

2016-2017  
**Proposed**

# BUDGET

## Focused on improving opportunities for students

### Proposed 2016-17 budget carries a 1.32 percent levy increase

On May 17, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$63.9 million budget for the 2016-17 school year. The plan carries a 1.32 percent tax levy increase, which is below the maximum allowable levy limit and results in an estimated 0.65 percent tax rate increase.

The Board of Education unanimously approved a proposal that restores some key teacher-leadership positions and includes a new cost-neutral early college program (see page 2). The budget also addresses programming for students with special needs, includes funding for additional learning materials to support computer science instruction, and allows for new opportunities for teacher-led professional development.

Overall spending in the proposed budget would increase by 1.87 percent, or \$1.18 million.

"Our goal while developing this budget was to find a way to uphold our commitment and responsibility to our taxpayers, yet also adhere to our promise to deliver a high-quality education that offers engaging and dynamic experiences and



*Fourth graders (from left) Noella Morris, Patrick Nyhan and Kaden Netto work with high school students on an experiment in the school's lab during the district's first Science Demo Day. This event introduces young students to the wonders and fun of science education by giving them a chance to perform fascinating and exciting hands-on activities.*

opportunities to all of our students as outlined in our 21st-Century Framework for Learning guiding principles," says Superintendent Patrick McGrath.

### What's included in the budget

The proposed budget preserves all current academic programs, as well as class sizes in grades K-5. The complete elimination of the GEA (Gap Elimination Adjustment) provides a financial boost that allows the district to restore some positions that were eliminated during the economic downturn when state aid was being withheld from schools. At the middle school, two curriculum representative positions, one for ELA and one for math, are being restored. These teacher leaders are tapped to provide additional guidance and support to classroom teachers in the areas of their expertise.

Additionally, a part-time professional development position at the high school will be added. Through this position, a portion of a teacher's assignment will be dedicated to training colleagues on how to leverage technology instruction and internet connectivity to provide a variety of course delivery options for students (see "Blended learning delivers technology integration to the classroom" on page 2). Also included in the proposal is a plan to

## BUDGET at-a-glance

- ✓ Proposed budget: \$63,905,956
- ✓ Spending increase: 1.87%
- ✓ Tax levy increase: 1.32%
- ✓ Estimated tax rate increase: 0.65%
- ✓ Homeowners are eligible for state's property tax rebate, see page 7.

expand the middle and elementary summer school programs and add a summer writing program for elementary school students who could benefit from additional instruction to strengthen their writing skills.

### Cost saving

The proposal also results in modest savings by replacing a full-time director position in the Human Resources Department with a BOCES shared-services position.

Another area of savings in the proposed budget is within employee benefits. The estimated required employer contribution rates to the state retirement systems (teacher and support staff) has decreased for a savings of approximately \$500,000.

**Don't forget to VOTE!**

- ✓ Tuesday, May 17 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.
- ✓ BH-BL High School Gym, 88 Lakehill Rd.

## BH-BL+1 opens college doors for students in high school

### Results by the Numbers

**98%**

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

**92%**

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

**22**

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

**6**

The number of years BH-BL High School has been named a school of distinction.

**4**

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.

For many years, BH-BL High School students have had the opportunity to earn several college credits through the school's Advanced Placement (AP) or University in High School (UHS) courses. The convenience of entering college with a few courses already completed has made this an attractive and popular offering among students. In fact, the number of college credit courses offered at BH-BL grows nearly every year. For these reasons and more, school leaders developed BH-BL+1 which is a more formal and robust early college program.

Through BH-BL+1, high school students can be dually enrolled at BH-BL and Schenectady County Community College where they can earn a full year of SUNY credits by the time they graduate from high school.

Next year, BH-BL students can "major" in Business Administration, Liberal Arts: Humanities & Social Sciences, or Mathematics & Science where they will be enrolled in courses that meet their high school requirements and earn college credits.

"Course credits through the BH-BL+1 program are all brought together on one SUNY transcript, so a



*In her Applications of Mathematics class, high school math and technology teacher Margaret Kelliher helps junior Corey Feeley put the finishing touches on his computer-aided design (CAD) project before printing it on the school's 3-D printer.*

student can graduate from high school with college credits that are portable across the SUNY system and at many private four-year colleges," explains High School Principal Tim Brunson.

In addition to getting a leg up on college credits, dual enrollment can also help students become accustomed to the rigors of college life while completing high school and preparing to live on a college campus. Recent studies show that students who participate in dual enrollment programs while in high school are more likely to complete college and

even attend graduate school after earning a bachelor's degree.

"Dual enrollment is becoming increasingly popular nationwide," says Brunson. "Many college professors have said it helps students become better prepared for college. It also expands their knowledge, sharpens their skills, and encourages them to discover their passions and interests."

High school students who want to learn more about BH-BL+1 and how to enroll should talk to their guidance counselor.

### Blended learning delivers technology integration to the classroom

Blended learning classes, also known in the education world as mixed-mode or hybrid courses, provide students with a combination of face-to-face and online instruction through a variety of 21st-century methods, such as flipped videos, Podcasts, Screencasts, online reference materials, and learning management tools (i.e., Blackboard, Google Classroom, etc.).

This technology-rich learning approach in the classroom delivers information to teachers and students that they might not typically have access to otherwise. By using a mix of digital instruction and traditional teacher-to-student instructional practices, students can often work on their own with new concepts which allows teachers more time to circulate throughout the classroom and support individual students who may need personalized attention.

"Blended learning courses allow students and faculty to take advantage of much of the flexibility and convenience of an online course while retaining the benefits of the face-to-face classroom experience," says Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction Maryellen Symer.

BH-BL currently incorporates defined blended learning practices in Global History & Geography I, AP United States History, Economics, AP Macroeconomics, AP Computer Science Principles, and Science Research, although many teachers have already begun introducing a variety of blended learning techniques into their daily lessons.

The proposed budget calls for the addition of a part-time professional development position that will allow for a portion of a teacher's assignment to be dedicated to training colleagues on how to boost their use of available technology and internet-based programs to deliver more variety in their classroom lessons. District leaders are planning to offer more blended learning opportunities in the future.





## Is the district purchasing buses for next school year?

Yes, but there will not be a separate proposition for the purchase of school buses since the district does not need to borrow funds to buy them this year. Instead, the proposed budget includes \$800,000 for the planned purchase of five 66-passenger buses, one mid-sized wheelchair-accessible bus and two minivans to replace some of the district's oldest buses and vehicles.

The district is also slated to be reimbursed approximately 66 percent of the cost of the buses through state transportation aid in subsequent years, resulting in a net local cost of approximately \$272,000.

"We are pleased that we can purchase several new school buses without the need to accrue debt," says Assistant Superintendent for Support Services Christopher Abdoo. "By doing this, we also are able to avoid expenses related to issuing debt and avoid finance charges."

### Cost saving

BH-BL's 68-bus fleet travels more than 700,000 miles a year, transporting

more than 3,100 students to and from its five schools. The buses are also used for sporting events, out-of-district runs, shared transportation runs, field trips, summer school and other events.

In order to keep buses in safe working order, the district's long-standing policy has been to replace a few of the oldest buses each year. Over the past several years, however, the replacement plan was modified and fewer new buses were purchased during the economic downturn.

"In recent years, we deviated from our bus replacement plan in an effort to maintain academic programming during difficult budget times," explains Abdoo. "This was a viable option for a few years because we had a relatively robust fleet of buses. At this juncture, however, some of our oldest buses are now in jeopardy of not passing state inspections without investing in costly repairs."

According to state law, if a bus doesn't pass inspection it has to be taken off the road until repairs are made. If this happens, the district

will have fewer buses to use for trips outside of the daily school runs, such as athletic team transportation, field trips, etc.

### Bus replacements

The buses and other transportation vehicles slated to be replaced in the 2016-17 school year are among the oldest in the district's fleet and have already accumulated high mileage, exceeded their warranties, and undergone many maintenance repairs. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent inspection codes.

Additionally, new school buses are aligned with the latest safety and emissions standards and have better fuel economy rates.

The district's retired buses are expected to be traded in to further reduce the purchase price of the new buses.

### Results by the Numbers

**120**

The number of K-12 students who participated in one of the district's 13 FIRST Lego Robotics teams.

**40**

The number of college credit courses offered at BH-BL HS, which includes Advanced Placement and College in High School courses.

**6**

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

**4**

The number of high school music students who were accepted into the elite Empire State Youth Orchestra this year.

**4**

The number of consecutive years BH-BL HS has been named a Reward School by the New York State Education Department. This designation goes to NY schools with the highest achievement in the state or those that are making the most progress in closing student achievement gaps.



*Pashley Elementary School Administrative Assistant Karen Matrazzo greets students (from left) Elise Waller, Azya Hamilton and Brandon Cunningham as they are safely dropped off at school by their bus driver Brian Peabody.*

### Bus Drivers Wanted

Are you interested in a career that offers a good work-life balance, job security and leadership opportunities? You should consider driving a bus for BH-BL.

Driving a school bus requires a commercial driver's license (we provide training), a clean driving record, a high school diploma and the ability to meet additional standards set by New York state. The district also pays for training to further prepare its drivers to ensure students' safety while on the school bus.

The starting hourly wage for drivers at BH-BL is \$19.08.

For more information, call Director of Transportation Joseph Czub at 399-9141, ext. 83525.

**RESULTS  
by the Numbers****133**

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

**242**

The number of BH-BL High School students who took a total of 346 Advanced Placement exams and scored 3 or above on 75 percent of those exams.

**509**

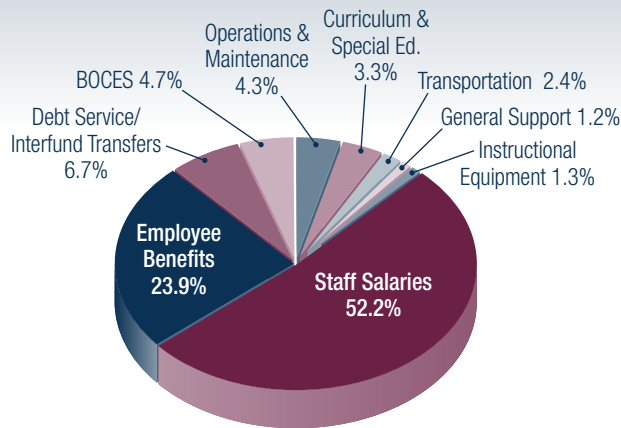
The number of high school students who took University in High School college-credit courses. Most students can potentially earn a semester's worth of college credits prior to high school graduation.

**660**

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

**760**

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

**Expenditures Summary**

CATEGORY	2015-16	PROPOSED 2016-17	% CHANGE '15-16 to '16-17
General Support (Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)	\$757,130	\$766,504	1.24%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements	2,341,662	2,101,662*	-10.25%
BOCES	3,107,085	3,015,364	- 2.95%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	717,530	847,127	18.06%
Operations & Maintenance	2,643,386	2,720,036	2.90%
Pupil Transportation	1,233,360	1,528,360**	23.92%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	15,287,462	15,277,971	-0.06%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers	4,169,481	4,270,972	2.43%
Staff Salaries	32,473,169	33,377,960	2.79%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$62,730,265</b>	<b>\$63,905,956</b>	<b>1.87%</b>

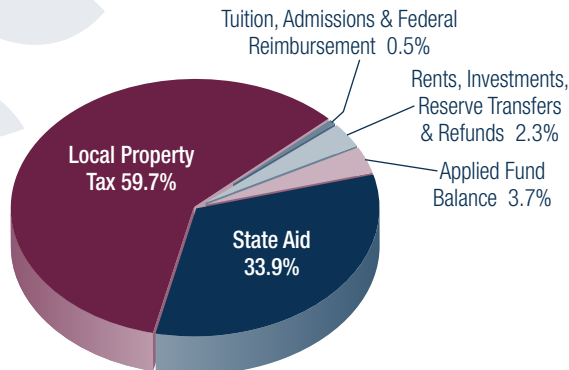
\* This decrease is associated with the removal of SmartSchools Bond Act funds from the general fund budget for next school year.

\*\* This increase is associated with the purchase of buses in the general fund budget. (See page 3).

**Revenue Summary**

	2015-16	PROPOSED 2016-17	% CHANGE '15-16 to '16-17
State Aid	\$20,524,521	\$21,683,263	5.65%
Local Property Tax	37,634,413	38,132,693	1.32%
Tuition & Admissions	205,000	290,000	41.46%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves	1,431,331	1,390,000	-2.89%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	100,000	75,000	-25.00%
SmartSchools Bond Act	500,000	0*	-100%
Applied Fund Balance	2,335,000	2,335,000	0%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$62,730,265</b>	<b>\$63,905,956</b>	<b>1.87%</b>

\* This decrease is associated with the removal of SmartSchools Bond Act funds from the general fund budget for next school year.



# School District Budget Notice

## Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2015-16 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2016-17 School Year	Contingency Budget for 2016-17 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$62,730,265	\$63,905,956	\$63,407,676
Increase/Decrease for the 2016-2017 School Year		\$1,175,691	\$677,411
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.87%	1.08%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		0.12%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount, Net of Reserve	\$37,634,413	\$38,132,693	
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)	\$37,634,413	\$38,132,693	\$37,634,413
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$777,146	\$994,560	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$36,874,405	\$37,184,171	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$36,857,267	\$37,138,133	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval)	\$17,138	\$46,038	
Administrative Component**	\$6,852,659	\$6,347,939	\$6,298,460
Program Component**	\$46,462,895	\$47,450,185	\$47,080,212
Capital Component**	\$9,414,711	\$10,107,832	\$10,029,004

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.

\* Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2016-17, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, the district assumes the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses 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. (See page 6.)

## Basic STAR Exemption Impact

### Maximum Basic STAR Exemption Savings for 2016-17<sup>1</sup>

Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
<b>\$763</b>	<b>\$764</b>	<b>\$798</b>	<b>\$606</b>

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2016-2017 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 17, 2016, 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.

<sup>1</sup> 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>

## \*\*BUDGET COMPONENTS DEFINITIONS

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



High school student Gianni Plemenik stands between two visiting history re-enactors who were bringing to life the experiences of French soldiers at Fort Carillon (now known as Fort Ticonderoga) in 1758. While students tried on uniforms and examined other possessions, the re-enactors explained the daily activities and duties of soldiers who lived at the fort.



## Did you Know?

## BH-BL

celebrated its centennial anniversary this year (1915-2015) at a ribbon-cutting ceremony to unveil the new turf field at the high school. The field was aptly named Centennial Field. Video of the ceremony can be viewed at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org)

## BH-BL

published *100 Memories of BH-BL*, a memory book to celebrate the district's 100 years of success. It includes more than 400 photos of BH-BL events and activities, an overview of how the district was established, and several biographies of people who played a significant role in shaping BH-BL into one of the top districts in the region. Contact Tara Mitchell at [tmitchell@bhbl.org](mailto:tmitchell@bhbl.org) to purchase your copy.

## BH-BL

strongly supports integrating technology instruction in the classroom, which is why students in grades 3 through 7 receive Chromebook laptop computers to use in their classes throughout the school day.



## 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 proposed budget by \$498,280. In doing this, the board may 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 and 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.



*During the district's annual Hour of Code event, Pashley Elementary School teacher Michele Bowker helps first grader Maxwell Mackey figure out what computer programming he needs to use to make his character move forward two spaces.*



## 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 \$84,550.

### 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 exact 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 by March 1.

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

### 2016 Estimated STAR Values

Basic STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$763
Charlton	\$764
Clifton Park	\$798
Glenville	\$606
Enhanced STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$1,529
Charlton	\$1,530
Clifton Park	\$1,599
Glenville	\$1,169



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

The 2016-17 proposed budget of \$63,905,956 is 1.87 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 1.32 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—Glenville, Burnt Hills, Ballston Lake and Clifton Park.

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 estimated 0.65 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 third year, two qualifications need to be met:

1. A resident needs to be receiving the STAR exemption and
2. the school district must keep its proposed tax levy increase below its maximum allowable tax levy limit.

BH-BL's proposed tax levy limit is 1.32 percent, which is *below* the district's maximum allowable tax levy limit of 1.45 percent.

Details as to when qualifying taxpayers will be reimbursed should be forthcoming from the state. Residents may also visit the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance website at [www.tax.ny.gov](http://www.tax.ny.gov) for updates and more information.



*Eighth graders Derek Jensen and Olivia Moran assist with meal preparation at the Schenectady City Mission during the middle school's 20th annual Community Service Day. The goal of the program is to help students grow personally, intellectually, and socially while embracing the spirit of volunteerism.*

### Understanding Tax Levy and Tax Rate

#### 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 tax levy increase within the tax cap?

Yes. In fact, the proposed tax levy increase of 1.32 percent is below the district's maximum allowable tax levy limit of 1.45 percent. The proposed levy increase is actually one of the lowest increases over the past 16 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.

### 2016 MEDIAN FULL-MARKET VALUE PER TOWN & ESTIMATED 2016 TAX INCREASES

Ballston	\$212,774	\$29
Charlton	\$216,768	\$30
Clifton Park	\$180,000	\$25
Glenville	\$180,526	\$25

**Understanding this chart:** If your home is in Glenville and last September's tax bill shows its total full-market value was \$180,526, your school tax bill could increase by \$25 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 full-market value 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.

# Board of Education CANDIDATES

At the polls on May 17, 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 10 at 7 p.m. in the BH-BL High School Library.**

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

### Jennifer Longtin

is seeking her second term on the board, where she has been instrumental in reviewing and revising board policies to better align them with the recommendations of the New York State School Board Association (NYSSBA). A 16-year resident of the district, Jen owns Lighthouse Insurance Agency, LLC, an independent insurance agency, and Longtin Properties, LLC. She holds a bachelor's degree in business and is a member of the BH-BL Business & Professional Association. She and her husband live in Ballston Lake. They have twins in sixth grade at O'Rourke Middle School and a daughter in fourth grade at Stevens Elementary School. See Jen's position statement\* at right.



*"One goal, one passion—I am running for re-election for my family and yours because we are in this TOGETHER!"*

*As I finish up my first term on the Board of Education and reflect back, I am convinced now more than ever that our teachers, board, administrators and community members all have the same goal, which is to provide a safe and nurturing environment with the opportunity for all students to thrive and succeed.*

*Having three children in the BH-BL school district, I know the pleasure of working with many of our fine educators. These teachers and assistants are as dedicated and passionate as I am about student success. There are many days they spend more time with our children than we as parents do, which is why it's important to me that they are supported and have the tools available to promote our children's academic success and well being. The Board has one of the most important responsibilities in ensuring that everyone has the resources they need to support student success.*

*There will be important changes occurring in education regarding Common Core in the next few years and I appreciate your support in trusting my voice. And, as promised when I was elected to my first term three years ago, I will continue to be an advocate for our students, teachers, and community.*

*One of the board's major responsibilities is developing policies. I have been instrumental in bringing our board's policies up to compliance and creating a new platform for continued policy review. This platform will ensure our policies are reviewed and updated consistently. I have worked with our staff in providing a safer environment for all our children and also sit on the Insurance Committee.*

*I promise to continue to focus on the important issues, treat all individuals with respect, and continue to make tough decisions. I am proud to serve our community as a BH-BL Board of Education member and thank you for your support with my re-election."*

### John Kelch

is seeking his first term on the board. After serving in the Army Security Agency in North Africa, he spent most of his career in customer-facing positions for major computer companies. He ended his career as the Regional Government Manager for the New York Divisions of Time Warner Cable, where he supported a major statewide initiative on behalf of schools. Upon retirement, he's been actively involved in BH-BL and has been acknowledged by local newspapers as a "public advocate." He's been a resident for 40 years and lives on Blue Barns Road in Rexford with his wife Vicki, who is a BH-BL bus driver, and his son Chris, who is a junior at the high school. See John's position statement\* at right.



*"Since my retirement, I have spent an inordinate amount of time involved in our school district, engaging with teachers and staff, serving in positions and working with the Administration and Board. I served as the PTA Parent Rep on the Middle and High School Building Councils, on the PTA Council, and the recent Renovation Bond Committee; I have attended many of our Board meetings and shared numerous conversations with the Board and with the Superintendent and members of his staff. My focus has been on advocating for kids, parents, and members of the community, for promoting the essence of what was intended by "Shared Decision Making", and believe strongly that collaboration between teachers, parents, and members of the Administration forms the basis to attain the best for all. Making that happen has been challenging – lives are busy these days and often our school district is taken for granted; without the investments of time by parents, the schools have to guess what's important to them, and the task of being that advocacy falls on the shoulders of a very few. "Common Core" has been very disruptive, inconsiderate of teachers, parents, kids, and schools, and IMHO, indefensible; the public deserves the truth.*

*At the same time, our school not only represents the largest local expenditure for residents, it forms the basis of our community, and it is essential that the investments and decisions that are made are in the best interests of that recognition. I feel that my background, working with hundreds of corporations, public entities, communities, and schools lends itself well to balancing that need, with a long-range, holistic view. There are many activities currently underway that are providing something of a Renaissance for BHBL, very uplifting. Yet, I think there are baseline issues that have deteriorated somewhat and decisions being considered that may be short-sighted and harmful to the future of our school and community, issues I'd like to guide for the benefit of the community. Please view more of my position at BHBLCitizen.com."*





# Board of Education CANDIDATES

## Patrick Ziegler

is seeking his first term on the board. A resident for 13 years, he is a member of the Saratoga County Water Authority Board and served as Ballston Town Supervisor from 2014 to 2015. He is the Treasurer of the NYS Reform Party, which was formed in 2014 as the Stop Common Core ballot line. Patrick has spent nearly 20 years in higher education finance and currently serves as a Market Relationship Manager for Wells Fargo. He holds a master's degree from UAlbany and is completing his doctorate in Educational Administration and Policy Studies from UAlbany. He and his wife Mary have three children in the district—William in eighth grade, Katherine in fifth grade and Freddy in kindergarten. See Patrick's position statement\* at right.



*"My wife and I chose to move to Burnt Hills in 2002 for a number of reasons but none more important than the reputation of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School district. From academic excellence to success on the athletic fields to nationally ranked music programs, our district is truly special. As I have learned through the course of the past year's 100th anniversary celebrations, a key contributor to the district's success has been the ability of administrators, teachers, parents and community leaders to work together to achieve a common goal, an approach that has become known as the Burnt Hills Way.*

*My decision to announce my candidacy has been driven by what I perceive to be a weakening of these community ties which will inevitably impact our children negatively. It is critical, now more than ever, that we have a Board of Education that listens to all stakeholders and develops the best strategy possible to navigate challenges such as Common Core, rising tax burdens, decreased state funding and the pressure placed on students and faculty due to an overreliance on standardized testing.*

*Having served as Ballston Town Supervisor from 2014 to 2015, I understand the importance of keeping lines of communication open with those who support your positions but, perhaps more importantly, with those who disagree as well. Inflated egos, personal animosities or petty grievances cannot be permitted to distract any legislative body from its primary focus—serving the interests of the people whom they represent. This is best accomplished when decisions are made locally—not in a statehouse or lobbyist's office inside the D.C. beltway—through open dialogue, compromise and shared-decision making. Should I have the honor of serving on our Board of Education, I will ensure that the underlying values that inspired the Burnt Hills Way are renewed and that we encourage engagement, debate and mutual respect throughout the community. Our district and our students deserve nothing less."*



## 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](mailto:pmcgrath@bhbl.org) or 399-9141, ext. 85002. There is also budget information at [www.bhbl.org/budget](http://www.bhbl.org/budget).

## Lee-Ann Mertzluft

is seeking her third term on the board, where she has served as both president and Finance Committee chair. She is the director/owner of Options with Learning, LLC, a 6-person business serving students with special education needs. Lee-Ann is also a member of the BH-BL Business and Professional Association, the Town of Ballston Ethics Committee, and a past member of the Ballston Community Library Strategic Planning Committee. Lee-Ann has been a BH-BL resident for 10 years and lives in Ballston Lake. She has two children in college and one at Stevens Elementary School. See Lee-Ann's position statement\* at right.



*"BH-BL is, and has been for the past 100 years, a great district with an abundance of pride and passion for its children and community. It's a place where people choose to live. The dedication of the teachers, Board members, administrators, and support staff is evident every day. Yet life is not simple, nor are the decisions placed before each and every board member simple. They require care, compassion and thoughtfulness. Being a Board member is truly not an easy role to fill, but it is rewarding. I believe I bring to the Board experiences and characteristics that allow me to fulfill this role.*

*We have a responsibility to hold high expectations for all children by providing them a high-quality education. I supported the recommendations of our Kindergarten Task force, worked to change state laws governing teacher evaluations and the state testing measures, and I worked for the restoration of the GEA. I have also encouraged modest tax levy increases by working with the Board to create a 5-year financial plan.*

*BH-BL is currently one of the top districts in the region, and that is not by accident. Maintaining that status takes cooperation from district staff and our community. Forward thinking requires the foresight and ability to look at the entire system and develop creative, new approaches for instruction.*

*As past president, vice president and finance chair, I know how difficult it is to run a top-notch district while putting forth a tax levy increase of only 1.32% (the lowest in at least 16 years) without cutting any staff or programs. This year also marks the completion of Phase I and IIA with a new field and track, new traffic areas at the middle school and Stevens and a restructured main office with a secure entrance at Stevens. We are poised to begin the STEAM addition, a major piece, of our \$34.2 million renovation project. These are all GREAT things happening in our community!*

*I believe that my nearly 23 years experience as an educator and director leaves me uniquely qualified to see issues from many different perspectives."*



## Exit Survey

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.

# Just can't hide that SPARTAN Pride



This year O'Rourke Middle School's Future City team, Spartopia, placed second in the regional competition.

Congratulations to YMCA Student of the Year Adam Hansen, YMCA Educator of the Year high school math teacher Mike Batty, and Leah Clasen, Casey Doherty, Christian Gramuglia, Kate Isaksen, Luke LeBel, Joe Messare and Jake Warren for being recognized by the YMCA for their outstanding volunteer efforts. (Photo from left: Gramuglia, Doherty, Hansen, Isaksen and Batty.)



Congratulations to high school student Nick Martinez for earning top honors in the recent SkillsUSA competition and advancing to the state competition. Visit our website and follow us on Facebook and Twitter to learn how he did, as well as read about many more student and teacher success stories.



The girls varsity volleyball team was named the NYS Class A Champions and set the record for most victories in a season with a 31-1 team record. The student athletes also achieved a scholar-athlete grade point average of 97.6 percent.

High school Science Research students (from left) Gwenda Law, Ben Schiher, Luke LeBel and Evan Karl raked in the awards for their projects at the prestigious Science and Engineering Fair at RPI. Law advances to the International Science and Engineering Fair in Arizona in May.



At the WorldStrides Heritage Music Festival in Washington, D.C., the BH-BL Music Program received the Festival Sweepstakes trophy for earning the highest combined scores. Concert Choir, Concert Band, Jazz Ensemble, Orchestra, and Select Jazz Choir received Gold ratings. And, within the divisions, Concert Choir and Orchestra ranked first and Jazz Ensemble ranked third. Concert Band, Concert Choir, and Orchestra each received Adjudicator Awards for high scores. Orchestra received the Outstanding Orchestra trophy, Concert Choir and Select Jazz Choir received the Choral Sweepstakes trophy, and Kelly Waters and Alicia Esposito received Maestro Awards for their outstanding vocal solos.



2016 Student Courage Award winner Nico Petel (with High School Principal Tim Brunson and Superintendent Patrick McGrath) was one of two local students to be honored by the Siena Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture Series for demonstrating courage by taking positive action against racism, prejudice or bias-related violence within a community.



# Renovations project moves full 'steam' ahead

## District set to break ground this summer on high school's new STEAM addition

On the last day of school when the final bell of the 2015-16 school year rings, BH-BL High School doors will close for students and staff and open for construction crews. The district is set to break ground on the new STEAM wing (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) this summer. The addition is expected to be completed in the 2017-18 school year.

### BH-BL High School

The STEAM wing portion of the voter-approved \$34.2 million renovation project (Phase IIB) includes classrooms and labs for hands-on work in areas such as advanced manufacturing, robotics, electronics, computer science, graphic design, applied math, 2-D and 3-D art, computer-aided design, and digital music.

Other projects planned for the high school include converting the existing Red and Blue Rooms into a black box theatre and a modern-day presentation

center, respectively.

The current English wing (one of the oldest sections of the school) will be renovated and become the District Office, which is currently located at the Hostetter Leadership Building. 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. These parts of the project are expected to get underway after the STEAM addition is completed.

Other work that will be done at the high school over the next couple of years includes upgrading and reconstructing the high school library to include a Learning Commons, which is a full-service learning, research, and project space. The modern space will accommodate students when they need a meeting place to work on collaborative projects with their peers. It will also offer study areas where students can easily rearrange furniture to accommodate impromptu



planning sessions or secure a quiet place to work. The physical education classroom/fitness center will also be renovated and expanded. New exterior restrooms on the end of the science wing adjacent to Centennial Field are scheduled to be constructed.

### CHES & PES

Also part of Phase IIB is construction and renovations at Pashley and Charlton Heights Elementary Schools. Work at both schools is expected to begin this summer and completed in the 2016-17 school year.

The addition of a workroom/small group learning space is being constructed at both buildings to provide teachers a place to collaborate on projects and work with small groups of students. At each school, modern fire alarm and public address systems will be installed and asbestos floor tiles in classrooms will be replaced.

### Completed Projects

#### 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.

#### 2015

Constructed a new multi-purpose turf field (Centennial Field) and 8-lane track at the high school.

Reconstructed the Stevens main office and added a secure visitor entrance vestibule.

Demolished the original garage at Stevens.

A detailed list of projects, a time line, photos and more information can be found at [www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org).

## Impact of new real estate development in BH-BL

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 several years.

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.

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

### TAX IMPACT HISTORY

Year	Tax Levy Increase	Average Tax Rate Increase
2012-2013	2.30%	1.96%
2013-2014	2.47%	2.01%
2014-2015	1.94%	1.16%
2015-2016	2.68%	1.95%
2016-2017	1.32%	*0.65%

*Tax base growth factors (if any) comes from the Office of Real Property Services (ORPS). \* Estimated.*



**Board of Education**

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Tara Mitchell, Editor*

**Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake**

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**12 2016-2017 Proposed Budget**

Please  
remember  
to VOTE!

**Ballot Items**

☒ The 2016-17  
Proposed Budget

☒ Board of  
Education  
Candidates

**Tuesday, May 17**  
**7 a.m. to 9 p.m.**  
**High School Gym**  
**88 Lakehill Road**  
**Burnt Hills**



*Charlton Heights  
Response to  
Intervention math  
and reading  
teacher Lauren  
Hogue volunteered  
at the recent  
elementary Math  
& Movement  
Night. She helped  
this student solve  
math problems by  
hopping, skipping  
and jumping  
on one of many  
different colorful  
floor mats used to  
make math fun by  
using whole-body  
movements.*

**👍 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 17 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 17.

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](http://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 17. For more information, contact Christopher Abdoo at 399-9141, ext. 85025.