

HOME PAGES

POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL - COMMUNITY INFORMATION BULLETIN

APRIL 2007

Dear Community Members,

You are cordially invited to participate in the development of our proposed 2007–2008 school budget and are encouraged to attend the School Board meeting at 8:00p.m. on April 10th in the school library. The Board has held a series of budget workshops and will be adopting a proposed budget on that evening.

This newsletter contains budget information for you to consider. In addition, the latest working draft of the budget may be reviewed on our district's website at www.pocanticohills.org or you may pick up a copy at the school between 8:00a.m. and 4:00p.m. We encourage your ideas, questions and comments. If you are unable to attend the meeting on April 10th, please forward your questions and comments to budgetinfo@pocanticohills.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

About the 2007-2008 Proposed Budget

Here are questions and answers about the preliminary Pocantico Hills budget prepared by the District administration.

Q How is the school budget communicated differently from prior years?

A This year, Pocantico Hills has presented the budget in its entirety at each community budget workshop, plus it will have been presented at two PTA meetings, to each employee group of the district, and to the student government. The district's intention is to communicate more effectively with the community, and to seek input and suggestions to explain the budget in terms more easily understood by the community.

Q How much will the budget and tax rate increase?

A The budget-to-budget total expenditures are projected to increase by 6.53%.

The projected tax rate increase for Greenburgh residents is 15.02%. The projected tax rate increase for Mount Pleasant residents is 14.51%.

Q What is the reason for the projected tax rate increase?

A The projected tax rate increases reflect a sudden and significant drop in the district's assessed valuation of \$6,461,904. Since the total assessed valuation of the district was \$55,806,748, this decrease represents approximately an 11.5% reduction in the district's assessed valuation.

The assessed valuation is part of the formula that is used to calculate the tax rate. It divides the property tax levy among all residents and commercial properties in the District. As the assessed valuation drops, the tax rate that each resident pays will increase, even if there is no change in the amount that the School District spends. For example, if there were no change to the District's assessed valuation, then the projected tax rate for Greenburgh would be 4.09%, and 3.63% in Mt Pleasant. So, if the school budget did not increase at all, and if revenue was exactly the same as it has been this year, the tax rate increase would still be approximately 11% as a result of the dramatic reduction in the District's assessed valuation.

Q Why has the assessed valuation of the District decreased so dramatically?

A The assessed valuation of the District decreases primarily as a result of tax certiorari claims and settlements.

Q What is a tax certiorari claim?

A Tax certiorari claims are made by commercial property owners when they believe that their property is assessed at too high a level, and their tax bill is also too high. A court-ordered judgment or settlement can reduce the assessment of a commercial property, and provide for refunds to the commercial property owner for taxes they might have overpaid in prior years and reductions in their assessed value. In 2006–2007, Pocantico Hills settled tax certiorari cases that originated in 2000 and 2001. The Board of Education hired a defense team to address pending tax certiorari claims, and that decision has saved the School District hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Q How much has the budget increased over 2006–2007, and in what areas have expenditures increased the most?

A The overall draft budget represents an increase of \$1,332,589, with the largest increase in costs brought about by increases in tuition rates for our high school students who attend high school in three of our neighboring districts. Salaries, benefits, technology, and the increased cost of the incarcerated youth program* are also major forces in the overall budget increase. The increases and decreases in the budget are as follows:

Salaries	\$368,424
Benefits	186,536
Equipment	(1,0514)
Contractual Expenses	7,534
Supplies	(29,461)
Tuition	677,658
Textbooks	(43,313)
BOCES	129,933
Incarcerated Youth*	437,424
Debt Service	48,866
Capital Projects	(450,000)

**Please note that the Incarcerated Youth Program generates revenues that completely offset the program cost, therefore, this program does not contribute to the increase in the tax rate.*

Q How much would need to be cut from the budget to have a 0% tax rate increase?

A A cut of approximately \$150,000 in the budget is equivalent to a 1% decrease in the tax rate. Therefore, \$2,175,000 would need to be cut from the budget to achieve a zero percent tax rate increase.

Q How much discretion does the School Board have over reducing the draft budget?

A If the assumption is made that the educational programs will continue to be delivered in the same manner as the District has done in the past, then approximately 94.5% of the budget would reflect mandated costs, and only about 5.5% of spending would be on non-mandated items. Some of the items in the non-mandated portion of the budget include instructional and non-instructional equipment, salaries, technology purchases, textbooks, instructional supplies, and community service programs, such as the summer day camp, after-school program, and community swim program.

Q How has the District informed the community about the budget?

A The District has prepared a communication plan that can be found on the District’s website, www.pocanticohills.org. Essentially the same budget presentation was made at each budget workshop to ensure that a resident missing one or more budget work sessions would not miss part of the description of the budget. Also, the District administration made a PTA presentation in March, to solicit input before the budget was adopted, and will make an additional PTA presentation on April 18, after the budget is adopted. All PowerPoint presentations and other documentation, including the most recent working draft, will be posted to the District’s website. Budget presentations have or will be provided to the teaching staff, students, and parents.

Q What will happen if the community does not approve the school budget on May 15th?

A State law provides that the Board of Education can, if it wishes, resubmit the same or a different budget to the community for approval once. If it is disapproved by the community again, or the Board

of Education decides not to resubmit the budget, the School District will operate on a contingency budget basis.

Q What is a contingency budget, how does it affect the School District?

A New York State law places a spending cap on a District's contingency budget, with a few exceptions made for repaying debt, costs associated with enrollment growth, etc. The spending cap for 2007-2008 is 3.84%. Therefore, under a contingency budget, the Board of Education would have to reduce the budget by \$285,826. The Board has examined potential areas for budget reductions in the event

that the proposed budget is not approved by voters and a contingency budget must be adopted. In order to make the budget reductions required to go to contingency, the Board may consider reductions in the following areas:

- Summer camp /swim program
- Student supplies
- Community use of buildings and grounds
- Certain equipment
- Software
- Staff
- Technology
- Overtime
- Field trips

2007-2008 Budget Highlights

Classroom Technology Upgrades	\$ 150,521
School Social Worker Salary/Benefits	\$ 50,000
Instructional Supplies and Materials	\$ 100,074
Replacement of 2 large Buses – new debt service	\$ 50,000
Interscholastic Sports Program	\$ 45,398
Summer Camp	\$ 260,688
Swim Program	\$ 161,754
After-School Program	\$ 52,948
Tractor Replacements	\$ 43,270 *
Partial Playground Replacement	\$ 8,000 *

* Supported by savings from 2006-2007 fire alarm bid

Budget-to-Budget Increase

2006-2007 Budget	2007-2008 Proposed Budget Expenditures (draft 4)	Budget-to-Budget Increase	Percent of Budget-to-Budget Increase
\$20,392,021	\$21,724,610	\$1,332,589	6.53

IMPORTANT BUDGET DATES

April 10, 2007

**Board of Education Meeting –
Adoption of Proposed Budget**
8:00 p.m., School Library

April 16, 2007

Last Day to File petitions for
Board of Education seats and propositions

April 18, 2007

PTA Budget Presentation
8:00 p.m., Cafeteria

April 25, 2007

PTA Meet the Candidates Night
8:00 p.m., School Library

May 7, 2007

Budget Hearing
8:00 p.m., School Library

May 10, 2007

Last day to register to vote. Voters may
register to vote at any time up to May 10th
at the District Office, Monday through Friday,
8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

May 15, 2007

Budget Vote 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.
School Library

POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL
599 Bedford Road
Sleepy Hollow, NY 10591

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