

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE: MAY 17
NOON-9 P.M. IN JR./SR. HS GYM LOBBY



Middleburgh

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Budget Newsletter May 2016

Middleburgh residents to vote May 17 on proposed \$21.3 million spending plan

Proposal keeps tax levy at district's cap

Middleburgh Central School District residents will vote Tuesday, May 17 on a proposed \$21,285,170 budget for the 2016-17 school year.

The proposed budget, which preserves all existing student programming and staffing, increases spending by \$519,254 (or 2.5 percent) over the current school year and carries a tax levy increase of 0.61 percent, or \$57,711. Because the proposed tax levy is at the district's maximum allowable increase under the state's tax "cap" law, support of a simple majority of voters (50 percent plus one) is required for the budget to be approved.

Closing the gap

At the beginning of the budget development process, MCS administrators faced a projected budget gap of \$1,009,696. The gap stemmed from increasing contractual and operational expenses, state mandates such as teacher/principal evaluations and a loss of nearly \$165,000 in tax revenue resulting from an almost 0 percent tax cap. Once final figures for state aid, insurance costs, benefit expenses, staff retirement and special education were factored in, the district still faced a budget gap of approximately \$474,841.

Nearly \$300,000 in savings realized in 2015-16 will help offset this funding shortfall. In addition, rather than reduce current programs and staff in the next year, the Board of Education voted to use additional fund balance to close the remaining gap.



(Photo credit: Cameron Bechtold)

Achievement a driving force

Behind the numbers calculated into this year's proposed budget lies the soul of MCS: the unwavering achievements of the district's students, faculty and staff.

Students continue to succeed in academics and extracurriculars as in years past, while the achievements of many students surface in nontraditional ways.

Students in Scott Gray's manufacturing class, for example, began their own business venture this year. Named "12 Techies, Nerds, and Mech-Es," the

company allows students to design and manufacture their own products, secure investors by selling stocks in the community and immerse themselves in the world of commerce. Organized into functional departments, the students serve as mentors to each other, monitor progress and efficiency and spend their free periods back in the classroom to ensure the venture's success.

"These students are running the show," Mr. Gray said. "They're not only learning career skills here – they've developed into leaders and mentors."

Students around MCS also benefit from experiential learning opportunities through programs such as BOCES Career and Technical School (CTE) and New Visions. Participants gain hands-on experience, explore potential careers, develop vocational skills, earn professional certificates that qualify them for employment after graduation and shadow professionals in their fields of interest.

What will I see on the ballot?

- ✓ Proposed budget: \$21,285,170
Budget Change: + 2.5 %
Tax Levy Change: + 0.61 %

- ✓ Board of Education election
- ✓ Bus proposition

Voting will be held from noon to 9 p.m. on Tuesday, May 17, in the Jr./Sr. High School gym lobby.

www.middleburghcsd.org

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Residents to vote

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In March, 11th-grade student Noah Sherwood was interviewed by several local media outlets when he participated in the Capital Region SkillsUSA competition, in which CTE students put their career and technical education expertise to the test and interacted with professionals from their field of study. Eleventh-grade student Irving Skowfoe took home a first-place win in the construction competition and his classmate Katie Dobesh secured a fifth-place finish in crime scene investigation.

"I've seen students – especially kinesthetic or hands-on learners – bloom in these programs because they find something that they love," said Guidance Counselor Paul Pierce, who helps to link approximately 20 percent of MCS students with these alternative learning opportunities.

"These programs anchor students to their academic goals, help them succeed in school and give them real

career experiences before they even graduate from high school," Guidance Counselor Kelly Pacatte said.

As Middleburgh continues to develop additional ways to support student learning and achievement, district officials look forward to the 2016-17 year as one that will continue to offer an outstanding educational experience to students.

Superintendent Michele R. Weaver emphasized the tangible value of academic, vocational and extracurricular opportunities inside and outside the traditional classroom setting. It's the heart of a well-rounded Middleburgh education.

"Our students are our future," Ms. Weaver said. "We remain steadfast in our mission to provide them the best possible education, and we can do so by supporting a wealth of academic and extracurricular opportunities that will enhance the experience of every student we serve."

Budget Q&A

What has been cut?

There are no program or staff reductions in the proposed budget.

What expenses increased?

- Operational and contractual obligations required to maintain the district's current level of programming and staffing.
- New state regulations require money to be allocated for community schools initiatives, which rely on public schools to help support the needs of the community; this \$58,000 expense is offset by state aid funds awarded to the district.
- Necessary upkeep of the buildings and grounds under the capital project.

What would a 0.61% levy increase do to my tax bill?

School districts establish the tax levy but cannot determine what portion of the tax burden is placed on any one property owner. What will happen to individual tax bills is determined by the tax rate, which cannot be predicted until a number of factors outside the control of the district are determined,

such as equalization rates, assessments and state School Tax Relief (STAR) program exemptions.

How will STAR affect my school taxes?

STAR provides New York homeowners with partial exemptions from school property taxes unless new changes in the 2016-17 state budget apply. Basic STAR is available for owner-occupied, primary residences where the owners' total income is less than \$500,000, and exempts the first \$30,000 of the full value of a home from school taxes. For qualifying seniors, Enhanced STAR exempts the first \$65,300 of the full value of a home from school taxes. This year's state budget includes a provision to transition the STAR exemption into a refundable personal income tax credit. Anyone who is paying school taxes on their home for the first time in 2016-17 will receive their STAR savings as a rebate check. Applications are available from your assessor's office. For additional information on STAR, please visit the budget section of our website at www.middleburghcsd.org.

Voters to decide on bus proposal

On May 17, residents will vote on a special proposition to purchase two 66-passenger school buses and one 48-passenger bus at a total cost not to exceed \$344,000.

Financing for the buses would be paid through property taxes that would be collected in annual installments for five years. After factoring in 79.8 percent transportation aid from the state, the vehicles would have an average annual cost of \$13,898 – about \$5 per year for the average taxpayer.

Ten years is considered to be the useful life of a school bus under New York state regulations. As buses age, the cost to maintain them up to state Department of Transportation standards increases, causing an elevated need for new buses within districts over time.

BOE Elections

On May 17, voters will elect two candidates to the Board of Education to fill the expiring terms of Michael L. Fisher IV and Donald Wood. The three-year terms commence with the reorganization meeting in July. There are four candidates running. A random drawing was held to determine the order in which the candidates will appear on the ballot:

- Michael L. Fisher IV
- Debra A. Bechtold
- Vicki Hoerz
- Maurice K. Lawton



Middleburgh Central School District Budget Notice

SCHOOL BUDGET VOTE: TUESDAY, MAY 17, NOON TO 9 P.M.

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2015-16 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2016-17 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2016-17 School Year
Total budgeted amount, not including separate propositions	\$20,765,916	\$21,285,170	\$21,076,080
Increase/decrease for the 2016-2017 school year		\$519,254	\$209,090
Percentage increase/decrease in proposed budget		2.50%	1.01%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		0.12%	
A. Proposed levy to support the total budgeted amount, net of reserve	\$9,460,904	\$9,518,615	
B. Levy to support library debt, if applicable	n/a	n/a	
C. Levy for non-excludable propositions, if applicable**	n/a	n/a	
D. Total tax cap reserve amount used to reduce current year levy	n/a	n/a	
E. Total proposed school year tax levy (A + B + C - D)	\$9,460,904	\$9,518,615	\$9,460,904
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$293,757	\$313,945	
G. School tax levy limit, excluding levy for permissible exclusions	\$9,167,147	\$9,204,670	
H. Total proposed school year tax levy, excluding levy to support library debt and/or permissible exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$9,167,147	\$9,204,670	
I. Difference: (G - H); (negative value requires 60.0% voter approval – see note below regarding separate propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$1,871,277	\$1,946,069	\$1,944,048
Program Component	\$14,558,769	\$15,016,441	\$14,926,871
Capital Component	\$4,335,870	\$4,322,660	\$4,205,161

** List separate propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (tax levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
Bus proposal	\$344,000

* If voters do not approve the proposed 2016-17 budget within two attempts, the board must adopt a contingent budget, which limits the property tax levy increase to zero percent, with no exclusions. As a result, the board would be required to reduce the budget by \$209,090 to \$21,076,080. In this event, the district would be subject to restrictions and limitations in areas where money could be spent. For example, the purchase of new equipment would not be permitted, and there would be mandated charges for the use of school facilities by outside organizations (Section 2023 of the Education Law).

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2016-17 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$607

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2016-17 by the qualified voters of the Middleburgh Central School District, Schoharie County, New York, will be held in the lobby of the Middleburgh Jr./Sr. High School Gymnasium in said district on Tuesday, May 17, 2016, between the hours of 12 p.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time, at which time the polls will be open to vote by machine. Absentee ballots are available and must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on the day of the vote.

School districts are required by New York State law to mail this information to all households within the district. If you would like more information about the budget, please call the superintendent's office at 827-3625 or visit the district website at www.middleburghcsd.org



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Pamela Standhart, *President*
Becky Binder, *Vice President*
Ernest Kuehl, Jr.
Donald Wood

DISTRICT OFFICIALS

Superintendent of Schools
Michele R. Weaver

Business Manager
Terry Gillooley

School Administrators
Kim Ross – Elementary School
Lori Petrosino – Jr./Sr. High School
Michael Teator – Jr./Sr. High School
Maura Green – DPPS

CONTACT

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for more budget information

School budget vote day is Tuesday, May 17, from noon to 9 p.m. in the Jr./Sr. HS gym lobby.

Voter Information

Who is eligible to vote?

Anyone who is a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years of age and a resident of the Middleburgh School District for at least 30 days prior to the vote is eligible.

What should I bring with me on May 17?

Personal identification/proof of residency is required (e.g., driver's license with current address or utility bill showing your name and current address).

Can I vote by using an absentee ballot?

Qualified district residents who are unable to go to the polls on May 17 can cast their votes by absentee ballot. For an application, visit the district website, stop in at the district office, located in the junior/senior high school, or call 827-3625. If the ballot is to be mailed, the application for the ballot must be received by May 10. If the ballot is to be delivered in person, the application must be received by May 16. All completed ballots must be received by the district clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 17.

What if I have questions?

For further information, please call 827-3625 or 827-3620 or visit www.middleburghcsd.org.

New voting machines at the polls

Voters arriving to the polls on May 17 to decide on the Middleburgh Central School District proposed 2016-17 budget will find something new this year: electronic machines.

Voters will fill out paper ballots at privacy stations, and then feed them into an optical scanner that will read and store their votes. This system replaces the traditional levered machines, whose use was permitted until this year.

A New York State waiver allowing school districts to use levered voting machines has expired this year. To save the district the \$96,500 per machine it would cost to purchase new voting devices, MCS will rent two machines from Schoharie County. The district will pay approximately \$1,500, which includes the costs associated with programming and transporting the two machines for the budget vote; renting eight privacy booths; printing 1,200 ballots; and, the services of an on-site machine technician and four voting inspectors.

Your opinion matters!

MCS invites voters to complete a voluntary, anonymous exit survey after voting on May 17. Your participation helps the district gather feedback and will help inform future budget decisions.