



2014-2015
PROPOSED

Budget

Working together to maintain excellence

Proposed budget preserves programs and services, carries a 1.94% tax levy increase

On May 20, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$60,458,535 budget for the 2014-15 school year. The budget calls for a tax levy increase of 1.94 percent (which is within the state's tax levy cap), preserves current programs and services, and seeks to position BH-BL for a strong educational and financial future.

The proposed budget reflects a spending increase of 2.44 percent, or \$1.4 million, over the current school year (see chart on page 10).

Despite the difficult financial times facing schools today, the board was mindful of two important goals as it developed the budget:

continuing its commitment to excellence by preserving BH-BL's high-quality programs and services for students and being fiscally responsible to the community.

Financial forecast

Like many districts throughout the state, BH-BL began developing its budget with a significant budget gap, due primarily to rising costs (e.g., contractual salaries, retirement system contributions) and the continued loss of state aid through the Gap Elimination Adjustment, or GEA (see page 3).

School leaders found savings of more than \$670,000 in current programs, but must still use money from the district's fund balance to fill the budget gap even after receiving a modest state aid increase of 2.6 percent in late April.

Although the increase in aid is welcomed, school officials caution that using the district's fund balance to balance the budget does little to address the larger, systemic problem. Districts are still being denied their full state aid and are developing budgets within a tax levy limit. In BH-BL, this could

eventually force the board to spend down its fund balance, cut programs and/or raise school taxes.

"Conservative financial planning over the years means we can weather this revenue shortfall in the short term without cutting student programs or reducing staff," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath. "However, in the era of a tax levy limit, our long-range financial planning model shows that continued state aid withholdings of this type cannot be sustained year after year."

In fact, next school year nearly \$1.5 million in aid will be withheld from BH-BL as a result of the GEA. Although the district will be back to receiving the level of state aid it did in 2010 before the GEA was enacted, five years of inflation coupled with the cumulative aid loss of \$12 million means revenues are still lacking.

Fortunately, not all improvements for students have to come with a big price tag. School leaders were able to restructure and reallocate existing resources to create mostly budget-neutral opportunities for students.

"Cutting our academic program was not a viable option," adds McGrath. "Instead, we made changes designed to continue providing students with a quality education, but with minimal increases."

See page 2 for what's included in the proposed 2014-15 school budget.



Middle School PACE students Anna LeClair and Dora Law collaborate on a forensic flame test to identify a mystery substance during Katie Duell's accelerated science class.

Please remember to **vote!**

BUDGET VOTE:

- ▶ **Tuesday, May 20**
- ▶ **7 a.m. to 9 p.m.**
- ▶ **High School Gymnasium, 88 Lakehill Road, Burnt Hills**

BUDGET AT A GLANCE:

- ▶ Proposed Budget: \$60,458,535
- ▶ Tax levy increase: 1.94%
- ▶ Budget-to-budget increase: 2.44%
- ▶ Preserves programs, services and staff districtwide

**RESULTS BY THE
➔ NUMBERS:****96%**

of BH-BL seniors graduate with a Regents diploma or better.

91%

of BH-BL graduates attend either a four- or two-year college, annually.

#5

BH-BL is consistently ranked 5th out of 85 school districts in the Capital Region by the *Albany Business Review* newspaper.

Top 5%

Of the 455 upstate school districts, BH-BL is ranked in the top 5 percent by the *Business Review's Schools Report*. The rankings are based on a formula that factors in performance on Regents exams, state assessments in elementary and middle schools, and graduation and drop-out rates.

Here's what's included in the proposed 2014-15 budget

The proposed budget maintains the current year's programs, services and staff and keeps class sizes stable districtwide. It also includes changes and improvements that are nearly all budget neutral. Take a look below.

AT BH-BL HIGH SCHOOL:

- Continues the district's commitment to develop new courses for students, including Computer Science Principles, Exploring Computer Science, Media Production, and Personal Fitness.
- Addresses class size concerns by balancing the schedule and sections to allow for greater flexibility. It is projected the high school will have 56 fewer students next year.
- Explores new Early College High School offerings that will allow students to earn a full year of transcribed SUNY/Advanced Placement credits before graduation.

AT O'ROURKE MIDDLE SCHOOL:

- Supports a true teaming structure for grades 7 and 8 by allocating resources to support the study and research of a school schedule reconfiguration for the 2015-16 school year.
- Reorganizes existing staff to create 12 sixth-grade sections. Doing this maintains class sizes for students

transitioning to the middle school and accommodates the enrollment increase of approximately 15 students.

AT THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS:

- Maintains the total number of class sections, based on enrollment projections.
- Improves the elementary enrichment program (PACE) by reorganizing existing staff to offer additional opportunities for students in kindergarten through grade 2. And, by using the existing BOCES budget, an introductory foreign language program will be offered to students at all three elementary schools. The course will be decided by BOCES, but would likely be either Chinese or Spanish.
- Increases the elementary summer school programming budget.

TECHNOLOGY:

- Continues the district's commitment to investing in instructional technology and includes an expansion of the current Chromebook laptop computer initiative to include students in grades 6 through 8. This means next school year every grade 3 through 8 classroom will be equipped with Chromebooks for student use.

- Reorganizes existing information technology staff for increased Chromebook professional development and technical assistance.

TRANSPORTATION:

- Supports a state-aidable assistant transportation supervisor position to better support safe and efficient operations. This position will be financially supported through state aid and health insurance and retirement savings.

SAFETY & SECURITY TEAM:

- Continues to support the district's safety and security initiatives (set in motion this year at the request of parents after the Newtown tragedy) by upgrading two existing substitute security monitors to permanent positions.
- Explores plans to improve the video camera system at the high school for continued student and building safety.

ATHLETICS:

- Maintains current athletic programs and offerings.
- Supports the replacement of worn-out and torn equipment and supplies used for physical education classes and extra-curricular athletic offerings.



Charlton Heights first-grade student Christopher Guo experiments with a symmetry lesson that requires him to apply both math and art skills.

Elementary class size projection range

Grade Level	Average Class Size
Kindergarten:	18 to 20
Grade 1:	18 to 20
Grade 2:	18 to 20
Grade 3:	20 to 22
Grade 4:	20 to 22
Grade 5:	24 to 26

These average class size ranges reflect districtwide figures based on current enrollment data. Class sizes will vary by school.



What has the district done to hold down costs?

The ongoing financial challenges facing the district has intensified BH-BL's cost-saving efforts. Staff, board members and volunteers manage to find new ways to reduce, combine, reconfigure, reprioritize and simply do without. Along with delivering mostly budget-neutral student opportunities, the budget proposal also includes these other effective cost-saving measures:

- **Health Insurance.** A \$200,000 savings is being realized within the budget thanks to a number of employees within the district's three bargaining units—teachers, administrators and support staff—as well as some retirees who voluntarily chose one of the district's less expensive health insurance options.
- **Natural Gas.** The district buys natural gas directly from the producer as part of a BOCES-

run consortium of 140 school districts. This results in a \$200,000 savings.

- **Retired Debt Service.** Next year, some of the district's debt will have been paid off, resulting in nearly \$171,000 in savings.

Ongoing Savings

- **Cooperative Services.** The purchase of cooperative services through BOCES, such as risk management/Haz-Com, communications, some data processing and some special education services, is significantly less expensive than hiring people outright, particularly since the district is reimbursed for a portion of the costs through state aid.
- **Transportation.** BH-BL is part of a three-district consortium that buys diesel fuel and gasoline as a group. This enables



Sophia Mackes in kindergarten teacher Bridget Patton's class points to the days of the week during morning program. Full-day kindergarten was implemented this year and Mrs. Patton had this to say about it: "The additional instructional time afforded in full-day kindergarten allows us to delve deeper into each subject area and still have time to incorporate fun and engaging activities into our lessons. Students now have more opportunities to learn, explore, socialize, and become more independent."

the district to get prices slightly below state contract for an annual savings of at least \$15,000. Additionally, the implementation of full-day kindergarten has allowed the district to reduce the number of mid-day bus runs. As a result, the transportation department has been able to use approximately 3,100 fewer gallons of gas (as of March), reduce the number of kindergarten out-of-district placements by 93 percent, and reduce the wear and tear on buses by driving them 19 fewer hours daily.

The GEA and how it's affecting BH-BL

School districts around the state are heading into their fifth straight year of a Gap Elimination Adjustment (GEA), which will result in a loss in funds of nearly \$1.5 million for BH-BL in the coming year.

The GEA was first introduced in 2010 by then-Governor Paterson as a way to help close New York's budget deficit. Under the legislation, a portion of the funding shortfall at the state level is divided among all school districts throughout the state by subtracting it from a district's state-established Foundation Aid.

In the early 2000s, prior to the GEA, a landmark court ruling resulting from the Campaign for Fiscal Equity lawsuit required the state to restructure its school aid formula to make it equitable among districts. The revamped aid formula determined the amount of aid a district should receive based on geographic needs. This became known as Foundation Aid.

Unfortunately, the GEA actually draws funding away from the state-mandated Foundation Aid.

"BH-BL is being denied aid that the state is required by law to provide for our students," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath.

Since first introduced, the total GEA reductions in school aid for BH-BL amounts to nearly \$12 million. Its impact on the school district's budget has been significant, resulting in a shifting of the tax burden to the local taxpayers over the past few years to help offset the impact of the withheld state aid.

The BH-BL Board of Education has been advocating for the removal of the GEA. This year the board adopted a resolution and met with individual lawmakers to explain the serious impact the GEA has had on the BH-BL budget. To get involved in these advocacy efforts, please visit the budget section on the district's website or contact the board at boardpresident@bhbl.org.



Are there other items on the May 20 ballot?

Relying on e-communications

District officials are committed to reducing paper and ink expenses by continuing to take advantage of electronic communications. They are relying more upon the district's new website, School News Notifier (SNN), Facebook, and parent and student portals to communicate with parents, students and staff. Additionally, this fall the district will launch an e-newsletter to share information and photos about the district's renovation projects. It will be disseminated through SNN, so be sure to sign up!

In addition to the 2014-15 budget proposition, voters will be asked to consider two other separate propositions, as well as elect three candidates to the Board of Education (see pages 6-8).

Proposition #2: Purchase property adjacent to the high school

Residents will be asked to vote on a proposition that allows the district to use \$148,000 of *previously approved* renovations referendum funds to purchase property and an accompanying dwelling at 834 Route 50 in Burnt Hills.

Using existing funds within the voter-approved referendum project means the purchase of this property carries **no tax impact**. Furthermore, nearly 74 percent of the cost of the property may be reimbursed to the district through state aid.

School officials explain the scope of the renovation projects will not change and could result in some cost savings.

The nearly 1.5 acres of property is located behind the high school athletic fields

where the equipment storage building will be installed as part of the renovations referendum. The additional land would make delivery, maintenance, and emergency vehicle access easier and safer. It would also allow the district to maintain a majority of the green space (e.g., trees, bushes), thus offering more privacy from Route 50.

In addition, the property has an existing driveway off of Route 50, which would become the primary roadway for construction vehicles accessing the high school work site during renovations. (Visit www.bhbl.org for referendum details.)

Having a separate work site roadway will minimize construction-related traffic at the high school entrances on Kingsley and Lakehill Roads; help reduce the wear and tear to the high school parking lots and fields; keep classroom disruptions to a minimum; and keep construction vehicles away from students and staff.

There is also a small, structurally stable house located on the property that also has functioning utilities (e.g., water, electric, gas, sanitation). It would be used as the temporary construction field office for architects and engineers throughout the renovation project. In doing this, the need and associated expense to run utility lines to the high school work site are eliminated.

"The potential savings from state aid coupled with the savings realized by using existing features on the property will likely offset the cost of the land," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath. "We always try to capitalize on win-win situations that result in the district being able to accomplish more without spending more."

Proposition #3: School bus replacement plan

The board is also asking residents to vote on a proposition authorizing the use of up to \$450,000 to replace five of the district's oldest buses.

The vehicles to be purchased next year are three 66-passenger buses, a 29-passenger bus and one wheelchair-accessible bus.

Instead of incurring additional debt, this purchase will be included in the 2014-15 budget.

If approved, the district would be reimbursed approximately 66 percent, or \$297,000, through state transportation aid.

BH-BL's 74-bus fleet travels more than 870,000 miles a year transporting nearly 3,200 students to and from its five schools. The buses are also used for sporting events, out-of-district 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 a few of the oldest buses each year. The five buses being replaced are 12 years old and have already accumulated high mileage. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent inspection codes.

In fact, the NYS Department of Transportation recommends districts replace small buses every five to seven years and large buses every 10 years.

On average, BH-BL retires buses that are between 11 and 12 years old and likely would not pass inspection without investing a significant amount of money for repairs.

The retired buses will be traded in to reduce the purchase price of the new buses.



Charlton Heights students Shelby Cataldo, Calla Presseisen, and Tyler Rorick enjoyed their bus ride to school!



What happens if the budget is defeated? Does the tax cap law impact a contingent budget?

If the proposed budget is defeated at the polls on May 20, state law gives the school board three options: Board members may decide to put the same budget before the voters a second time, put a revised budget before the voters, or move directly to a contingent budget.

If voters defeat the budget a second time, however, the board must adopt a contingent budget.

Rules more severe now

Under the state tax levy cap law, districts that adopt a contingent budget cannot increase the current tax levy by any amount. Additionally, the following previous contingent budget requirements must remain in effect:

- A contingent budget cannot include money for furniture, equipment or new capital projects.
- The administrative proportion of a

contingent budget cannot be more than it was in the previous budget.

- Under a contingent budget, the district may also need to raise the fees charged for public use of school buildings and grounds.

Larger class sizes

Under a contingent budget, a school district must find ways to decrease expenses significantly. Bringing the BH-BL tax levy increase down to zero in 2014-15 would force the board to reduce the proposed budget by approximately \$698,477.

After removing money for furniture and equipment as required, the school board would not be able to adhere to its goal of preserving student programs and services or staff. They would likely have to make a number of staff reductions across all schools, which would likely increase class sizes in a number of places.



Pashley Elementary School first-graders Anna Darling and Lillian Morse were all smiles as they sat next to each other during a schoolwide meeting.



Are there any exemptions available to help taxpayers?

Yes. Homeowners can receive property tax exemptions under the School Tax Relief (STAR) program. Under state law, STAR exemptions can now grow by only 2 percent per year.

The **Basic STAR exemption** is available on a homeowner's primary residence for anyone who owns and lives in his/her own home and earns less than \$500,000 a year.

The **Enhanced STAR exemption** is available on the primary residence of taxpayers age 65 and older with yearly incomes below \$81,900.

Is STAR changing in 2014?

No, the rules for homeowners' STAR exemptions are not changing for the fall 2014 school tax bill. How-

ever, the state comptroller's office has discovered that many exemptions were improperly granted in the past. To stop this abuse of the system, the state legislature has started requiring periodic renewal of Basic STAR exemptions. In order to continue receiving STAR exemptions, taxpayers were required to re-register with the New York State Tax Department by March 1, 2014.

Two more tax relief options

BH-BL residents over the age of 65 with an income 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 income. Additionally, the district grants a disability exemption,

also ranging from 5 to 50 percent, for qualifying residents of any age with disabilities and incomes of less than \$37,400.

Applications for either of these district exemptions and for state STAR exemptions must be filed with your town assessor's office.

Call your town assessor or visit your town website if you have questions about STAR or other exemptions.

2014 Estimated STAR Values

Basic STAR	Estimated Tax Savings
Ballston:	\$733
Charlton:	\$734
Clifton Park:	\$766
Glenville:	\$582
Enhanced STAR	Estimated Tax Savings
Ballston:	\$1,469
Charlton:	\$1,470
Clifton Park:	\$1,536
Glenville:	\$1,123

Board of Education CANDIDATES

At the polls on May 20, BH-BL residents may elect *three* members to the Board of Education. The positions are unpaid and become effective July 1, 2014. Members serve a three-year term of office.



John Blowers joined the Board of Education in 2006 and has served as both board president

and vice president. He is a member of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake class of 1983 and holds an MBA from the Kelley School of Business at Indiana University. Blowers is the talent acquisition leader for Price Chopper, the author of the novel *Life on Tilt*, and a consultant for Pinnacle HR Solutions. He coaches CYO Basketball and is board chair for Junior Achievement. Blowers resides in Ballston Lake and has two children attending O'Rourke Middle School and one child attending Charlton Heights. See Blowers' position statement at right. ➔

The statement below was written by John Blowers. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows.—Sydney J. Harris, Journalist
 “Reflecting on the state of the district is a common pastime of mine. As a lifelong district resident, I am intimately familiar with the ‘Burnt Hills way’. Continuing our district’s high performance while containing the cost of delivery has become increasingly challenging each year. Unpredictable revenue sources, coupled with limited local control on expenses, have created a dilutive dynamic to public education delivery. Compared with a generation ago, state aid has been cut in half, yet unfunded mandates have increased exponentially. As a result, several surrounding districts are in dire financial straits with bleak options to consider. I am pleased to report our district is in sound fiscal shape as a result of working together as a community using shared-decision making protocols.

As we exit the financial crisis, our attention is focused on new challenges. The realities of Common Core, APPR, testing and data sharing reinforce how the ugliness of politics continues to pollute the aspirations of education. Each of us plays a role in education delivery and we need to hold each other accountable. The egregious missteps of recent past serve as a reminder: Those entrusted with statewide responsibility for education need to understand it’s not okay to leverage our children for their political gain.

During my time on the board, I have worked hard to increase community involvement with understanding the challenges facing our district and developing solutions. I introduced online budget forums to increase transparency and launched the Legislative Task Force to give our community a collective voice in legislative issues influencing our district. I pushed for the creation of a board e-mail account and advocated for the district’s Facebook presence. I led the board’s search efforts to identify our new superintendent and, during the past two years, I have been part of a small team developing a long-term strategic plan focused on key district drivers to make our success more predictable and transparent.

I welcome the opportunity to continue to serve this community by exploring ways we can deliver quality education in the most responsible manner.”



Will Farmer is seeking a second term on the board. He has been a district resident for 19 years and previously

served on the board from 2010 to 2013. Farmer is a partner at Creatacor, Inc. in Clifton Park where he manages a dimensional marketing business that employs 55 people. He has a communications management degree from Ithaca College and is a former T-ball and basketball coach. He and his wife live in Burnt Hills. They have two sons—one attends Charlton Heights and the other attends the middle school. See Farmer’s position statement at right. ➔

The statement below was written by Will Farmer. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

“With the adoption of the Common Core standards under the Race to the Top initiative, our school district and school districts across the state and country have suffered sweeping changes resulting in adverse effects on our children and our education system.

Common Core is bad on so many levels. It’s bad for parents as it limits parental choice and shuts their voices out of their child’s education. It’s bad for teachers as they will have little control over their classrooms, leaving little room to innovate and meet the unique needs of their students. It requires testing and more testing. Our teachers will have little choice but to “teach to the test” lessening instructional time and increasing test prep. It’s bad for taxpayers as it’s another unfunded mandate adding cost while not improving education quality. And most importantly, Common Core is bad for students. It’s a one-size-fits-all education policy that assumes every student learns exactly the same. Students’ creativity and desire for learning are being stifled. Good education policy realizes that all students have different learning styles, preferences, and paces yet Common Core does not.

Our current school board has taken no action against these negative changes. I am seeking a term on the school board to get our schools back on track, rid them of this system, save our children’s future and save the taxpayer from this huge unfunded mandate. Because it’s those who are closest to the child, not national organizations or bureaucrats in Washington, who are best equipped to improve educational outcomes. Decisions about standards and assessments should be made at the state level, or better still, at the local level, where parents, teachers, and business leaders, who understand the skills students need for success at work, can provide real input. It will be my goal to not only develop a resolution to withdraw from the Race to the Top initiative but to see it through as a reality. If you are looking for a board member that will advocate for our children, I respectfully ask for your vote this election day. Find me on Facebook at Will Farmer for BH-BL School Board.”

Board of Education CANDIDATES



John Kelch

is seeking his first term on the board. A resident for 38 years, he is a retired NY government manager for Time Warner Cable. He

has held similar positions with large computer corporations and worked with numerous BOCES and NY school districts to expand educational opportunities. Kelch also served as a volunteer on the Governor's Public Broadband Initiative with leaders from across the state. He is a Vietnam veteran and served in an intelligence unit in North Africa. He has been active in the district and served as parent representative at the middle and high schools and was on the Renovation Committee. He and his wife Vicki, a BH-BL bus driver, live in Rexford with their son, who attends the high school. Kelch also has two older children who attended BH-BL. See Kelch's position statement at right. ➡

The statement below was written by John Kelch. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

"With 38 years in our school district and two families of boys attending, for most of that I too was overly accepting of public platitudes and invested little in understanding what went on 'under the covers.' Six years ago, when that changed, I was troubled by much of what I found—an administration and board that found deceiving the public all too 'justifiable' to get what they wanted and often catering to their own interests instead of the public's. Since then I have invested hundreds of hours attending meetings, conversing with staff and teachers, researching laws, rulings, and background, and advocating for constituents as the parent representative on Building Councils, PTAs, and the Renovation Committee, speaking out repeatedly to inform the community.

Our schools exist for one pre-eminent reason—to assist parents in providing the best education possible for our kids, and to do so respectful of the investments by the community, yet I often find that those stakeholders are the last ones considered in many decisions. Three years ago, when I ran to advocate for those interests, 1,300 members of the community rose to empower that, but it wasn't enough. The teachers' union, who hasn't appreciated my actions to balance decisions, brags about their ability to pre-destine 800 to 1,000 votes, and as we saw last year when they spent \$2,000 to buy and place signs for Lee-Ann Mertzluft and Jen Longtin, is able to defeat responsible candidates and install Board members that cater to their interests over those of taxpayers, parents and kids. Thus the interests of a few hundred staff dominate the interests of 18,000 in our community. When only 2,300 people vote out of 15,000 eligible, as did last year, that influence becomes pivotal, and I run against two long-term incumbents, John Blowers and Joe Pericone, that have catered to union support and rubber-stamped every vote taken.

If I'm to be elected to represent you, I will need the votes of many that have and haven't typically voted, and I ask you to gather your neighbors and turn out that vote. More of my position at BHBLCitizen.com."



Joe Pericone

joined the board in 2006 and has served as both board president and vice president. A mechanical engineer, he

has worked for General Electric for 37 years, including the past 15 years as an instructor at the GE Learning Center. He helped develop the Pathways Program, which introduces middle and high school students to engineering by bringing them to the Learning Center for hands-on lessons. A former Lakehill Soccer coach, he has been active with both Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts. Pericone and his wife have been district residents in Glenville for more than 20 years. Their four children are BH-BL graduates. See Pericone's position statement at right. ➡

The statement below was written by Joe Pericone. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

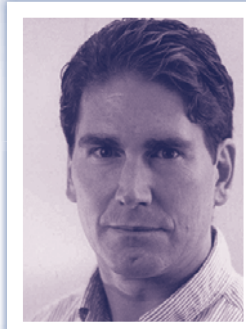
"I would like to thank the community for allowing me to represent them on the BH-BL Board of Education for the past several years. During my time, I've been involved with various aspect of the school, both with the students and the staff. I have had the opportunity to speak with different department members, find out their needs and learn about their daily work. In doing this, I have discovered a staff that is highly dedicated to helping our students, which allows them to reach their highest ability.

The district continues to be one of the highest performing districts in the region, both in and out of the classroom. As our students continue to excel academically, the district continues to offer students the opportunity to succeed outside the classroom. Take our Fine Arts program, for instance. If you listen to a concert or see a student art exhibit you'll know that our young students have amazing talent, and you'll be impressed. Our varsity sports teams continuously compete beyond the regular season, at the state level. Our student athletes not only compete on the playing field but their hard work inside the classroom has made it possible for BH-BL to have been presented with the Scholar Athlete New York State School of Distinction Award. This is awarded to schools whose varsity teams have a 90 percent or better grade point average. Only 20 of 697 school districts in the state achieve this award. BH-BL has achieved this honor three years in a row.

The district's revenue over the past several years has been drastically reduced from both the state and federal governments due to the poor economy. All district residents, who make up a large part of the district's tax base, have also felt the effects of the weak economy. Now as things are beginning to improve, the district is beginning to see an increase in revenue from the government once again. This, however, may cause the district to allow spending to go unchecked. The board must remain vigilant and continue to offer our students the best education possible, while not increasing taxes unnecessarily. To this end, I will continue to push for the balance between making sure our students receive the best education they can while keeping districtwide expenditures low."

Board of Education CANDIDATES

Additional information about board candidates may also be found on our website:
www.bhbl.org/budget/boecandidates_2014



Peter Sawyer

is seeking his first term on the Board and has been an on-and-off BH-BL resident for more than

30 years. He is a 1977 BH-BL graduate and has a Ph.D. in social sciences from Syracuse University. Sawyer is a department chair and director of the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at Hudson Valley Community College. He also is a member of the Burnt-Hills Ballston Lake Rotary Club, American Sociologist Association, Town of Ballston Parks and Recreation Committee and the Rubin Foundation. In the past he has served on several BH-BL committees. He lives in Burnt Hills and has two sons who attend the high school. See Sawyer's position statement at right. ⇨

The statement below was written by Peter Sawyer. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

"As a Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake graduate and someone who has two children in the high school, I feel a deep commitment to the community and to the education that is provided here.

I believe we have great schools, tremendous and dedicated educators, and a community that knows that character, integrity, hard work and education are the keys to the future. It is this commitment that leads me to run for the school board.

My ability to contribute to the board is reflected by more than 26 years working in higher education. I began working and studying higher education in 1986. In those early years, I developed a background in leadership programs, career development, student activities, the first-year experience and residential life. After working for a number of years, I decided to go back and earn my doctorate so I could have a stronger influence on the development of students in the classroom.

Since that time, I have taught courses at a number of colleges and universities and now work as a department chair. I also am the director of the Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at Hudson Valley Community College.

My experience in the classroom includes teaching high school students through interactive television and at the Tec-Smart campus in Malta, NY. I have also taught online classes and web-enhanced classes to traditional college students. As a department chair, I supervise 23 full-time and 70 part-time instructors.

I see the value of education in its mission to fully recognize and to bring forward the character, skills, talents and commitments of our young people.

I hope to use my experience, my commitment and my dedication to continue the fine tradition of our schools and to help them continue to be the strength and the heart of our community. As a member of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Rotary Club, I believe in the Rotary motto of "service above self."



Matthew Schultz

is seeking his first term on the board. He is a senior at BH-BL High School and graduates in June. Schultz, who has overcome challenges

brought on by dyslexia, has been on the High Honor Roll since sixth-grade. He received the 2010 Barbara Alesio Memorial Award and won the 2014 Scholastic All-Star Award. In the past, Schultz volunteered for the high school football team and worked at the Saratoga Bridges Great Pumpkin Challenge. He is also the manager of his family's business, Schultz Garden Center, and will attend Schenectady County Community College in the fall where he plans to major in business administration with a minor in computer networking and cyber security. Schultz lives in Glenville. See his position statement at right. ⇨

The statement below was written by Matthew Schultz. The opinions contained within are his and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

"Having a strong board of education is one of the most important factors in the health of a district. I am running for the board because I want to help maintain the tradition Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake has as being one of the top schools in New York. I will do this by promoting healthy connections with students, staff, teachers and the community. I have been attending board meetings since the beginning of the year and am familiar with the issues facing the district, as well as district procedures and policies.

If elected, my first matter as a board member will be to maintain the high school courses that we currently offer. I will also support the addition of new courses to help our students at all levels be even more prepared for college and the 21st century.

In addition, I will be available to the community, teachers, staff and students to both hear ideas and to inform them about what is happening. I plan to be a board member who listens to the concerns of community residents and acts upon them in a proper manner. I also plan to listen and respect all members of the board and hear what they have to say. I will bring to the board my 13 years of BH-BL schooling experience and will prove that I am committed to being a problem-solver, not a problem-maker.

Finally, I will be instrumental in the institution of the new renovations project that I followed closely from concept to approval in October 2013.

I know that Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake is an excellent school district. I have learned so much. As I prepare to graduate in June, I confidently go forward knowing I am prepared to face the world.

I want to ensure that the current and future students have the same great opportunities that I had, which is why I am running for the board. I believe that together, with constructive teamwork and enthusiastic ideas, we can make this happen.

Take a look at the video I made at www.youtube.com/watch?v=IkFOuv9MbZ4 or visit my Facebook page at www.facebook.com/matthew.schultz.92."



How will the proposed budget impact taxes? What will the state's tax credit mean for taxpayers?

The 2014-15 proposed budget of \$60,458,535 is 2.44 percent higher than the current year's budget. Given the state aid BH-BL will receive and other revenue sources, the overall property tax levy will increase 1.94 percent in order to balance the proposed budget.

Equalization rates

Calculating tax rate increases is complicated by the fact that the BH-BL school district is made up of parts of four towns.

Each year tax rate increases vary from town to town due to equalization rates that the NY State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) announces in August.

As the name implies, equalization rates are intended to spread the tax burden across the four towns as fairly as possible. The rates attempt to "equalize" or compensate for differing assessment practices, for the fact that one town's assessments may be more recent than the other towns', and for the fact that property values don't change equally in all towns within the school district.

For instance, if ORPS determines that property values have risen more in one

town than another in the past year, the tax increase in that town may be somewhat higher than the 1.94 percent average while the rate in another town may be lower than the average.

Equalization rates are typically not shared with school districts until August. Equalization rate differences tend to even out over several years, but they make it impossible to predict actual tax rate increases in each town.

The school district plays no role in determining what portion of the tax burden is placed on any one town or any one property owner.

The state ORPS office sets equalization rates that determine the portion of the total tax levy paid by each town, and the assessor in each town calculates individual assessments that determine how much is paid by each property owner.

State's property tax credit

The state's new property tax reimbursement initiative will be in effect for qualifying BH-BL taxpayers because the district's tax levy increase is *below* its maximum allowable tax levy limit of 2.29 percent.

Homeowners who are eligible for STAR in 2014-15 will receive a credit from the state for a portion of school taxes paid after paying their school tax bills. Residents will still receive a school tax bill in September and will still need to pay their annual taxes under the program.

Additional details about the program, including how and when taxpayers will be reimbursed should be forthcoming from the state.

How is the tax levy different from the tax rate?

The *tax levy* is the total amount that a school district raises each year in taxes from all property owners.

The *tax rate* is the amount of tax paid for each \$1,000 of assessed value of property.

Is the 1.94% tax levy increase within the tax cap?

Yes, it is. In fact, the proposed tax levy increase of 1.94 percent is actually *below* the district's maximum allowable tax levy limit and is the *lowest* tax levy increase the district has proposed in 40 years.

How does the tax levy cap work?

Under New York state tax cap rules, school districts must use a complex formula to calculate their own unique "tax levy limit." Districts then add exclusions set forth in the law to this limit to determine their maximum allowable tax levy for a simple majority vote.

BH-BL's maximum allowable tax levy limit for 2014-15 is 2.29 percent.

2013 Median Assessments per Town & Estimated 2014 Tax Increases

Ballston:	\$201,450	\$81
Charlton:	\$155,400	\$89
Clifton Park:	\$103,750	\$71
Glenville:	\$171,750	\$72

Understanding this chart: If your home is in Glenville and last September's tax bill shows its total ASSESSED value was \$171,750, your school tax bill could increase by \$72 in September. This is the best estimate the school district can make given existing data. Calculations will change when ORPS announces new equalization rates in August. Additionally, the estimated figures are *before* factoring in any exemptions. *Reminder: Some town assessments are more up to date than others. Median assessment figures are calculated directly from the tax rolls and are based not on the entire town but only on the portion of each town within the BH-BL district.*

Other budget questions?

If after reading this newsletter you have other questions about the budget, please contact Superintendent Patrick McGrath by e-mail or phone at pmcgrath@bhbl.org or 399-9141, ext. 85002. There is also more budget information on our website at www.bhbl.org/budget.

Exit survey to be available

Following the vote, residents will be asked to complete a voluntary and anonymous exit survey. This will help the district gather community feedback and help guide future budget and program decisions. Both online and paper surveys will be available.

RESULTS BY THE
➔ NUMBERS:**35**

The number of college-credit earning courses offered at BH-BL High School. This includes AP and University in High School courses.

22

The number of art students who had their work selected to appear in various, highly competitive regional art shows last year.

148

The number of music students who were selected to perform in prestigious county and state music festivals.

20

All 20 of our fall and winter varsity teams have earned Scholar Athlete Awards for outstanding team grade-point averages.

Expenditures Summary

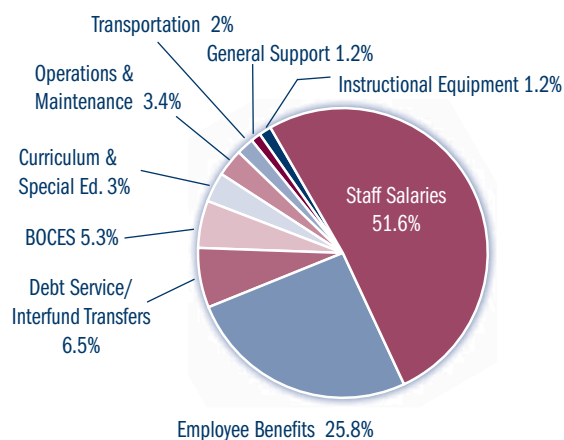
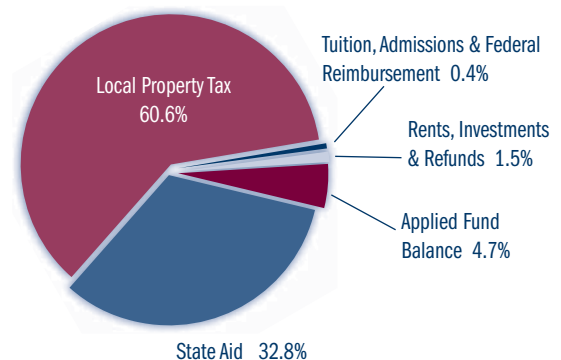
CATEGORY	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	PROPOSED 2014-15	% CHANGE '13-14 to '14-15
General Support (Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)	\$711,908	\$717,108	\$756,088	\$707,588	-6.41%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements	1,756,200	1,761,200	1,777,912	1,793,662	0.89%
BOCES	2,798,518	2,929,055	3,019,193	3,242,285	7.39%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	679,821	672,321	672,609	713,530	6.08%
Operations & Maintenance	2,618,866	2,688,411	2,224,286	2,067,711	-7.04%
Pupil Transportation	757,670	757,670	766,145	1,233,985	*61.06%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	12,063,204	13,132,081	15,264,637	15,578,333	2.06%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers	3,939,367	4,483,712	4,341,387	3,945,995	-9.11%
Staff Salaries	29,444,388	29,770,896	30,193,849	31,175,446	3.25%
Total Expenditure	\$54,769,942	\$56,912,454	\$59,016,106	\$60,458,535	2.44%

* This figure includes the 2014-15 bus purchase amount. The cost is being shifted from the debt service line to pupil transportation because the district will pay in full for the new buses rather than finance them, thus eliminating accrued interest.

Revenue Summary

	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	PROPOSED 2014-15	% CHANGE '13-14 to '14-15
State Aid	\$16,846,160	\$18,172,605	\$19,318,497	\$19,825,899	2.63%
Local Property Tax	34,281,282	35,085,477	35,953,659	36,652,136	1.94%
Tuition & Admissions	133,000	133,000	133,000	133,000	0%
Rents, Investments, Refunds	629,500	521,372	630,950	912,500	44.62%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	750,000	165,000	145,000	100,000	-31.03% *
Applied Fund Balance	2,130,000	2,835,000	2,835,000	2,835,000	0%
Total Revenue	\$54,769,942	\$56,912,454	\$59,016,106	\$60,458,535	2.44%

* The 2011-12 amount in this line also includes a one-time grant of \$645,000 in federal stimulus aid, which is no longer available to schools.

Expenditure Summary**Revenue Summary**

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2013-14 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2014-15 School Year	Contingency Budget for 2014-15 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, not including Separate Propositions	\$59,016,106	\$60,458,535	\$59,760,058
Increase/Decrease for the 2014-2015 School Year		\$1,442,429	\$743,952
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		2.44%	1.26%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.46%	
Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, including levy to support Library Debt, if applicable	\$35,953,659	\$36,652,136	\$35,953,659
Total Permissible Exclusions	\$1,160,798	\$671,238	
A. Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Not Including Levy for Permissible Exclusions or Levy to Support Library Debt	\$34,792,861	\$35,980,898	
B. School Tax Levy Limit, Not Including Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$35,190,312	\$36,106,582	
Difference: A - B (Positive Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval)	-\$397,451	-\$125,684	
Administrative Component**	\$6,307,961	\$6,465,850	\$6,391,151
Program Component**	\$43,792,204	\$45,425,961	\$44,901,155
Capital Component**	\$8,915,941	\$8,566,724	\$8,467,752

*Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2014-15, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, we assume that the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses for equipment and new capital project costs. To result in no tax levy increase as the law requires, we would also need to cut a number of staff positions and increase class sizes.

** Definitions for the budget components are listed below.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings** for 2014-15

	Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings** for 2014-15	\$733	\$734	\$766	\$582

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2014-2015 by the qualified voters of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, Saratoga & Schenectady Counties, New York, will be held at the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Senior High School in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2014, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Senior High School gymnasium, 88 Lakehill Rd., Burnt Hills at which time the polls will be open to vote by voting machine.

** The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law. The numbers listed here come from the NY Office of Real Property Services website: <http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/sd41.htm>

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 10.

Photo below: BH-BL High School students (from left) Sarah Ryan, Lindsey Collins, Danielle McDonnell and Molly Gallagher take notes (and flash smiles) in Jen Summersell's American Experience class.

DEFINITIONS

1. Administrative costs include the salaries and benefits of administrators and supervisors, plus the salaries and benefits of clerical staff. Also, 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.
2. Program costs include the salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, guidance, library and athletics). Also, textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, extracurricular activities, BOCES program costs, and all costs of the transportation program except bus purchases.
3. Capital costs include the salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, plus debt service, bus purchases, utilities, fire insurance, tax certiorari, and other court-ordered expenses.



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Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

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Please remember to **vote!**

VOTING:

- ▶ Tuesday, May 20
- ▶ 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- ▶ High School Gym,
88 Lakehill Road,
Burnt Hills

BALLOT ITEMS:

- ▶ The 2014-15 Proposed Budget
- ▶ Land Purchase Proposition
- ▶ Bus Purchase Proposition
- ▶ 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.

Registering to Vote

You are already registered to vote on May 20, 2014, if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election OR if you have voted in a BH-BL school election anytime since May 2009.

If you are not already registered, you may register in person or by mail with your County Board of Elections through May 16.

Absentee Ballots

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 20.

To receive an absentee ballot, first fill out an application from Clerk of the Board Christopher Abdoo at the district office OR from the BH-BL website at www.bhbl.org/budget/voterinfo.htm

The completed application must be returned to Christopher Abdoo at least seven days 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 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the clerk of the board no later than 5 p.m. on election day, May 20. For more information, contact Christopher Abdoo at 399-9141, ext. 85025.



Stevens Elementary School student George Connally recites the Pledge of Allegiance with his kindergarten teachers Kris Gregory and Kristi Fish.