

**2025-26
Proposed**

BUDGET

Board proposes budget with 1.85% estimated tax rate increase

2025-26 proposal focused on preserving programming and staffing

On Tuesday, May 20, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$89,199,500 budget for the 2025-26 school year. Voters will also be asked to elect two candidates to the Board of Education (see pages 6-7).

Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the gym at BH-BL High School on Tuesday, May 20.

The proposed budget carries a 1.85% estimated weighted average tax rate increase with a 2.98% tax levy increase, making this the 14th consecutive year the district has proposed a budget below the state's tax cap.

Overall spending in the proposed budget will increase by \$4.27 million, or 5.04%. A portion of the increase is due to onboarding debt associated with the voter-approved 2023 capital project. Work for this project is beginning this spring. (See page 5 for a project timeline.) Another reason for the increase has more to do with a change in how the state wants districts to account for certain expenditures, explains Assistant Superintendent Dr. Christopher Abdo.

"The district is fortunate to have secured grants through the New York State Bus Incentive Program (NYSBIP) for the purchase of two 70-passenger electric buses next school year. While those grants will be applied at the dealership to reduce the cost to the district, the state has indicated that school districts are now required to record the full cost of the bus purchases (without the grants)



BH-BL's elementary school counselors collaborated on a districtwide career exploration lesson using a March Madness theme. They first visited classrooms to introduce students to careers, inspire them to think about different professions, and encourage future educational goal setting. Career choices were added to March Madness brackets and students voted weekly to narrow down the champion aka the Career of the Year! Read the full story by scanning the QR code or visit bhbl.org.



on the expenditure side of the budget as well as the grant funding on the revenue side of the budget."

In addition, new requirements related to Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB) statement 87 also require districts to record expenditures and revenues associated with instructional technology (IT) services the district receives from the Northeast Regional Information Center.

"It is important to note that since the accounting entries for both the NYSBIP grant and GASB 87 are made on both the expenditure and revenue side of the budget, they do not have an impact on the district's tax levy or tax rate," adds Abdo.

After netting out these accounting requirements, the effective year-over-year budget increase is approximately 4.22%.

2025-26 Budget Planning

Along with relying on the district's long-range financial plan as a guide for preserving academic offerings and services, the Board of Education was also highly committed to developing a budget that was sensitive to higher inflation rates (energy costs, supplies

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**25
26**

BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

Proposed Budget	\$89,199,500
Estimated Tax Rate Increase	1.85%
Tax Levy Increase	2.98%
Budget-to-Budget Increase	5.04%

Expenditures Summary

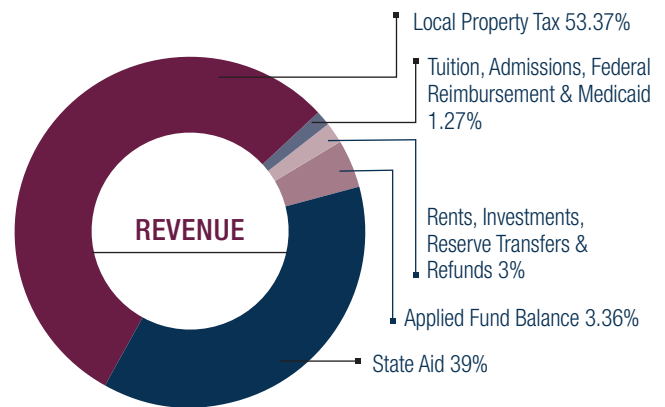
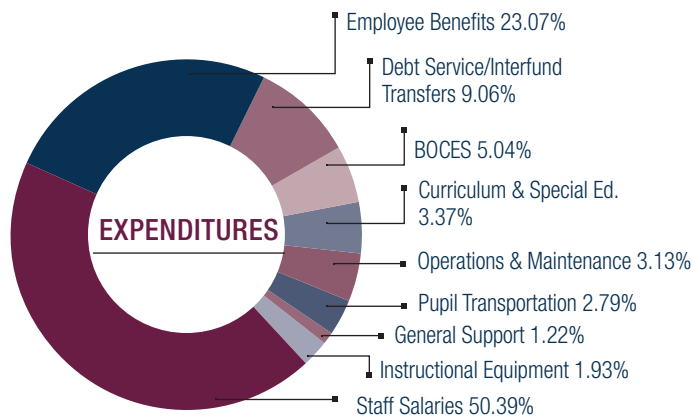
CATEGORY	2024-25	PROPOSED 2025-26	% CHANGE '24-25 to '25-26
General Support (Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)	\$1,020,000	\$1,091,625	7.02%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements*	2,753,827	3,009,827	9.30%
BOCES	4,302,803	4,489,998	4.35%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	1,676,958	1,717,420	2.41%
Operations & Maintenance**	2,672,950	2,791,641	4.44%
Pupil Transportation***	2,579,152	2,492,954	-3.34%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	19,207,227	20,577,095	7.13%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers****	7,193,783	8,083,619	12.37%
Staff Salaries	43,516,372	44,945,321	3.28%
Total Expenditure	\$84,923,072	\$89,199,500	5.04%

* This figure reflects a projected increase in out-of-district tuition for pupils with special needs, and contracts for related service providers.

**This figure reflects increased costs for power & natural gas.

***This figure reflects a reduction in school bus purchases based on the replacement schedule.

**** This figure reflects accounting entries associated with GASB 87 and the beginning of the phase-in of debt service associated with the 2023 Capital Project.



Revenue Summary

	2024-25	PROPOSED 2025-26	% CHANGE '24-25 to '25-26
State Aid	\$32,860,312	\$34,785,104	5.86%
Local Property Tax	46,224,894	47,602,396	2.98%
Tuition, Admissions & Services	923,866	935,000	1.21%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves*	1,714,000	2,677,000	56.18%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	200,000	200,000	0%
Applied Fund Balance	3,000,000	3,000,000	0%
Total Revenue	\$84,923,072	\$89,199,500	5.04%

* This figure reflects GASB 87 accounting entries as well as the revenue from the NYSBIP grant associated with electric bus purchases.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

\$6.87M

The total dollar amount in scholarships that students from the Class of 2024 received.

2,830

The number of college credits students from the Class of 2024 earned through participation in the school's College in High School (CHS) program.

26

The number of students from the Class of 2024 who completed licensing and college credit programs through Capital Region or Saratoga vocational programs.

91

The number of high school students inducted into the Math and Science Honor Societies this year.

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2024-25 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year	Contingent Budget for 2025-26 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$84,923,072	\$89,199,500	\$87,821,998
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-2026 School Year		\$4,276,432	\$2,898,930
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		5.04%	3.41%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$46,224,894	\$47,602,396	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C – D)	\$46,224,894	\$47,602,396	\$46,224,894
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$2,665,895	\$2,989,808	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$43,844,831	\$44,944,214	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$43,558,999	\$44,612,588	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval)	\$285,832	\$331,626	
Administrative Component** (See below)	\$8,424,959	\$8,643,890	\$8,712,552
Program Component** (See below)	\$61,149,500	\$64,132,412	\$63,236,894
Capital Component** (See below)	\$15,348,613	\$16,423,201	\$15,872,552

Basic STAR Savings Impact

Estimated Basic STAR Savings¹

Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
\$609	\$612	\$617	\$527

The annual budget vote for fiscal year 2025-26 by the qualified voters of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, Saratoga & Schenectady Counties, New York, will be held at BH-BL High School, Tuesday, May 20, 2025, between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the BH-BL Central School District, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

**Budget Components Definitions

- Administrative costs include the salaries and benefits of administrators and supervisors, the salaries and benefits of clerical staff, school board costs, curriculum development, staff development, tax collection, legal and auditing costs, central printing, central data processing, general insurance, BOCES administrative costs, research, planning, and evaluation.
- Program costs include the salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, guidance, library, and athletics), textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, extracurricular activities, BOCES program costs, and all costs of the transportation program except bus purchases.
- Capital costs include the salaries and benefits of custodial staff, debt service, bus purchases, utilities, fire insurance, tax certiorari, and other court-ordered expenses.



The high school's Sports Marketing & Management students got a behind-the-scenes look at Jets Stadium during Sports Business Day. They also learned about careers on the business side of the sports industry, including marketing, finance, fan experience, ticket sales, community and public relations, sports reporting, multimedia and digital media, and corporate partnerships.

The box on the left is the "School District Budget Notice" as required by state law. School districts must present their costs in three prescribed components, as defined below. A more detailed breakdown of expenses and revenues is given on page 2.

* Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2025-26, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, the district assumes the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses, such as new equipment purchases. To result in a no tax levy increase as the law requires, we would also need to cut a number of staff positions and increase class sizes.

¹ The estimated basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law. The numbers listed here come from the NYS Office of Real Property Services website: <https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/max-savings/school-district/sd41.htm>

Budget Q&A

Q. What happens if voters do not approve the proposed budget?

A. Under New York state law, if the school budget is defeated, the BH-BL Board of Education typically has two options: put the same or a modified budget up for another vote on the third Tuesday in June, or immediately adopt a contingent budget. If residents defeat the proposed budget during a second vote, the board must adopt a contingent budget.

CONTINGENT BUDGET RULES

Under New York state law, districts that adopt a contingent budget cannot increase the current tax levy by any amount—resulting in a zero percent tax levy increase.

Bringing the BH-BL tax levy increase down to zero would force the board to reduce the proposed budget by \$1,377,502. In doing this, the board may not be able to adhere to its goal

of preserving student programs and services or staff, or expanding academic and extracurricular programming. It would also likely have to make a number of staff reductions across all schools, which would increase class sizes.

Adopting a contingent budget also prohibits a district from spending any money in certain areas, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases including school buses; nonessential maintenance; capital expenditures (except in emergencies); salary increases for non-instructional and non-unionized employees; and certain field trips and student supplies.

These requirements existed prior to the tax levy cap and remain in effect.



Q. Are new buses being purchased for next year?

A. Yes, new buses, both electric and diesel, are included in the budget for next school year. The total estimated cost of the new buses is included in the budget proposal rather than as a separate proposition. Bus purchases are done this way so the district doesn't have to borrow funds and incur debt. The proposal includes \$1,640,954* for the purchase of new buses to replace some of the district's oldest buses. (*This figure includes funding for two full-size electric buses. However, electric buses will only be purchased if the district receives grant funding for a significant portion of the total cost.)

The district anticipates being reimbursed approximately 72.5 percent or \$1.19 million of the cost of the buses through state transportation aid in subsequent years. Additionally, by purchasing buses outright, the district saves an estimated \$40,000 annually in interest and legal fees associated with borrowing funds.

BUS REPLACEMENT PLAN

The buses scheduled to be replaced in the 2025-26 school year are among the oldest in the district's fleet and have already accumulated high mileage, exceeded their warranties, and undergone many maintenance repairs. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent safety codes. Furthermore, new school buses are aligned with the latest safety and emissions standards and have better fuel economy rates.

BH-BL's 69-bus fleet travels more than 750,000 miles a year, transporting more than 3,100 students to and from its five schools. The buses are also used for sporting events, out-of-district school placement runs, shared transportation runs, field trips, summer school, and other events.

In order to keep buses in safe working order, the district's long-standing policy has been to replace several of the oldest buses each year.

Q. Are there any tax savings programs available to help taxpayers?

Homeowners can receive a property tax exemption or credit under the School Tax Relief (STAR) program.

The Basic STAR* exemption or credit is available on a homeowner's primary residence for anyone who owns and lives in his/her own home. Homeowners who earn \$500,000 or less can receive a STAR credit. Homeowners earning \$250,000 or less can receive a STAR exemption.

The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of taxpayers age 65 and older with yearly incomes of \$107,200 or less.

OTHER TAX RELIEF OPTIONS

BH-BL residents over the age of 65 with incomes of \$37,400 or less also can be exempted from paying school taxes on 5 to 50 percent of their

home's assessed value depending on their exact income. The district also grants a disability exemption, ranging from 5 to 50 percent, for qualifying residents of any age with disabilities and incomes of less than \$37,400.

The board adopted the Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption and, more recently, the Firefighters' Tax Exemption, which allows qualifying veterans and firefighters to be exempted from paying school taxes on a *portion* of their home's assessed value depending on their military and fire service.

Applications for these district exemptions and the state's STAR program must be filed with your town assessor's office. Please visit your town's website or call your town assessor if you have questions.

2025 Estimated STAR Values

Basic STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$609
Charlton	\$612
Clifton Park	\$617
Glenville	\$527

Enhanced STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$1,591
Charlton	\$1,592
Clifton Park	\$1,664
Glenville	\$1,216

***STAR Program Savings:** Please contact your town assessor's office to learn more about the latest requirements for residents participating in the STAR program.

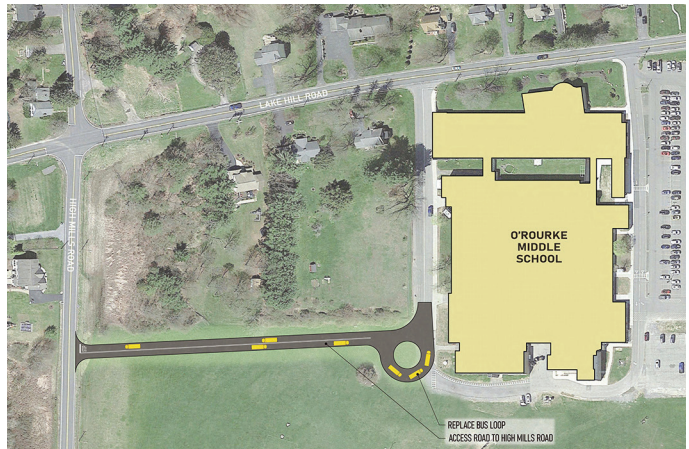
2023 Capital Project work to begin this spring

As of March 2025, the district has received State Education Department (SED) approval and will begin Phase I of the voter-approved 2023 Renewing Spaces, Inspiring Futures: It Starts with K-5 Capital Project this spring. Phase II work went to bid in April 2025, with anticipated work to begin in the early summer 2025 and continuing into the fall of 2026. Below are the timelines and a list of projects slated to be included in Phases I-III. (All plans are contingent upon SED approval.)

Phase I Work (Spring/Summer 2025)

- ♦ **BH-BL High School:** Replace cafeteria and gas house roofs.
- ♦ **O'Rourke Middle School:** Create a new road from bus loop to High Mills Road, repave bus loop, and replace roofing on first floor of Special Education wing and choral classrooms.
- ♦ **Charlton Heights Elementary:** Separate bus loop from car traffic by expanding parking in front, repave side parking lot and address drainage concerns, and replace library roof.

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This spring at O'Rourke Middle School, an access road for school bus transport is being constructed. It will connect to High Mills Road from the existing bus loop to improve traffic flow and separate busing from parking and drop off/pick up areas on the other side of the school.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

17

The number of students recognized in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program over the past five years. Congratulations to Miles Bechtel, Owen LeClair, and Thomas Kotkoskie who are this year's National Merit Scholarship Commended students.

38

The number of official student clubs and organizations at the high school, which include the newly added Spartan Explorers, Racquet Sports Club, and Astronomy Club.

15

The number of students from the Class of 2024 who achieved the New York State Seal of Biliteracy upon their graduation last year.

Board of Education Candidates

VOTE FOR TWO

On May 20, residents may also elect two members to the Board of Education for three-year terms.



MEET-THE-CANDIDATES NIGHT, MAY 14

Learn more about the candidates at a *community-hosted* event at **O'Rourke MS Library at 7 p.m.**

Residents are asked to submit questions ahead of time. Scan the QR code with your phone (right) or visit bhbl.org to submit questions.



* The statements to the right of each candidate's bio were written by the candidates. The opinions contained within are theirs and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

James Robertson

is seeking his first term on the Board of Education. He and his wife Leigh Ann have been district residents for 14 years. They



have two children who attend Charlton Heights Elementary School. James attended Kansas State University and is a mechanical engineer for Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. James has been involved in a variety of district and community organizations over the years, including FIRST Lego League, Drama Club, Girls Wrestling, and Earth Day clean up. He also was a 2023 Capital Project Committee member. For the past 20 years he has been a donor for the American Red Cross and a volunteer SCUBA diver for local Sea Perch competitions. *See James' position statement at right. →

I have been a Burnt Hills resident for 14 years and have witnessed firsthand the great reputation BH-BL has of providing an excellent education. I have really enjoyed meeting the teachers, administration, and staff while our kids are in elementary school. I am appreciative of the hard work they put in and want to help continue the BH-BL tradition by running for Board of Education.

I'm a mechanical engineer at Knoll's Atomic Power Laboratory. I enjoy engineering because it teaches you to seek facts, follow data, and build a solution. The facts are that our student population is growing, our buildings are heavily used, and our staff's salaries have not kept up with inflation.

My top two priorities are to make sure that our buildings provide an effective learning environment and that our staff are compensated for the great job they do. In 2023, I was fortunate to participate on the Capital Improvement Bond Committee as a parent representative from Charlton Heights. It was an incredible experience being able to see the spaces our students spend their day in, meet the teachers and administrators that give their best to our kids, and getting to know other members of the community. I'm excited to see that work is starting this spring with a new road from High Mills to the middle school, starting the classroom addition at Pashley, expanding the parking lot at Charlton Heights, followed by renovating dozens of classrooms and bathrooms across the district over the next few years. I'm glad to see the investment we are making in our buildings, especially the elementary schools. Based on NY state data from the 2023-24 school year, 46% of students in the district are in the elementary schools. I believe it is important to have a parent from the elementary schools on the Board of Education, which we currently don't have. We must also invest in our staff. They are the ones that show up every day for our kids. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, between 2021 and 2024 inflation rose 15%. Our staff is our greatest resource and we must make sure they are compensated appropriately.

If elected, I will work with administration and faculty to continue to invest in our buildings and our people. I will also listen to the community, administration, and faculty, striking the right balance of all those involved to resolve new challenges. I respectfully ask for your vote and thank you for your time.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

741

The number of students (grades 4-12) who are participating in choral music ensembles this school year.

73

The number of middle and high school students who were selected to participate in various Capital District and state honors concerts.

468

The number of high school students who are enrolled in art elective courses, including College in High School (CHS) courses where they earn college credits.

12

The number of consecutive years BH-BL has been recognized by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) for its commitment to music education with the Best Communities for Music Education award.



Michael Libertucci

is seeking his first term on the Board of Education.

He and his wife Meghan have been Glenville residents for 10 years, and they have two children

attending O'Rourke Middle School. Michael is a 9th-grade English teacher in the Schalmont school district. He is also a graduate of Schalmont High School, has his Bachelor's Degree in English from SUNY Albany, and his Master's Degree in Secondary Education from the College of St. Rose. He has been involved in the community as a youth sports coach, a member of the wrestling and field hockey booster clubs, and a member of the Scotia and Glenville Shared Services Committees. He is also a NYS United Teachers Leadership Institute graduate and an active member of the Adirondack 46ers. *See Michael's position statement at right. ➔

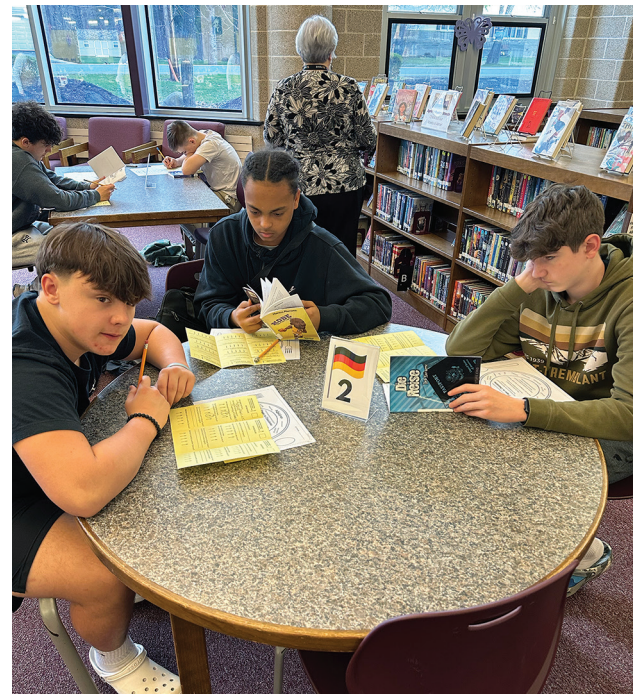


Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake is a tremendous school district, with many outstanding programs and opportunities for our children. Whenever I attend my children's concerts, sporting events, and other school programs, the idea of "Spartan Pride" is apparent. You can't help but take pride in our school community.

As a parent of two middle school students and a teacher with over 20 years of experience in the 7-12 classroom, I see what our children bring to school with them every day. I believe public education is a foundation of our democracy, and the great equalizer of our society. Regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnicity, location, or ability, the promise of a public education is something that every person in the United States should be entitled to. As the challenges facing public schools mount, it is imperative to have school board members who are aware of the challenges, but also see them first hand on a daily basis. From the ways technology is consumed, to the mental health crisis that is plaguing our nation, to students who come to school hungry, to staring down an uncertain economic future, our children need a stable education system, with a strong foundation of support in place, now more than ever. As an educator, and parent, I am well-suited to offer an informed viewpoint on how to pave the way for our children to be successful.

During these economic times, creating a sound, fiscally responsible budget for the community, that addresses the needs of our students, maintains all of the great programs available, but also addresses the issues that public education will cross in the future is imperative. According to the NYS School Boards Association, it is estimated that in the next 10 years, New York will face a teacher shortage of over 180,000 teachers. This is a staggering number that will have a direct impact on our students. I am excited to work with all of the district's shareholders to ensure BH-BL attracts, and retains the very best candidates available to guarantee our children continue to have a high-quality public education.

BH-BL provides our children with an excellent education, in the classroom, in the concert hall, on the athletic fields/mats, and in the community. The challenges that lie ahead will need strong leadership, and people with the expertise in the field of education. I am asking for your vote, as I will bring these attributes, and more to the Board of Education.



German book "tasting" was recently on the menu for eighth graders in Frau Phelps's German classes. Students rotated through stations "sampling" books and graphic novels before rating them using a list of questions, all written and answered in German. The books are part of the new collection of World Language books in the O'Rourke Middle School library. Frau Phelps and School Librarian Lori Bennett were awarded a grant from the BH-BL Education Foundation to create the collection, which includes titles in French, Mandarin, and Spanish, along with books for English Language Learners.

Capital Project Timeline

Continued from page 5

- ♦ **Pashley Elementary:** Replace gym and library roofs.
- ♦ **Stevens Elementary:** Replace gym and gas house roofs.

Phase II Work: Anticipated Spring 2025 to Summer 2026

BH-BL High School

- ♦ **Spring 2025:** Install septic system at Centennial Field concession.
- ♦ **Summer 2025:** Renovate bathrooms 123A-E and 223A-E, renovate the school's oldest science lab classroom and install a science chemical storage ventilation unit.
- ♦ **Summer 2026:** Renovate the Family & Consumer Sciences classrooms/wing, install air conditioning in the woodshop classroom, and upgrade the swimming pool equipment and ventilation units.

O'Rourke Middle School

- ♦ **Summer 2025:** Renovate the old library area, renovate the locker room bathrooms, upgrade classrooms (112, 114, and 120-128) through Oct. 2025, begin gymnasium renovations (painting in Sept. 2025), renovate bathrooms (113 and 131) through Sept. 2025.
- ♦ **Summer 2026:** Renovate first and second floor bathrooms into single use, replace school's exterior doors, and renovate the Family & Consumer Sciences classrooms/wing through Oct. 2026.

Charlton Heights Elementary School

- ♦ **Summer 2025:** Install a new gym dividing wall, replace selected exterior doors, repair exterior masonry work, renovate bathrooms in rooms 15, 26, 27 and in the kindergarten area, and renovate classrooms and bathrooms in the D-Quad through Oct. 2025.
- ♦ **Summer 2026:** Renovate bathrooms (A5, A6, B5 and B6), replace selected exterior doors, renovate classrooms 7-12 through Dec. 2026.

Pashley Elementary School

- ♦ **Spring 2025-Spring 2026:** Construct a four-classroom addition.

Stevens Elementary School

- ♦ **Spring 2025:** Replace intercom system and arch-top windows.
- ♦ **Summer 2025:** Install a new dividing wall in the gym, renovate the administration/main office area, renovate bathrooms in rooms 110, 122, kindergarten area, 32A, 32B and 34A, and renovate classrooms 11, 12, 32 and 33 through Oct. 2025.



An architectural rendering of a renovated elementary classroom. Numerous classrooms at the three elementary schools are slated for renovation to bring them up to a common district standard.

Phase III Work: Anticipated Spring 2026 to Fall 2027

BH-BL High School

- ♦ **Spring 2026:** Install new entry drive lighting and new cafeteria lighting and controls.
- ♦ **Summer 2026:** Replace Alumni Hall floors, renovate instructional technology (IT) rooms/suite, replace flooring in the main offices and guidance counseling offices, renovate bathrooms (189A and 189B), renovate receiving area located near the kitchen and custodial areas through Sept. 2026, and construct a multi-purpose field through the fall of 2026.
- ♦ **Summer 2027:** Renovate bathrooms (152, 153, 190 and 191), renovate gym hallway, construct a secure vestibule in the gym lobby, renovate the team room (near gym), repair the gym roof, renovate the gym through early fall 2027, and renovate the kitchen area through early fall 2027.

Pashley Elementary School

- ♦ **Summer 2026:** Renovate parking lot, replace windows in original section of building, install a new dividing wall in the gym, renovate bathrooms (Quads A & B), replace hallway tile, and renovate C Quad classrooms and kindergarten rooms through fall 2026.
- ♦ **Summer 2027:** Renovate bathrooms in rooms 18, 20, 30 and 32, renovate resource room and classrooms on second floor, replace hallway tile, and renovate the administration area, nurse's office and Strive classroom through Sept. 2027.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

37

The number of student-athletes from the Class of 2024 who signed letters of intent to continue playing their respective sports at a collegiate level this year.

1,621

The number of students in grades 7-12 who participated on an athletic team this school year.

2

The number of athletic teams (fall & winter seasons only) that won state championship titles: Field Hockey and Girls Indoor Track 4x400 Relay.

4

The number of Section 2 championship titles (fall & winter seasons only) won by Boys Volleyball, Girls Volleyball, Field Hockey and Girls Cross Country teams.

2025-26 School Budget Vote

Continued from page 1

and materials, contractual services, and instructional resources) that residents and, thus, the district is experiencing. They sought to offset these rises by identifying cost-saving measures, through attrition and realignment of positions.

Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath shared, "Like our residents and local businesses, our school district is navigating the complexities of higher inflation. Recognizing these economic headwinds, the Board of Education has been diligent in ensuring our financial stability so that we can continue to invest in the programs and services our students need to thrive, both now and in the future."

What's included in the proposal?

Through strategic realignment and continued careful fiscal planning, the board is proposing a budget that does the following:

- ◆ **Preserves programming and supports that were added over the past few years to target student needs and interests.** These include such services as the K-5 math intervention specialists who provide early intervention and support for mathematical skill development to build a solid math foundation. It also includes preserving the elementary school counselors who work with students on social-emotional and character development skills, career awareness, and offer individual and group services and guidance to support healthy minds. It also includes the expansion of the Mandarin Chinese language elective through grade 12.

- ◆ **Expands the district's music program.** Over the past three years, there has been a 500 percent increase among students participating in this program. As a result, string instrument instructional time and space is beyond capacity, and the orchestra ensemble is extremely overcrowded. This budget includes funding to expand the orchestra program by adding a part-time instructor and an additional level of orchestra at the high school.



High school seniors Aidan Urstadt on the cello (left) and Shianna Ramsaran on the violin (right) are members of the school's Chamber Strings and Orchestra Ensembles. Since the fourth grade, both students have taken weekly lessons through BH-BL's music program and, for nine years, have performed in school and regional concerts and festivals. Over the past three years, there has been a 500 percent increase among students participating in orchestra. The proposed budget includes funding to expand the orchestra program by adding a part-time instructor and an additional level of orchestra at the high school.

- ◆ **Continues to support new instructional resources to replace the outdated classroom materials.** This includes further support of the K-5 English Language Arts series that is better aligned to the science of reading and current research around literacy acquisition. It also continues to fund required science lab materials and supplies that align with the new science standards and enhance the hands-on learning experience for students.

- ◆ **Supports extracurricular offerings.** This budget includes shifting costs associated with the crew and ice hockey programs into the operating budget. Ice hockey is a shared program with the Ballston Spa School District, and the team's home rink is the Schenectady County Recreational Facility Ice Rink. The crew program has its team row out of a boathouse on the Mohawk River. The proposed budget now includes operating expenses for these established interscholastic athletic programs, which are currently funded, to a large extent, by parents of team members. The budget also supports new clubs at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

- ◆ **Streamlines school-to-home communication.** This budget prioritizes efficient and direct school-to-home communication through the implementation of ParentSquare. This innovative app provides parents/guardians with a single, easy-to-use platform to connect with teachers, administration, coaches, and other educators supporting their child's education, to foster stronger partnerships and keep vital information readily available.

"Strategic budget management and planning by the board ensures the sustainable continuation of federally funded programs, allowing us to maintain our comprehensive student offerings that our community is used to," says Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. David Collins. "This unwavering commitment underscores our enduring belief that putting students first is the cornerstone of providing a rich and successful educational experience."

JUST CAN'T HIDE THAT *Spartan* PRIDE



ABOVE

Congratulations to the high school's Odyssey of the Mind team—June Bodenstab, Kate Gerwitz, Meg Gerwitz, Ellen Guthrie, Katie Lopez, and Sammy Lopez—for taking 2nd place in the regional competition and 4th place at states. They now advance to the World Finals in Michigan!

BELOW

For nearly two decades, O'Rourke students have participated in the national Toys for Tots program that provides those in need with holiday gifts. NJHS advisor Monica Hills and students visit the Glenville Target every year to use the money raised—\$3,450



this year—to buy toys to be donated. Hear what our students have to say by scanning the QR code below.



ABOVE

Congratulations to high school students Zoe Adams, Simon Rieffel and Adelynn Redinger for winning top awards at the Greater Capital Region Science & Engineering Fair. Additionally, Adams qualified to compete at the state-level Science Fair, and Redinger will compete at the STANYS State Science Congress in June. Scan the QR code to learn more about the students' awards and the Science Research Program.



ABOVE

Congratulations to the 2025 Founder's Day award recipients who were recognized and honored for going above and beyond for their school and the district. Thank you to the following staff and community members: Kasie Batty, Kristen Boussa, Christine Crawford, Tom DiAcetis, Breanna Donzelli, Neil Estrada, Laurel Jolliffe, Chris Marshall, Kristin McCabe, Carrie Neary, Darcy Passarelli, Katina Saxton, and Jennifer Sutliff.

**LEFT**

You might have seen them raking leaves in neighborhoods throughout the community, volunteering at a local food pantry, or doing landscaping work at the front of O'Rourke Middle School. Who are these silent, helpful heroes? They are members of the Impact Club! Learn more by scanning the QR Code.

**RIGHT**

BH-BL High School and Career & Technical Education students received top placements at the Regional SkillsUSA Competition advancing them to the NYS competition. Congratulations to Logan Garrand,



Electrical Trades (1st place); Mary Guyer (pictured above), Small Animal Sciences (2nd place); Liam Wolf, Environmental Conservation & Forestry (2nd place); Ed Chase, Automotive Trades (3rd place); and Hadassah Harrell, Cosmetology (3rd place). Connor O'Neill will also compete at the NYS SkillsUSA competition in the Criminal Justice Quiz Bowl.

BELOW

The Board of Education, Superintendent McGrath, and Athletic Director Joe Scalise recognized the **Field Hockey** team for winning the 2024 Class B NYS Championship title. Congratulations to team members Anna Caccamo, Gabriella Donahue, Kaelin Fish, Kailtyn Green, Addisyn Knapik, Grace Kogut, Katie Lansley, Maggie Lansley, Taylor Loria, Lily Mastrella, Maddy Mazzone, Lillian Morse, Kayla Mosher, Allie O'Rourke, Layla Sharp, Quinn Stowell-Melley, Halie Tomlinson, and Isabella Yecies. The **Girls Indoor Track 4x4 Relay** team of Addison Cyr, Adalyn Greer, Julia James, Allie O'Rourke, and Adalynn Wood were recognized for capturing the NYS Federation championship title with an incredible time of 3:56:47.

**RIGHT**

Congratulations to Fine Arts students, such as Giselle Marrera-Hogan, who left their mark on the local art scene this year with several even earning spots in prestigious and renowned art shows, such as the 3-D Art Show, the HS Regional Juried Show, Media Arts Fest, the HS Juried Art Show, and the BOCES Art Show.



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BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**DON'T FORGET
TO VOTE ON**

**May
20**

7 AM to 9 PM

**BH-BL HIGH SCHOOL GYM,
88 LAKEHILL RD**

- ✓ The 2025-26 Proposed Budget
- ✓ Two Board of Education Candidates

► **VOTER QUALIFICATIONS**

All voters must be United States citizens, age 18 or older on election day, residents of the BH-BL School District for 30 days immediately prior to election day, and registered to vote.

► **REGISTERING TO VOTE**

You are already registered to vote on May 20 if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election.

► **ABSENTEE & EARLY MAIL
VOTING BALLOTS**

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 20, or by early mail voting ballot if they would rather vote by mail.

To receive an absentee or early mail voting ballot, first fill out an application which can be obtained from Deputy Clerk of the Board Rebecca Manson at the district office or downloaded from the BH-BL website at www.bhbl.org/budget/voting-information/

The completed applications must be returned to Rebecca Manson at least seven days (May 13) before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or at least one day before the election if the ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter at the district office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 20. For more information, call 518-399-9141, ext. 85020.



Future scientists show off their talents at a districtwide K-5 STEM Fair where their projects were "judged" by the high school's Science Club members.