

BHBL Budget

2015-2016
PROPOSED

Dedicated to continuous academic improvement

Proposed budget includes new initiatives, maintains class sizes

On May 19, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$62.7 million budget for the 2015-16 school year. The plan carries a 2.68 percent tax levy increase and an estimated 1.76 percent tax rate increase.

The proposed budget maintains current class sizes and includes improvements that allow the district to enhance learning opportunities and programs while staying below the district's state tax levy cap. This is the result of the development of a conservative budget that includes retirement savings and mostly budget-neutral changes based on shifts in enrollment and realignment of programs to better meet student needs.

All of these efforts, combined with ongoing consortium savings, are allowing the board of education to put forth a budget that upholds its responsibility and commitment to students and taxpayers.

"Although we are proposing mostly cost-neutral changes for next school year, that doesn't mean we aren't moving forward on districtwide academic initiatives," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath.

"We reprioritized our needs and realigned our use of available resources to develop a more efficient delivery of student programs, which also opens the door to implement new educational opportunities."

Reprioritizing includes reducing overtime work districtwide and keeping building budgets at their current levels. Additionally, various positions were reorganized to allow for the creation of a new elementary program for students with special needs, the implementation of small learning communities at the middle school and the growth of districtwide instructional technology support. (See page 2 for details.)

The budget proposal calls for an overall spending increase of 3.76 percent—which includes a general budget spending increase of 2.44 percent and a capital spending increase of 1.32 percent. The capital expense increase is due entirely to the transfer of \$800,000 from the Hostetter flood insurance settlement to fund upcoming debt service associated with the voter-approved October 2013 Renovations Referendum. This transfer will have no impact on taxes. (See page 8 for more details.)

State aid impact

State aid estimates for BH-BL were on the lower end of what was proposed for districts across the state. However, the minimal boost in state Foundation Aid (\$47,000) and partial restoration of the Gap Elimination Adjustment (\$540,000) that BH-BL is scheduled to receive are steps in the right direction.



Charlton Heights fifth-graders (from left) Melissa Gallinat, Kyle Rosselli, Harrison Keena and Alex Gibelius excitedly hover over a laptop as they experiment with coding to program robots (in the background) to follow commands during the districtwide Hour of Code. This event is aimed at introducing computer programming to students at an early age.

AT-A-GLANCE BUDGET

- ▶ Proposed budget: \$62,730,265
- ▶ Tax levy increase: 2.68%
- ▶ Estimated tax rate increase: 1.76%
- ▶ General budget increase: 2.44%
- ▶ Capital budget increase: 1.32% (Oct. 2013 Renovations Referendum)
- ▶ Eligible for state's property tax rebate, see page 7.

"Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake is considered by the state to be a 'Low-Need' district based on data from the early 2000s. This is despite the fact that current data shows that our property wealth and income wealth per student fall below many other districts that are considered 'Average-Need,'" says McGrath. "As long as the state considers us 'Low-Need' we will continue to receive minimal increases in state aid."

McGrath encourages residents to ask legislators to revisit BH-BL's 'Low-Need' aid categorization as well as continue advocating for an end to the Gap Elimination Adjustment, which continues to withhold nearly \$1 million of state aid from BH-BL each year.

Visit www.bhbl.org for advocacy tips.

Don't forget to **vote!**

- ▶ **Tuesday, May 19 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.**
- ▶ **BH-BL High School Gym, 88 Lakehill Rd.**

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.

17

The number of high school students who have received National Merit Letters of Commendation in the past five years.

#5

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

3

The number of times BH-BL has been named among "Best Communities for Music Education" by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) Foundation for its outstanding efforts by teachers, administrators, parents, students and community leaders to make music education accessible to all students.

What will be different in the 2015-16 school year?

The proposed budget includes mostly budget-neutral improvements that represent the district's commitment to offering quality programs and services. Nearly all of the proposals are driven by shifts in enrollment, retirements, and a more efficient delivery of student services.

■ Creation of a Beginnings

Program at Stevens Elementary School. The district will create a full-day, self-contained program designed for elementary students with disabilities who require significant communication, academic and social supports. This program allows BH-BL to bring external services back in-house and keep students in their home school among their peers. Part-time teacher positions will be combined to support a cost-neutral, full-time special education teacher to run this program.

■ O'Rourke Middle School

schedule changes. The middle school's grade 7 and 8 schedule will be reconfigured to allow for small learning communities, or academic teams, for these grades. A team structure is one in which a group of teachers in a given grade level is responsible for a common group of students—which is similar to the middle school's current sixth-grade model. Research shows that teaming models enable

better collaboration between teachers, parents, and students for academic and organizational purposes. Teams can also provide a more supportive environment for students as they transition from the single-classroom model of early elementary school to the independence of high school. This program adjustment was accomplished by shifting existing teaching positions. More information about teaming will be shared with parents and students this summer and this fall at Back-to-School Night.

■ **Administrative changes.** School leaders were able to restructure administrative staff based on the retirement of the K-12 Supervisor for Career & Technical Education. In place of this position, a K-12 Supervisor of Science & Technology will be hired. Though cost-neutral, this new position allows for the reorganization of administrative respon-

sibilities to better reflect changing academic and program needs as construction of the new STEAM addition to the high school begins next year. (See page 11.)

■ **Reduction in total number of teaching assistants.** Due to shifts in enrollment, changes in special education needs, and a more efficient use of available resources and services, the number of teaching assistant positions has been reduced and better aligned to student needs. The reduction will be accomplished mostly through attrition.

■ **Increased instructional technology (IT) support.** The district will be finishing the two-year project of restructuring its IT Department by shifting existing technology support from BOCES to in-house positions. This allows BH-BL to increase the amount of staff time spent on instructional support, data privacy and student information systems with no additional cost. With the anticipated influx of nearly \$2 million in technology hardware through the state's SmartSchools Bond initiative, it is crucial that BH-BL have a well-organized plan for IT integration, data management, and instructional support.

■ Restructure transportation department positions.

Leadership of the transportation department will be restructured following a retirement. Additionally, using VersaTrans bus routing software, the district was able to generate more efficient routes, leading to the consolidation of two bus runs and increased sharing of routes with neighboring districts.



BH-BL High School student Austin Dingman bones up on his biomedical engineering skills by using yarn to simulate connective tissues for implantation during the school's Engineering Day coordinated through RPI's Engineering Ambassadors Program.



Are there other items on the May 19 ballot?

In addition to the 2015-16 budget proposition, voters will be asked to consider two other separate propositions, as well as elect two candidates to the Board of Education.

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 NYS Department of Transportation recommends

A student board member will attend board meetings, sit at the board table and participate in public discussions. However, as an *ex officio* member, the student will not vote and will not attend confidential executive sessions.

"Student perspective has always been important to the board of education," says longtime board member John Blowers. "This school year we've had a regular student presence at our board meetings in an informal capacity, and the input has been invaluable to our decision-making process. Having formal student representation at the board level further demonstrates our commitment to being student centered," he adds.

To be eligible to run for the board position, students must be high school seniors and have been in the district for at least two years. They must also be members of the high school's Student Government Organization (SGO).

If approved, the board will work with school administrators and the high school principal to define the procedures for appointing an eligible student.

Board of education elections

Also at the polls on May 19, residents may elect two members to the board of education.

There are two incumbents, James Maughan and Jennifer Bradt, running unopposed. More information about the candidates can be found on page 10.

School board positions are unpaid and members serve a three-year term of office typically beginning in July.

Stay connected to BH-BL

BH-BL is committed to keeping residents, parents and students up to date on the latest school and district happenings.

To learn more about the exciting classroom activities, school events, fun projects and assemblies students are engaged in every day, visit our award-winning website to read stories, view photos and videos, and much more.

We've also expanded our communication outreach to social media where you'll find BH-BL on Facebook and Twitter (@bhblschools). Follow us!

Parents and community members are also encouraged to sign up for the School News Notifier (SNN) system, which uses email to share information and news. A selection of categories from which to choose is offered, including school closings/delays via text message. Sign up today at www.bhbl.org. Simply click on the SNN icon on the homepage located in the "quick links" navigation bar and follow the sign-up directions.



Stevens Elementary School Principal Rick Evans greets students with a smile and a helping hand as they arrive at school.

Proposition #2: School bus replacement plan

The board is asking residents to vote on a proposition authorizing the use of up to \$510,000 to replace some of the district's oldest buses.

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

Instead of incurring additional debt, this purchase will be included in the 2015-16 budget.

If approved, the district would be reimbursed approximately 66 percent, or \$336,600, through state transportation aid.

BH-BL's 67-bus fleet travels more than 870,000 miles a year, transporting more than 3,000 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.

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 buses being replaced are among the oldest in the district's fleet and have already accumulated high mileage. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent inspection codes.

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

Proposition #3: Add a student member position to the board of education

The board is asking residents to vote on a proposition authorizing the addition of an *ex officio* student member position on the board of education.

RESULTS BY THE ➔ NUMBERS:

4

The number of consecutive years BH-BL has been recognized as a Scholar-Athlete School of Distinction as a result of ALL 27 varsity teams earning a GPA of 90 or greater.

38

The number of college-credit bearing courses offered at BH-BL High School, including Advanced Placement and University in High School courses.

110

The number of students in grades K-12 who participated in one of the district's 14 FIRST Lego Robotics teams since inception in 2014.

660

The number of students in grades 4-12 who played a musical instrument and participated in the district's music program this year.

762

The number of students who participated on at least one interscholastic athletic team last school year.

Expenditures Summary

CATEGORY	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	PROPOSED 2015-16	% CHANGE '14-15 to '15-16
General Support (Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)	\$717,108	\$756,088	\$707,588	\$757,130	7.00%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements	1,761,200	1,777,912	1,793,662	2,341,662*	30.55%
BOCES	2,929,055	3,019,193	3,242,285	3,107,085	-4.17%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	672,321	672,609	713,530	717,530	0.56%
Operations & Maintenance	2,688,411	2,224,286	2,067,711	2,643,386**	27.84%
Pupil Transportation	757,670	766,145	1,233,985	1,233,360	-0.05%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	13,132,081	15,264,637	15,578,333	15,287,462	-1.87%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers	4,483,712	4,341,387	3,945,995	4,169,481	5.66%
Staff Salaries	29,770,896	30,193,849	31,175,446	32,473,169***	4.16%
Total Expenditure	\$56,912,454	\$59,016,106	\$60,458,535	\$62,730,265	3.76%

* This increase includes the anticipated \$500,000 associated with the SmartSchools Bond initiative. The district is expected to receive \$1.9 million over the next three years.

** This increase includes the transfer of \$800,000 from the Hostetter Building flood reserve to fund renovation work associated with the voter-approved October 2013 Renovations Referendum. See page 8 for details.

*** This increase includes additional IT positions transferred from BOCES. See page 2.

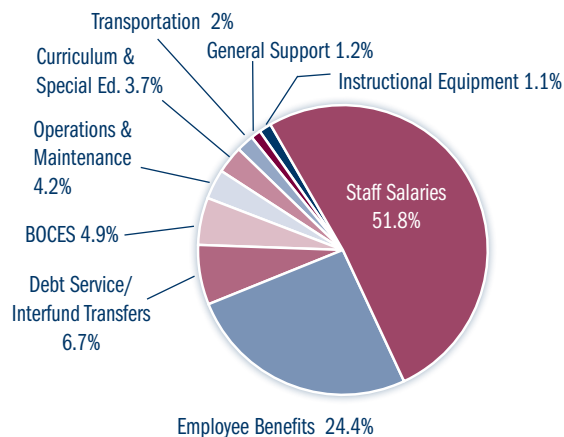
Revenue Summary

	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	PROPOSED 2015-16	% CHANGE '14-15 to '15-16
State Aid	\$18,172,605	\$19,318,497	\$19,825,899	\$20,524,521	3.52%
Local Property Tax	35,085,477	35,953,659	36,652,136	37,634,413	2.68%
Tuition & Admissions	133,000	133,000	133,000	205,000	54.14%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves	521,372	630,950	912,500	1,431,331**	56.86%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	165,000	145,000	100,000	100,000	0%
SmartSchools Bond Act	0	0	0	500,000*	100%
Applied Fund Balance	2,835,000	2,835,000	2,835,000	2,335,000	-17.64%
Total Revenue	\$56,912,454	\$59,016,106	\$60,458,535	\$62,730,265	3.76%

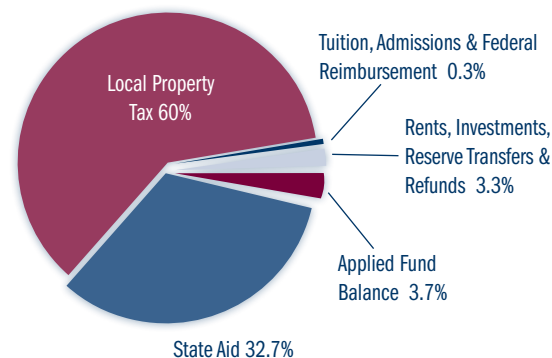
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Expenditure Summary



Revenue Summary



School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2014-15 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2015-16 School Year	Contingency Budget for 2015-16 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, not including Separate Propositions	\$60,458,535	\$62,730,265	\$61,747,988
Increase/Decrease from the 2015-2016 School Year		\$2,271,730	\$1,289,453
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.76%	2.13%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.62%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$36,652,136	\$37,634,413	
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)	\$36,652,136	\$37,634,413	\$36,652,136
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit	\$671,238	\$777,146	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$36,106,582	\$36,874,405	
H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, Excluding Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E-B-F+D)	\$35,980,898	\$36,857,267	
I. Difference: (G-H); (Negative Value Required 60% Voter Approval)	\$125,684	\$17,138	
Administrative Component**	\$6,465,850	\$6,852,659	\$6,603,702
Program Component**	\$45,425,961	\$46,462,895	\$46,394,919
Capital Component**	\$8,566,724	\$9,414,711	\$8,749,367

*Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2015-16, 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 2015-16

	Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
	\$748	\$749	\$782	\$594

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2015-2016 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 High School in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake High School gymnasium, 88 Lakehill Rd., Burnt Hills at which time the polls will be open to vote by voting machine.

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 4.

*** 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 NYS Office of Real Property Services website: <http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/sd41.htm>

Photo below: Charlton Heights fifth-grader Justin Gray presents his state "collection" at the annual U.S. Jackdaw Fair, which is the culminating event of a six-week social studies research project. Visit www.bhbl.org to learn more and view a photo gallery.

DEFINITIONS

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.



**DID YOU
KNOW?**

Last year, 224 BH-BL High School students took a total of 341 Advanced Placement (AP) exams and scored 3 or above on 77 percent of those exams.

BH-BL offers enrichment program opportunities for students as early as kindergarten.

BH-BL strongly supports integrating technology instruction in the classroom, which is why students in grades 3 through 6 receive Chromebook laptop computers to use in their classes throughout the school day.

Last school year, 486 high school students took University in High School (UHS) college-credit courses. Most students can potentially earn a semester's worth of college credits prior to high school graduation.



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

If the proposed budget were defeated, state law gives the board two options: resubmit the same or revised proposal for a revote or move directly to a contingent budget. If voters defeat the proposal a second time, however, the board *must* adopt a contingent budget.

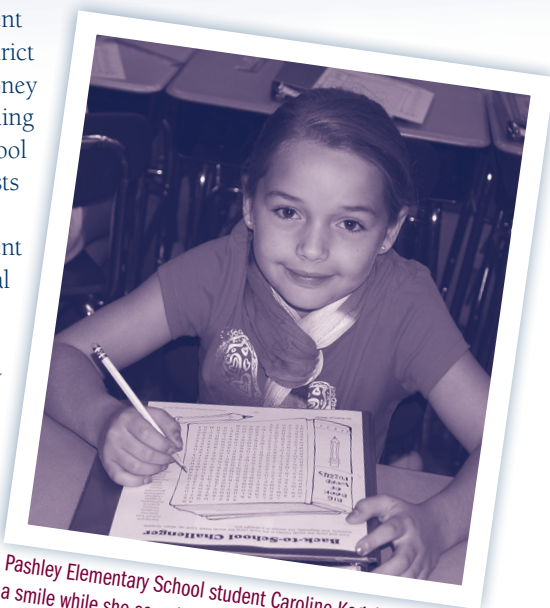
Rules more severe now

Under New York's tax levy “cap” 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 proposal by \$982,277. In doing this, the board would not be able to adhere to its goal of preserving student programs and services or staff. It would likely have to make a number of staff reductions across all schools, which would increase class sizes.

Adopting a contingent budget 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; nonessential maintenance; capital expenditures (except in emergencies); salary increases for non-instructional, non-unionized employees; and certain field trips and student supplies.

Also under contingency rules the administrative component of the budget would be subject to certain restrictions. These requirements existed prior to the tax levy cap and remain in effect.



Pashley Elementary School student Caroline Kogut shares a smile while she completes her morning work, which is a precursor to the academic lessons she'll be exposed to during the school day.



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 \$83,300.

Two more 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 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.

2015 Estimated STAR Values

Basic STAR	Estimated Tax Savings
Ballston:	\$748
Charlton:	\$749
Clifton Park:	\$782
Glenville:	\$594
Enhanced STAR	Estimated Tax Savings
Ballston:	\$1,499
Charlton:	\$1,500
Clifton Park:	\$1,568
Glenville:	\$1,146



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

The 2015-16 proposed budget of \$62,730,265 is 3.76 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 2.68 percent in order to balance the proposed budget.

Equalization rates

Calculating tax rate increases is complicated by the fact that the BH-BL 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 New York 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 1.76 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 rebate

In order for residents to qualify for the state's property tax rebate initiative, which is in its second year, the district must meet two requirements: keep the proposed tax levy increase *below* its maximum allowable tax levy limit and submit an efficiency plan to the state. The plan must outline how the district will achieve savings equivalent to 1 percent of the tax levy each year for three years.

BH-BL anticipates meeting both requirements next year. Its efficiency plan will be submitted to the state in June, as required, and the proposed tax levy increase is below the cap. Details, including when the district's plan will be approved by the state and when taxpayers will be reimbursed, should be forthcoming from the state.



During O'Rourke Middle School's annual Community Service Day, eighth-grader Isabella Antonini assembled craft kits that were donated to The Children's Hospital at Albany Medical Center. Community Service Day exposes students to the field of social services and gives them a first-hand look at how their good deeds impact others.

UNDERSTANDING TAX RATE AND TAX LEVY

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 2.68 percent tax levy increase within the tax cap?

Yes. In fact, the proposed tax levy increase of 2.68 percent is slightly *below* the district's maximum allowable tax levy limit of 2.73 percent.

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.

2015 Median Assessments per Town & Estimated 2015 Tax Increases

Ballston:	\$202,600	\$78
Charlton:	\$155,900	\$81
Clifton Park:	\$103,750	\$66
Glenville:	\$171,500	\$66

Understanding this chart: If your home is in Glenville and last September's tax bill shows its total ASSESSED value was \$171,500, your school tax bill could increase by \$66 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.*

DO YOU HAVE OTHER BUDGET QUESTIONS?

If after reading this newsletter you have other questions about the budget, please contact Superintendent Patrick McGrath by email or phone at pmcgrath@bhbl.org or 399-9141, ext. 85002. There is also budget information 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 board gather community feedback and help guide future budget and program decisions. Both online and paper surveys will be available.



What's meant by budget-to-budget increases? Why separate the operating & referendum budgets?

When presenting a budget, school leaders generally reference the district's budget-to-budget increase as a way to show how much the school budget would increase from the current year to the upcoming school year. However, the proposed budget increase of 3.76 percent or \$2.27 million can be better explained in two parts—general, or operating, budget expenses and capital budget expenses associated with the voter-approved October 2013 Renovations Referendum.

The 2015-16 proposal carries an operating budget increase of 2.44 percent, which is driven by traditional expenses required to run a district. This includes expenses that support curriculum, special education, transportation, salaries and benefits, etc.

The budget increase associated with the Renovations Referendum of 1.32 percent is directly tied to the

board transferring \$800,000 from reserves, which is similar to a savings account, to fund a portion of the Renovations Referendum.

When the referendum was proposed to voters in 2013, the board promised to use funds from the 2009 Hostetter (District Office) Building flood insurance settlement it set aside in a reserve in order to keep the local cost of the renovations project to a 1 percent tax levy increase. To honor that promise, the board plans to use \$2.7 million from the Hostetter flood reserves and other sources for the next several years to fund the renovation work. The 2015-16 proposed budget includes the first transfer of funds from the settlement reserve.

"Essentially, the transfer of \$800,000 from the district's reserves is represented on both the revenue side and the expense side of the proposed budget," explains Assistant Superintendent for Support Services

Christopher Abdoo. "Doing this reflects a higher than usual increase in our overall budget, but the \$800,000 increase is supported solely from the Hostetter flood insurance settlement. This particular increase does not impact the overall tax levy."

Next school year is also the first year that the overall estimated 1 percent tax levy increase for the Renovations Referendum begins to take effect. The proposed 2015-16 tax levy increase of 2.68 percent *includes* a portion of the 1 percent increase associated with the Renovations Referendum. The 1 percent increase will be phased in over the next several years as the project progresses and more debt is accrued.

To learn more about the Renovations Referendum and view photos of the progress thus far, please visit www.bhbl.org/referendum.

Impact of new real estate development

When new construction occurs within district boundaries in the form of residential and commercial development, BH-BL's tax base increases. Continued growth in the tax base allows a district's tax rate increase to be lower than the overall tax levy increase—as has been the case in BH-BL for the past few years.

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

TAX IMPACT HISTORY

Year	Tax Levy Increase	Average Tax Rate Increase
2012-2013	2.30%	1.96%
2013-2014	2.47%	2.00%
2014-2015	1.94%	1.13%
2015-2016	2.68%	1.76%

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

The chart on the left shows the impact of a growing tax base over the past three school years and next year's projected tax levy increase and estimated average tax rate increase.

"As the tax base grows, the tax levy increase gets spread out among more taxpayers, thus possibly resulting in a lower overall tax rate increase," explains Assistant Superintendent for Support Services Christopher Abdoo.

Tax base growth factors (if any) comes from the Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) x 1.0092.

Join us in celebrating 100 years of excellence at BH-BL

Ribbon-cutting ceremony and centennial celebration October 10

BH-BL will be making history next school year! School leaders will break ground on the new STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) addition at the high school, host a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new multi-purpose athletic field AND celebrate the district's 100th birthday.

"It seems only fitting that as we celebrate 100 years of academic excellence at BH-BL, we are simultaneously breaking ground to begin building our second century by transforming our facilities to keep pace with how students learn in the 21st century," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath.

Visit www.bhbl.org/referendum to learn more about the voter-approved October 2013 Renovations Referendum that includes school upgrades and renovations, additions, and much more.

BH-BL has come a long way in 100 years

Before there was a BH-BL School District, there were 10 one-room schoolhouses, or "districts," that served local students. But, it wasn't until the school superintendent of Ballston decided that it was in the best interest of the students and the community to consolidate three of the "districts" so that children no longer needed to take the train to Schenectady or Ballston Spa to attend school beyond eighth grade. Although school consolidation was a controversial issue at the time, the New York State Education Department approved it on September 22, 1915, making BH-BL the first consolidated school district in the state.

The original BH-BL school building was located on the site of the present-day Stevens Elementary School. It went through a series of name changes before becoming the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School of Agriculture and Homemaking. It was in 1925 that the school eventually became known as the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central Rural School District.

Over the past 100 years, BH-BL has grown from a one-school district serving 36 students and graduating two students in its first year of existence to a five-school district serving more than 3,000 students with an average graduating class of 270 students.

Save the *date!*

- ▶ **Saturday, Oct. 10, 2015**
- ▶ **Centennial kick off**
- ▶ **New multi-purpose athletic field ribbon-cutting**
- ▶ **Athletic games, musical performances & fireworks**

It's quite an accomplishment to be able to celebrate 100 years of academic excellence and progression, and as such BH-BL has big plans! On Saturday, Oct. 10, in collaboration with the high school's homecoming celebration, district leaders and the board will host a ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially reveal to the public the new multi-purpose turf athletic field. And, to keep the yearlong centennial celebrations in full swing, there will be a variety of student and alumni events during homecoming as well as fireworks Saturday night.

The BH-BL Centennial Committee (made up of staff, alumni, students, community members and local business leaders) has been working together to plan a variety of special events to be held at the schools throughout the 2015-16 school year, including student art displays, musical and theatrical performances, history discussions and projects, and much more. Information about centennial-related events will be shared on the district's website and social media channels.

"100 Memories of BH-BL" commemorative album

The Centennial Committee is also producing and selling a commemorative album to highlight "100 Memories of BH-BL." To include the community, the committee is asking residents to share their memories, photos, old news clippings, etc. of BH-BL to help build the album.

All photos submitted need to be in jpeg format and at least 1MB in file size. Send all submissions to Tara Mitchell at tmitchell@bhbl.org by August 1. Due to space limitations, all submissions may not be included in the memory album. The Centennial Committee will make final decisions.

Additionally, anyone who is interested in supporting the printing cost of the albums should contact Dacey Bonney at dbonney@bhbl.org. Various donation levels are available. All donors' names (individuals and/or businesses) will be printed in the album. Proceeds from the sale of the memory albums may be used to fund districtwide dedication memorials in honor of the centennial. A limited number of albums will be printed.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN #BHBL100YEARS

BH-BL is launching a Centennial Celebration social media campaign. Community members are encouraged to share memories and old photos, as well as new photos that capture the many centennial events that will take place throughout the schools next year. Share with everyone by using #BHBL100years on social media.



Board of Education CANDIDATES



Jennifer Bradt

is seeking her first full term on the board. She joined the board in 2015 to fill a vacancy. She is a BH-BL graduate and lives in

Glenville with her husband and two children. She is the childcare director at the Greater Glenville YMCA and has been extremely involved in the district and community, most recently as the Pashley Elementary School PTA President and the BH-BL Business and Professional Association Board Secretary. Bradt holds a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from the University of Phoenix and a bachelor's degree in elementary education and psychology from Russell Sage. She also has received her NYS teaching certification in grades preK-6. See Bradt's position statement at right.

At the polls on May 19, residents may also elect two members to the Board of Education. To learn more about the candidates, the district will conduct a **Meet-the-Candidates Night on Tuesday, May 12 at 7:30 p.m. in the middle school cafeteria**. All residents are invited to pose questions and listen to the candidates discuss their views. If you can't attend, the event will be streamed online.

→ The statement below was written by Jennifer Bradt. The opinions contained within are hers and may not reflect the opinions or views of BH-BL School District leaders or the Board of Education.

"As a lifelong Burnt Hills resident, a Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake graduate, homeowner, mother of two children currently in elementary school, and Child Care Director at the Glenville YMCA, I have cared for, supported and gotten to know many of the school-aged children in this district. All of these titles have provided me with many opportunities to build a strong connection with the district and the community.

As Childcare Director, I have overseen the YMCA elementary and middle school after-school programs—all on-site within the three elementary schools and one-off site. My passion lies with providing the best experience to all students who are in my care. As a school board member, it would be a natural progression to widen my connection to all the students in the district. I firmly believe in offering students the chance to be involved in many activities as a way to foster a well-rounded education and instill in them a passion for learning.

I was approached in January 2015 to fill a vacancy on the board—and I'm enjoying the experience and gaining knowledge of the inner workings of the district. Before becoming a board member, I was the President of the Pashley PTA, a role I immensely enjoyed. However, I took a leave of absence so that I could gain insight as to how to better serve the families within my programs. It is my intention to return to my position as President of the Pashley PTA in July 2015, as well as continue to devote myself to the district and community as a BH-BL board member.

I am accustomed to and openly welcome the responsibility of juggling many roles. In addition to my other responsibilities, I have been a board member of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Business and Professional Association for two years and have participated in a number of community events, including the Glenville Octoberfest and the BH Flag Day parade. My desire to be a board member stems from my passion for this community and the children and families who make BH-BL what it is. I want to continue to serve all of them."



James R. Maughan

is seeking his third term on the board. He has served this past year as Board President and previously

as Finance Committee chair. An area native, he is a Technical Director at GE Global Research. James holds a BS, MS, and Ph.D. in mechanical engineering. He has been an active volunteer in various school committees, local Scout troops, his church, and the GE Volunteers program. James and his wife Sharon live on Longcreek Drive Ext. in Burnt Hills. Their four children all attended Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake schools. See Maughan's position statement at right.

→ The statement below was written by James Maughan. 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.

"It has been a privilege for me to serve on the Board. While some aspects are clearly more enjoyable than others, I do believe we provide critical oversight, policy direction, and community representation. I'd like to see more well-qualified district residents interested in being a part of the Board, as fresh perspectives are healthy for any organization.

The District has been executing a sound financial strategy that is sustainable for the taxpayer, and is now aggressively pursuing models for education delivery that are more modern, are geared toward emerging career needs, and offer more opportunity for advanced students. These have been important themes for me and I like to think my leadership and perspective have been helpful here, and that I have contributed to the many other decisions of the Board, including the selection of our new administration.

Voters have a right to know how candidates stand on current issues. I have studied the Common Core Standards directly and, on the whole, I find they are more rigorous, require more understanding and set higher expectations than the 2005 revision. In my view, these are benefits. I also think that measured student progress is one reasonable criterion for assessing teacher performance; the state and NYSUT earlier negotiated a 20% weighting to that factor. The Governor should not have tried to increase that as part of his budget process and NYSUT should not be trying to eliminate it by enlisting schoolchildren to opt out of the annual standard tests.

My original interest in the Board was to play some small part in stemming the tide of millions choosing to leave our state. I want to give parents reasons to come to Burnt Hills: the best opportunities for their high-achieving children, controlled spending, and a well-balanced but academic school."

Renovation projects gain momentum

Schools under construction as part of October 2013 Referendum

You've likely seen the renovation projects signs at the high school and Stevens Elementary School. And, now that the weather is warmer and the ground has thawed, you'll see a lot of changes taking place. Therefore, as the signs read, "Please pardon our appearance; we are improving our schools."

Stevens Elementary School

In mid-April, safety fences were set up at Stevens in preparation for the construction of a separate parking lot/student drop-off and pick-up area where the existing blacktop play area is located. The current playground and equipment will be relocated further away from the road. Plans also include reorganizing the existing main traffic area/bus loop and repairing the parking area on the west side of the school. These projects are scheduled to be complete by the start of the 2015-16 school year.

BH-BL High School

For the next couple of years, various parts of the high school will also be under construction. The football field and track are

currently being renovated to a multi-purpose turf athletic field and eight-lane track, which is expected to be ready for use this fall. (See page 9 for news about the ribbon-cutting ceremony.)

In 2016, construction is expected to begin on the new STEAM addition, which will house 21st-century Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math classrooms as well as labs for hands-on learning. (See photo below.) This portion of the project includes moving the district offices (currently located in the Hostetter Leadership Building in Glenville) to the space currently being used for high school English rooms. The English classes will move to where the existing math classrooms are housed and the math classes will be relocated to the new STEAM addition.

Additionally, the library will be upgraded and revamped to include Learning Commons. The Red Room will be renovated to a multimedia auditorium and the Blue Room renovated to a Black Box Theater. The gym is scheduled to be renovated and the physical



Construction crews use a backhoe to remove trees at Stevens Elementary School as they prepare the ground for grading and leveling.

education classroom/fitness center renovated and expanded.

New exterior restrooms on the end of the science wing are scheduled to be constructed and the oldest bathrooms renovated.

These projects are anticipated to be completed in late 2017. (Much of the timeline is dependent upon State Education Department approval time frames, which have been delayed.)

Pashley & Charlton Heights Schools

This fall, renovations at Charlton Heights and Pashley are also expected to begin. They include gym restorations, 21st-century classroom updates/infrastructure improvements and workroom/small

group learning space additions, among other projects. This work is expected to be completed by the following fall.

A detailed list of projects, a timeline, photos and more information can be found on our website, www.bhbl.org.

An architectural rendering of the new Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) addition at BH-BL High School. Construction is expected to begin in winter 2016 and be completed in late 2017. The STEAM wing will be added onto the southwest corner of the front of the school.



Completed Projects

Summer 2014:

- Removed the fencing around the tennis courts at the middle school.
- Restructured the middle school traffic area and repaved and reoriented the parking lot to allow for more spaces.
- Replaced classroom asbestos floor tiles.

Winter 2015:

- Reconstructed the Stevens main office and added a secure visitor entrance vestibule.
- Demolished the original garage at Stevens.

Board of Education

James Maughan
President

John Blowers
Vice President

Jennifer Bradt
Will Farmer
Jennifer Longtin
Lee-Ann Mertzlufft
Peter Sawyer

Superintendent

Patrick McGrath Jr.

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Please remember to **vote!**

VOTING:

► **Tuesday, May 19**

► **7 a.m. to 9 p.m.**

► **High School Gym,
88 Lakehill Road,
Burnt Hills**

BALLOT ITEMS:

- The 2015-16 Proposed Budget
- Bus Purchase Proposition
- Student Board Member 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 19, 2015 if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election.

Absentee Ballots

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 19.

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/voterinformation.cfm**

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 19. For more information, contact Christopher Abdoo at 399-9141, ext. 85025.



Stevens Elementary School students Ashley and Alyssa Bikowicz and their father Jason had a "sweet" time making DNA models out of gumdrops and licorice sticks in the biology lab during the school's Science Fair. Other hands-on lab experiments were in the fields of physics, chemistry, anatomy, electricity, and astronomy.