



2024-25  
**Proposed**

# BUDGET

## Board proposes budget with 1.98% estimated tax rate increase

### 2024-25 proposal expands programming and services for students

On Tuesday, May 21, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$84,923,072 budget for the 2024-25 school year. Voters will also be asked to elect two candidates to the Board of Education. (See pages 6-7.)

**Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the gym at BH-BL High School.**

The proposed budget carries a 1.98% estimated tax rate increase with a 2.91% tax levy increase, making this the 13th consecutive year the district has proposed a budget below the state's tax cap. A small portion of the tax rate increase is due to onboarding a new debt cycle associated with the voter-approved 2023 capital project.

Overall spending in the proposed budget will increase by \$3.35 million, or 4.11%. The increase is due in large part to preserving the services and programs that were added across the district using the limited-time federal grant monies. The federal grants, which expire at the end of the current school year, were allocated to districts to fund academic recovery efforts after the pandemic.

"The addition of these interventions, including academic positions and social-emotional counseling services, had been a long-term goal for the district," explains Assistant Superintendent Dr. David Collins. "Because of the success of the student-centered initiatives and opportunities, maintaining them—beyond the life of the federal grants—became a budget priority."



*There were lots of oooos and ahhhs heard from fourth graders during Science Demo Day at the high school. This annual event offers young students the opportunity to try their hand at a variety of different science experiments, such as "Boo Bubbles" (pictured above). National Science Honor Society students design all of the experiments and run each lab. Scan the QR code to learn more and watch a news story to hear what one excited student has to say about Science Demo Day!*



### 2024-25 Budget Plan Impacts

Along with planning financially to maintain services, staffing, and programming that are no longer funded by federal grants, school district leaders and the Board of Education were also focused on developing a budget that took other factors into consideration. These include the realities of addressing higher inflation rates (energy costs, supplies and materials, contractual services, and instructional resources), a larger student population, and the growth in student needs (both academic and social-emotional) while also seeking opportunities to improve and grow programming in ways that are sustainable and innovative. District leaders also continuously pursue ways to generate revenue. This includes expanding the reach of the district's Distance Learning Program to include more schools as well as increasing the number of distance learning courses

offered. Another revenue source involves performing routine maintenance work on other local school districts' bus fleets.

Developing the budget for the upcoming school year has been challenging given the high inflation and economic pressures the community is facing. As Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath noted: "Our team has

continued on pg. 9

**24  
25**

## BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

Proposed Budget	<b>\$84,923,072</b>
Estimated Tax Rate Increase	<b>1.98%</b>
Tax Levy Increase	<b>2.91%</b>
Budget-to-Budget Increase	<b>4.11%</b>

# Expenditures Summary

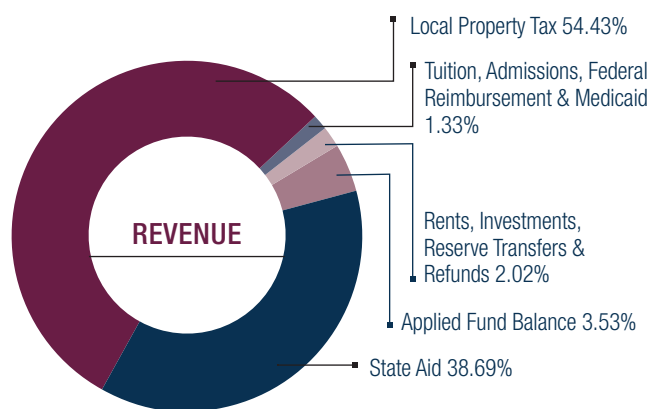
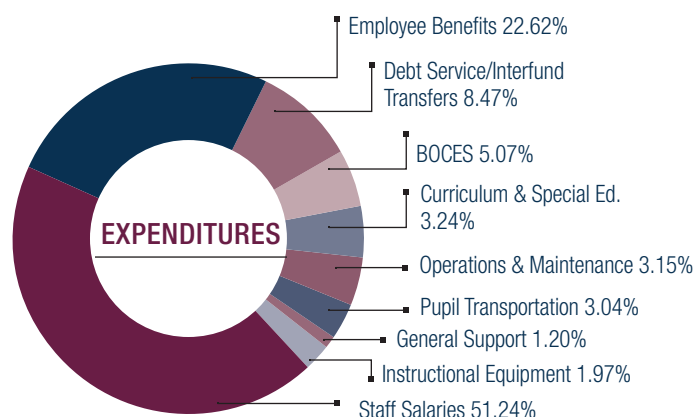
CATEGORY	2023-24	PROPOSED 2024-25	% CHANGE '23-24 to '24-25
General Support (Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)	\$925,696	\$1,020,000	10.19%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements*	3,173,368	2,753,827	-13.22%
BOCES**	3,961,823	4,302,803	8.61%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	1,662,747	1,676,958	0.85%
Operations & Maintenance***	3,432,175	2,672,950	-22.12%
Pupil Transportation	2,448,000	2,579,152	5.36%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	18,718,134	19,207,227	2.61%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers****	6,994,208	7,193,783	2.85%
Staff Salaries	40,253,971	43,516,372	8.10%
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>\$81,570,122</b>	<b>\$84,923,072</b>	<b>4.11%</b>

\* This figure reflects a shift in budget lines from the Governor's proposed high-impact tutoring to interventionists' salaries.

\*\*This figure reflects a projected increase in out-of-district tuition and technology purchases.

\*\*\*This figure reflects a reduction in equipment purchases.

\*\*\*\* This figure reflects a transfer of salary expenditures from temporary federal grants to general funds as well as current and projected contractual expenses.



# Revenue Summary

	2023-24	PROPOSED 2024-25	% CHANGE '23-24 to '24-25
State Aid	\$30,385,946	\$32,860,312	8.14%
Local Property Tax	44,917,786	46,224,894	2.91%
Tuition, Admissions & Services	890,938	923,866	3.70%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves*	1,675,452	1,714,000	2.30%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	200,000	200,000	0%
Applied Fund Balance	3,500,000	3,000,000	-14.29%
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$81,570,122</b>	<b>\$84,923,072</b>	<b>4.11%</b>

\* This figure reflects Loss of Transfer from Debt Service and an increase in estimated interest income.

## RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

**\$5.11M**

The total dollar amount in scholarships that students from the Class of 2023 earned.

**2,800**

The number of college credits students from the Class of 2023 accumulated prior to their graduation from BH-BL.

**97.3%**

The district's average graduation rate\* for the past six years. It's one of the highest in the Capital Region. (\*NYSED school report card data.)

**116**

The number of high school students inducted this year into the Math (68) and Science (48) Honor Societies.

# School District Budget Notice

## Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2023-24 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year	Contingent Budget for 2024-25 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$81,570,122	\$ 84,923,072	\$83,615,964
Increase/Decrease for the 2024-2025 School Year		\$3,352,950	\$2,045,842
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		4.11%	2.51%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.12%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$44,917,786	\$46,224,894	
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)	\$44,917,786	\$46,224,894	\$44,917,786
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$2,374,634	\$2,665,895	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$43,772,792	\$43,844,831	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	\$42,543,152	\$43,558,999	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval)	\$1,229,640	\$285,832	
Administrative Component** (See below)	\$7,720,599	\$8,424,959	\$8,295,284
Program Component** (See below)	\$58,111,344	\$61,149,500	\$60,208,307
Capital Component** (See below)	\$15,738,180	\$15,348,613	\$15,112,372

## Basic STAR Savings Impact

### Estimated Basic STAR Savings<sup>1</sup>

Ballston	Charlton	Clifton Park	Glenville
<b>\$652</b>	<b>\$666</b>	<b>\$704</b>	<b>\$563</b>

The annual budget vote for fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, Saratoga & Schenectady Counties, New York, will be held at BH-BL High School, Tuesday, May 21, 2024, between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the BH-BL Central School District, at which times the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

## \*\*Budget Components Definitions

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



Stevens Elementary School students try their hand at African stick drums during an interactive assembly by the SAAKUMA Dance Troupe, which is a resident dance company of the Dagara Music Center. The troupe is driven by its passion for bringing innovative dances and world music to its audiences and has been visiting schools throughout the country since 2008.

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

\* Assumptions made in projecting a contingent budget for 2024-25, 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.

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



## Budget Q&A

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

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

#### CONTINGENT BUDGET RULES

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

Bringing the BH-BL tax levy increase down to zero would force the board to reduce the proposed budget by \$1,307,108. In doing this, the board may not be able to adhere to its goal

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

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

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



### Q. Are new buses being purchased for next year?

**A.** Yes, but the cost of the new buses is included in the budget proposal rather than as a separate proposition. Bus purchases are done this way so the district doesn't have to borrow funds and incur debt. The proposal includes \$1,802,152\* for the purchase of two 77-passenger buses, a 72-passenger bus, a 60-passenger wheelchair accessible bus, a 35-passenger bus, and a service truck to replace some of the district's oldest buses. (\*This figure includes funding for two full-size electric buses. However, electric buses will only be purchased if the district receives grant funding for a significant portion of the cost.)

The district anticipates being reimbursed approximately 72.5 percent of the cost of the buses through state transportation aid in subsequent years, resulting in a net local cost of approximately \$495,592. Additionally, by purchasing buses outright, the district saves an estimated \$20,000 annually in interest and legal fees associated with borrowing funds.

#### BUS REPLACEMENT PLAN

The buses scheduled to be replaced in the 2024-25 school year are among the oldest in the district's fleet and have already accumulated high mileage, exceeded their warranties, and undergone many maintenance repairs. Beyond certain limits, buses typically become too costly to maintain given the state's stringent safety codes. Furthermore, new school buses are aligned with the latest safety and emissions standards and have better fuel economy rates.

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

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





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

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

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

The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of taxpayers age 65 and older with yearly incomes of \$93,200 or less.

### OTHER TAX RELIEF OPTIONS

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

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

The board adopted the Alternative Veterans' Tax Exemption (level 1) and, more recently, the Firefighters' Tax Exemption, which allows qualifying veterans and firefighters to be exempted from paying school taxes on a *portion* of their home's assessed value depending on their military and fire service.

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

### 2024 Estimated STAR Values

Basic STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$652
Charlton	\$666
Clifton Park	\$704
Glenville	\$563

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

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

## Q. Can residents now vote early by mail?

**A.** Yes. New York Governor Hochul recently signed into legislation the Early Mail Voting Act. This allows qualified voters the opportunity to vote in their school budgets and board elections by mail. Qualified voters who prefer to mail in their ballots rather than voting in person on Tuesday, May 21, first need to complete an early mail voting application and return it to the district by May 14 if the applicants want a ballot mailed to them, or by May 20 if the ballot is to be personally delivered to the voter.

You are considered a qualified voter if you are a United States citizen, 18 years of age or older on election day, a resident of the BH-BL School District for 30 days immediately prior to election day, and registered to vote.

Additionally, you are already registered to vote in the school district election if you are registered with the County Board of Elections to vote in the general election or if you have voted at an annual or special district vote within the last four calendar years.

Voters may only apply for an early mail voting ballot on their own behalf. A voter who applies for and is issued an early mail voting ballot will not be eligible for an absentee ballot for the same election.

The early mail voting application can be downloaded from the district's website, picked up at the District Office (Hostetter Leadership Center, 88 Lakehill Rd.), or mailed directly to a resident. Please contact Deputy

Board Clerk Rebecca Manson at [rmanson@bhbl.org](mailto:rmanson@bhbl.org) or 518-399-9141, ext. 85020 to have an application mailed.

Once an early mail voting application is received by the clerk, a ballot will be delivered in the method requested on the application. If no method is requested, the clerk shall mail the ballot to the address designated on the application, to the qualified voter. Please note, the voter's signature must be on the return envelope in order for the early mail voting ballot to be considered valid and canvassed.

For a voter's ballot to be canvassed, it must be received by the District Clerk by 5 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21, 2024.

## RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

50+

The number of BH-BL High School students who were recognized in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program over the last 10 years. Congratulations to Clara Law, Andrew Phillips, and Liam Sullivan who are this year's National Merit Scholarship Commended students.

37

The number of clubs offered at BH-BL High School that range in focus from community service and student government to academics, athletics, and fine arts. This includes the recent addition of a Pickleball Club and a Crochet/Knitting Club.

90

The percentage of the Class of 2023 who pursued post-graduation education at either a 2- or 4-year college or university.



# Board of Education Candidates

## VOTE FOR TWO

On May 21, residents may also elect two members to the Board of Education for three-year terms.



## MTC NIGHT, MAY 15

To learn more about the candidates, there will be an informal **Meet-the-Candidates Night on Wednesday, May 15 at 7 p.m.**

*Residents may chat one-on-one with the candidates in the high school library. Light refreshments will be available.*

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

### Lisa Morse

a 21-year resident of the district is seeking a third term on the board. She has served as board president and on numerous board committees. She also volunteers on the BH-BL Field Hockey Booster Club as its treasurer and immediate past president, and on the Softball Booster Club as the secretary. Lisa lives in Glenville with her husband and daughter, who will be the last of their five children to graduate from BH-BL (in 2025). She is employed as a licensed insurance producer, with prior work experience in the Ballston Spa Central School District, Capital District YMCA and Greater Glenville YMCA. Her education includes associate and paralegal degrees from SUNY Herkimer. \*See Lisa's position statement at right. ➔



"I am running again for the privilege of continuing to support this wonderful school district and the path it is on to become even better. I believe to accomplish this we need to keep alignment with our district's mission statement and our student-centered, decision-making process. This is additionally important at a time when we may soon need to replace up to five senior administrators. If and when this happens, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the process of identifying future leaders who possess the qualities we value and need - all while keeping true to our tradition of creating an educational environment that supports opportunities for learning, personal growth and social responsibility.

During my tenure, I have served as the board president, Finance Committee Chairperson, Audit Committee member, Education Foundation representative as well as a member of the 2013, 2018 and the 2023 Capital Project Committees. In this time frame, the board has also successfully worked to construct the STEAM addition at the high school, dedicate Centennial Field, build our Transportation Building, and fully renovate the Arthur Mengel Auditorium. I will bring this relevant experience and institutional knowledge to this next term and continue to be a strong voice for the residents of the district.

I will continue to support our teachers and administrators in their quest to effectively educate our children, and work to identify new learning and professional development opportunities for students and staff.

I will also continue to be a responsible steward of district finances, celebrate the numerous successes of our students and staff, and continue the search for new and better ways to connect our entire community to the district and our schools.

I am extremely grateful and honored to have been chosen to represent our community on the BH-BL School Board for the last two terms and respectfully ask for your support to serve the district and its stakeholders for a third."

## RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

791

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

55

The number of high school students who were selected to participate in various Saratoga-Warren County Music Educator Association concerts.

485

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

7

The number of high school student artists who had their artwork selected for the prestigious High School Juried Regional Art Show. More than 600 pieces were submitted and only 100 selected for the show.





### Kevin J. Bearce

is seeking his first term on the board. He and his wife, Lindy, have lived in Charlton for 13 years and have three children who attend the high school.



Kevin works for Fluor Marine Propulsion at Knolls Atomic Power Lab as a Construction Subcontractor Technical Representative. He is also a local business owner of the Spartan Machine Shop. Kevin earned a mechanical engineering degree from the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and also served with the U.S. Army Reserves Combat Engineers. He was a member of BH-BL's 2013 Capital Project Committee and shares his mechanical engineering expertise in a variety of ways, such as mentoring the high school Robotics Team and introducing middle school students to the field of underwater robotics. \*See Kevin's position statement at right. ➔

"It would be an honor to receive your vote for a position on the BH-BL Board of Education, and represent the community.

Thirteen years ago, my wife and I put our oldest child on the school bus to Charlton Heights Elementary for his first day of kindergarten. This June, he will graduate and head to the University at Buffalo to study Aerospace Engineering. His BH-BL education has given him a solid foundation and I'm confident he will do well in college and beyond. My other children, currently a freshman and junior at the high school, also thrive academically and I know their accomplishments didn't happen in a vacuum. This district and community are truly top notch, and it shows in the student body which is why I want to ensure continued excellence in the programs and opportunities afforded to all students.

Throughout the years, I have been able to give back to the community by mentoring the high school's robotics team by lending them technical help during robot builds. I served on the district's hiring committee as a parent representative selecting the administrator to oversee the high school STEAM addition and programs. I have also volunteered for the Fluor Marine Propulsion Sea Perch program helping middle school students build and navigate underwater robots.

My greatest strength as a potential board member is to lend technical knowledge to future district modernization and infrastructure improvements with almost three decades of construction project management and field experience under my belt. For the past 13 years, I have overseen projects involving new buildings, utility services, and infrastructure renovations at KAPL in support of the U.S. Navy, while employed by Fluor Marine Propulsion. Before working for Fluor, I was a project manager overseeing the bidding and installation of large energy efficiency retrofit projects for school districts, Universities, and DOE while employed by Siemens Building Technologies or Johnson Controls.

I'm also the owner of a local small business called Spartan Machine Shop LLC. I have built up a customer base helping other local businesses with repairs and custom fabrication projects. I pay close attention to the quality of my work, timely delivery, and cost when taking on work.

I feel my experience managing complex construction projects, along with hands on business and technical skills running a local machine shop, provides a unique perspective to evaluate topics brought before the school board and find collaborative solutions.

In closing, I am proud to be part of the BH-BL community and hope to gain your support in allowing me to serve the district and community as a school board member."

### James Robertson

is seeking his first term on the Board of Education. He and his wife Leigh Ann have been district residents for 13 years. They



have two children who attend Stevens and Charlton Heights Elementary Schools. James attended Kansas State University and is a mechanical engineer for Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. James has been involved in a variety of district and community organizations over the years, including being a FIRST Lego League coach, a Girls Wrestling Booster Club member, and a 2023 Capital Project Committee member. For the past 20 years he has been a blood donor with the American Red Cross and a volunteer SCUBA diver for local Sea Perch competitions. \*See James' position statement at right. ➔

"My career started 20+ years ago as an engineer with Knolls Atomic Power Laboratory. I moved to Burnt Hills 13 years ago after hearing BH-BL was a great school district. Little did I know how important this school district would be when we started our family. BH-BL has been amazing for the growth of our kids and it would be a pleasure to give back to the community by serving on the Board of Education.

Last year, I was fortunate to participate on the 2023 Capital Improvement Committee as a parent representative from Charlton Heights. It was an incredible experience being able to see the spaces our students spend their day in, meet the teachers and administrators that give their best to our kids every day, and getting to know other members of the community. This great school district is a reflection of the great community we live in. Our district has challenges, a big one is that we are simply out of space. The demands on our district to provide services to our students have grown over time, however, the size of our teaching space has not. Kudos to our teachers and administrators for making the best out of the situation but, our kids should have the right space to make sure they are getting the best education possible. I'm proud of the work the Capital Improvement Committee did and the recommendation made to the Board of Education. This is an example of being able to face and solve the district's challenges when we work together.

BH-BL has a great legacy of listening to the community and providing an education that we can be proud of. I am also proud of how inclusive our district is. This has been demonstrated in the support of our new girls wrestling program and also by the team of therapists and counselors dedicated to each student in the district. Continuing this legacy is only possible by putting in the work and I would be honored to have the opportunity to do my part.

If elected, I will work with the administration and faculty to create a long-range vision for our buildings that support the growing size of our student population, ensuring BH-BL continues to provide the best education for our kids. I will also listen to the community, administration, and faculty, striking the right balance of all those involved to resolve new challenges. I respectfully ask for your vote and I thank you for your time."

# O'Rourke Students Get Eco-friendly at Green University

O'Rourke Middle School Go Green Club member Rylynn Rossman (top photo, left) and her friend Gianna Jones (top photo, right) had a great time making paper flower bouquets out of old library books that were headed to the recycling bin. This eco-friendly activity, among others, was part of the club's new Green University. Kelly Chila, the club's advisor and an O'Rourke teaching assistant, explained that the club applied for and received a grant from the BH-BL Education Foundation to fund a Go Green Week leading up to Earth Day (April 22). Other Green University "courses" included Plant an Indoor Garden; Make Your Own Lip Balms, Bath Bombs, and Sugar Scrubs; Water Testing; Make Paper from Scratch; and Make Bird Seed Ornaments, as demonstrated by middle school student Joshua Janeczek (bottom photo).

In addition to organizing Green University, club members also got creative and designed an Earth Challenge Bingo Card to encourage their peers to try simple "green" tasks, such as bringing a waste-free lunch to school, recycling their school papers, donating old shoes, etc. The club took an extra step by supplying the cafeteria with sustainable cutlery, straws, and water bottles for a week in April. And, nearly 1,000 sustainable shampoo-soap bars (available to anyone at O'Rourke) were donated to the club.

"The goal of Go Green Week is to introduce students to the various sustainable options that we've put into play at the school but also to spark an interest so that they continue, and even expand, their own green efforts in the future," adds Chila.



## 2023 CAPITAL PROJECT PLANS AWAIT SED APPROVAL, CONSTRUCTION ANTICIPATED TO BEGIN FALL 2024

This past December, Phase 1 plans for the voter-approved 2023 capital project were submitted to the State Education Department (SED) for approval. However, the district has been informed by SED that due to delays, the approval process for school district-related projects is taking longer than originally anticipated. Therefore, BH-BL is anticipating a portion of Phase 1—creation of an access road from the O'Rourke bus loop to High Mills Rd. and districtwide roof repair work—to begin in the fall 2024. The Charlton Heights bus loop and parking lot work is planned for next summer (2025). In the meantime, plans for the remaining construction phases are being designed and will continue to be submitted to SED for approval.

## RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

35

The number of varsity athletic teams offered at BH-BL. Included in this budget is the addition of two more sports teams—Girls Flag Football and Unified Bocce Ball.

1,524

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

4

The number of athletic teams (fall & winter seasons) that won state championship titles: Boys Cross-Country, Girls Volleyball, Boys Wrestling (Liam Carlin), and Girls Indoor Track 4x400 Relay.

8

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



## 2024-25 School Budget Vote

Continued from page 1

worked hard to balance rising district costs with the critical academic, social-emotional, and programming needs of our students. At the same time, we know many families are struggling with their own financial difficulties due to inflation. We believe this budget reflects these realities.”

### What's included in the proposal?

Through strategic reductions and continued careful fiscal planning, the board is able to propose a budget that continues to support student interventions, improve and expand existing academic programming, and add new student-centered offerings. This includes:

#### ❖ Expanding the grade 6 enrichment program to include more introductory elective courses.

Electives are a great way to help students develop new interests and abilities or take a deeper dive into a topic that resonates with them. They also help students step out of their comfort zone to explore something new while still in a familiar setting with staff they likely know.

#### ❖ Reducing class sizes at O'Rourke Middle School to better align with the elementary schools' class sizes.

Middle school is a pivotal time for students where their interpersonal, academic, and social skills are being further developed. The vast majority of research shows that students perform better in all subjects, at all levels, in smaller classes. This is in part because smaller class sizes allow staff to get to know students better and more easily identify students' challenges and strengths. It also supports more one-on-one time between staff and students, creates a more cohesive class culture, supports sustainable collaboration among students, and encourages student engagement.

#### ❖ Expanding and realigning the high school's self-contained Transitions Program.

Due to the existing program's size and projected enrollment growth, this budget supports an additional class to better align the program with age-appropriate targeted instruction. Students beginning their high school program will benefit from

a curriculum that delivers both academic and life skills instruction. Students further along in their high school trajectory will be in a different classroom with staff who deliver a curriculum focused on preparation for adulthood, including advanced life skills instruction and job/career development skills. Some

students may be introduced to real-world, hands-on internship placements outside of the classroom as well.

❖ **Maintaining the K-5 math intervention specialists.** These staff members provide early intervention and support for mathematical skill development to help solidify a solid math foundation. They may work with students one-on-one or in small groups. Math specialists also assist students who may be struggling with math concepts by reinforcing classroom lessons.

❖ **Maintaining the counseling positions at each elementary school.** These staff members work with all students implementing the district's comprehensive social-emotional curriculum, which includes topics such as character development and career awareness. The counselors also focus on interpersonal and friendship-building skills, test anxiety and self esteem, conflict resolution, and goal setting. Individual and group services and guidance to support healthy minds is also provided to students.

❖ **Adding new instructional resources to replace the outdated classroom materials.** This includes a new K-5 English Language Arts series that is better aligned to the science of reading and



High school students Megan Smialek, left, (grade 11) and Ava Lyons, right, (grade 9) are hard at work getting ready to kick off the flag football season at BH-BL. The Spartans are one of 12 schools in Section 2 that are competing this spring. Girls flag football is a new athletic offering at the high school and was partially funded through a one-year grant from the NY Giants organization. The continuation of this program is included in the proposed 2024-25 budget. Check the district website for the girls flag football schedule so you can catch a game and cheer for BH-BL!

current research around literacy acquisition. And, new science materials will be aligned to the new state standards, assessments, and the required lab activities.

❖ **Expanding athletic offerings.** This includes the addition of a Unified Bocce Ball team (BH-BL currently offers Unified Bowling and Basketball) and the continued support of a Girls Flag Football team. BH-BL was among 12 districts in Section 2 that introduced Girls Flag Football this spring through a one-year grant from the NY Giants organization. The continuation of this program is included in the proposed budget in response to the level of interest among students.

Superintendent Dr. McGrath emphasized the close connection between the district's budgeting process and its core educational mission: "The budget development process is a natural extension of the BH-BL School District's longstanding mission and purpose. For over a century, our district has been a collaborative partnership between parents, the community, and school staff. The budget process is a tangible expression of that ongoing partnership. By working together, we will each do our part to ensure the district continues providing world-class academic programs and opportunities that prepare our students for life after graduation."

# JUST CAN'T HIDE THAT *Spartan* PRIDE



## ABOVE

Congratulations to O'Rourke Middle School's Odyssey of the Mind team—Kate Gerwitz, Meg Gerwitz, Ellen Guthrie, Chloe DiMaso, Sammy Lopez, and Katie Lopez—for taking first place in the regional competition.

## BELOW

The high school's Robotics Club held its first Tech Fest, which was a huge success! Organizers say the goal of Tech Fest is to usher more students into technology classes and explore careers that involve technology. Scan the QR code (below) to watch a brief news story of the event.



## ABOVE

High school student Joey Veteramo proudly holds the Section 2 Divisional Championship plaque for the school's Unified Bowling team. Included in this budget is the addition of a high school Unified Bocce Ball team.



## ABOVE

Congratulations to student artists Caleb Wood (grade 10) and Clara Law (grade 12) who were award winners at the prestigious and highly competitive High School Juried Regional Art Show. Only 100 pieces of art, out of 600+ submissions, were even accepted into the show!



**LEFT**

Congratulations to high school students Lilly Mertzlufft, Jack Stuhlman, Emily Pearson and Ethan Reyes for winning top awards at the state-level Greater Capital Region Science & Engineering Fair. Congratulations to Mertzlufft who won first place (out of 70+ projects) advancing her to the International Science & Engineering Fair in California where she represented New York state with her project entitled “An Investigation of Jet Assisted Surface Mounted Actuators in Laminar and Turbulent Boundary Layers.”

**BELOW**

BH-BL student athletes won four state champion titles during the fall and winter seasons. Congratulations to Girls Volleyball (pictured below), Boys Cross Country, Liam Carlin/Boys Wrestling and Girls Indoor 4x4 Relay.

**LEFT**

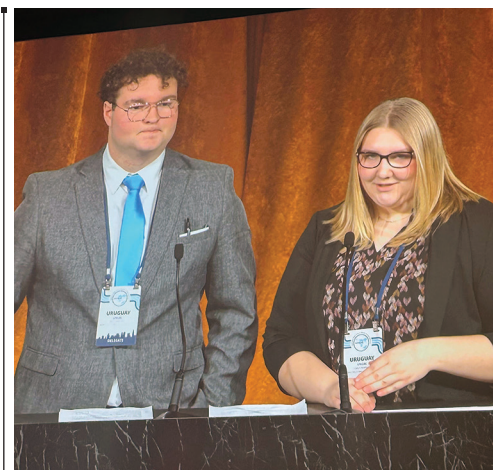
Throughout the month of March, Pashley Elementary School students made reading a major priority. In fact, they read 2,051 minutes, collectively! And, getting into “book character” at the local library helped make reading even more fun.

**BELOW**

Congratulations to BH-BL High School and Career & Technical Education students Dane Fendrick, Electrical Trades (pictured center), Avery Pultorak, Cosmetology (not pictured), and Erin Fresn, Culinary (not pictured), for winning first, second, and third places, respectively, at the Regional SkillsUSA Competition. They all advanced to the state-level SkillsUSA competition.

**RIGHT**

Congratulations to Model United Nations (UN) delegate pair Matt Lepel and Emily Pearson for being honored with the Award of Distinction for their representation of Uruguay at the National High School Model UN conference in NYC.



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12



BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**DON'T FORGET  
TO VOTE ON**

**May  
21**

**7 AM to 9 PM**  
**BH-BL HIGH SCHOOL GYM,**  
**88 LAKEHILL RD**

- ✓ The 2024-25 Proposed Budget
- ✓ Two Board of Education Candidates

► **VOTER QUALIFICATIONS**

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

► **REGISTERING TO VOTE**

You are already registered to vote on May 21 if you are registered with your county Board of Elections to vote in a general election.

► **ABSENTEE & EARLY MAIL VOTING BALLOTS**

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 21, or by early mail voting ballot if they would rather vote by mail. (See page 5 for details.)

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

The completed applications must be returned to Rebecca Manson at least seven days (May 14) before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter, or at least one day before the election if the ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter at the district office between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 21. For more information, call 518-399-9141, ext. 85020.



*Charlton Heights Elementary School students in Coding Club having fun programming water pianos. They are using a Makey Makey board to code complete circuits that allow their computers and cups of water to "talk" to each other. The end result? Students put their fingers into the different water cups that act as piano keys and they make music!*