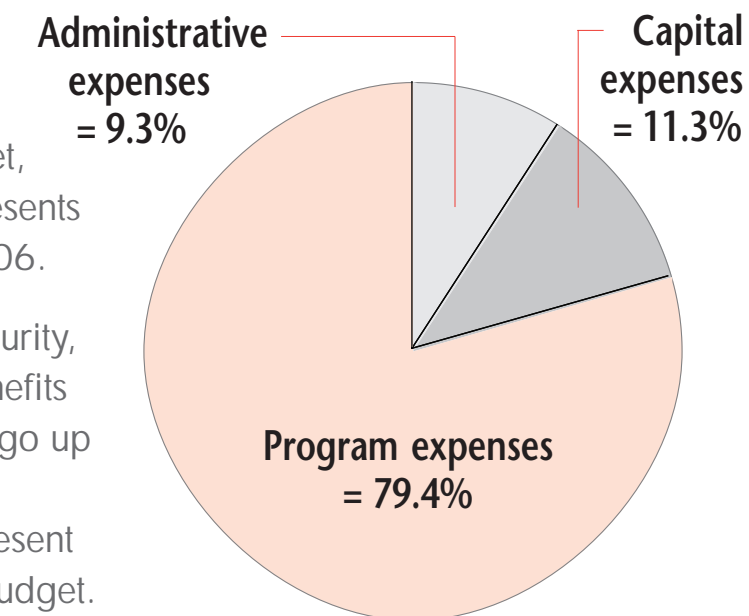
## WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

- School district funds come from a variety of sources, with the majority coming from local property taxes, along with state aid.
- Other sources include investment earnings, BOCES aid, non-resident tuition for students who live outside the district, and appropriations from the existing fund balance.



## ...AND WHERE IT GOES

- Instructional expenses account for more than 79.4 percent of the budget, for a total of \$3,620,250. This represents an increase of \$92,217 from 2005-06.
- Hospital, medical, dental, Social Security, worker compensation, retirement benefits and insurance costs are expected to go up an additional \$27,516 for a total of \$783,300. These benefits costs represent 17.2 percent of the total proposed budget.



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## PROJECTED REVENUES

CATEGORY	TOTAL
Property taxes	\$3,387,284
State aid*	829,165
Refunds/tuition/interest	268,989
Fund balance	75,000
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<b>\$4,560,438</b>

\* State aid revenues can be accurately projected for the 2006-07 school year because the state has adopted its budget for the coming fiscal year. This is the second year in a row that the state budget was approved on time.

## Three new high school classes and new elementary reading series included in proposed 2006-07 budget

The proposed 2006-07 budget for Wells Central School includes funding for three additional high school courses and a new elementary reading series.

### The new high school classes include:

- Anatomy, Physiology and Sports Medicine, to be taught by Edward Pruden;
- Pre-Engineering Math, to be taught by Michael Valovic; and
- Theatre Set and Design, to be taught by Corinne Hayden as a complement to the drama course already offered to high school students.



### New elementary reading series

The proposed budget includes \$40,000 to pay for a new elementary reading series to be used by students in grades preK-6. The district is evaluating offerings from a number of publishers before choosing a new series to complement the textbooks currently in use in the district. The new series will meet state learning standards as well as the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

## Budget timeline: Key dates to remember

- **April 24:** Drawing by lot to determine candidate placement on the election ballot, at 3 p.m. in the district office.
- **May 1-5:** Voter registration, 7 a.m.-3 p.m., at Wells Central School.
- **May 2:** Evening voter registration, 4-6 p.m., at Wells Central School.
- **May 9:** Final date for requesting absentee ballots **and** public hearing on proposed 2006-07 budget, 7 p.m., at Wells Central School.
- **May 15:** Last day to pickup absentee ballot.
- **May 16:** Budget vote/board elections/annual meeting. Polls are open 12:30-8:30 p.m. in the school cafeteria. Absentee ballots are due by 5 p.m.

## What happens if a majority of voters don't approve the budget?

The school district can hold another vote and offer residents either a revised budget or the same spending plan – or it can adopt a contingency budget, which puts a cap on some spending.

If a budget is twice defeated, the district **must** adopt a contingency budget, and there can be no more votes to restore the funding eliminated for the 2006-07 school year.

Under a contingency budget, the 2006-07 spending plan would have to be cut by an additional \$118,571.

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## PROJECTED EXPENSES

CATEGORY	TOTAL
Instruction	\$2,373,436
Benefits	960,512
Operations/maintenance	215,200
Pupil transportation	303,875
Debt service	243,375
BOCES & other services	464,040
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<b>\$4,560,438</b>