



2026-27
Proposed

BUDGET

Voters to go to the polls Tuesday, May 19

Board proposes budget with a 2.21% estimated average tax rate increase for 2026-27 school year

On Tuesday, May 19, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School District residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$94,867,769 budget for the 2026-27 school year. Voters will also be asked to elect three 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, 88 Lakehill Road.

The proposal carries a 2.21% estimated weighted average tax rate increase with a 3.5% tax levy increase, making this the 15th consecutive year the district has proposed a budget at or below the state's tax cap.

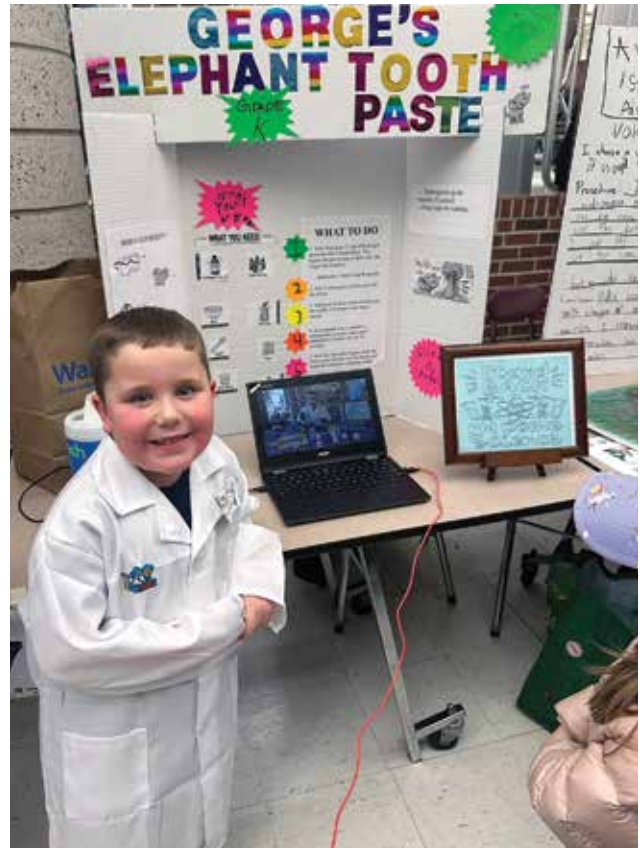
"Budget development is a complex balancing act between striving to maintain and enhance our existing student programs and opportunities and keeping taxes at a responsible level," explains Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath. "Fortunately, we've been able to do both. Fifteen years of historical data shows that BH-BL's final average tax rate has actually always been lower than what we've estimated in May. And, as a result of the

board's steadfast commitment to pursue strategic cost-saving measures, we've been able to continue growing and keeping pace with the educational changes that are necessary to prepare our students for the future."

Budget Drivers

Overall spending in the proposed budget will increase by \$5.67 million. The proposed budget-to-budget increase, in terms of an increase in the operating budget, is 4%. A budget-neutral transfer of \$2.1 million from the debt service fund as well as other reserve funds (on the revenue side) into the general operating budget (on the expenditure side) for work associated with the 2023 Capital Project must be calculated as a budget increase. Therefore, while the impact of these transfers is recorded as a budget increase, it actually *does not* impact the proposed tax levy nor the estimated tax rate. When including the budget-neutral transfer, the budget-to-budget increase is calculated as 6.35%. Other factors impacting the 4% operating budget-to-budget increase can be attributed to rising operational costs due to inflationary pressure, rising health insurance costs, and mandated out-of-district placements based on students' needs.

"We are feeling the pressure of rising operational costs alongside school districts across the state," says Assistant



Pashley Elementary School kindergarten student George Kichton donned his lab coat to showcase the wonders of chemistry at the annual districtwide STEM Fair. His "Elephant Toothpaste" demonstration was a crowd favorite, proving that science is just as much about having fun as it is about discovery. Pro tip: Keep this toothpaste away from the toothbrushes...and elephants!

Superintendent Dr. Christopher Abdo. "The board focused on finding ways to address these increased price points while maintaining our academic standards. Their priority was to offset growing expenses without compromising the educational experience our community expects."

Budget Proposals

The proposed 2026-27 school year budget maintains all academic programming and services, prioritizes fiscal responsibility, and expands opportunities for students while

26
27

BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

Proposed Budget	\$94,867,769
Estimated Tax Rate Increase	2.21%
Tax Levy Increase	3.50%
Budget-to-Budget Increase	6.35%
Budget-to-Budget Increase Without Transfer to Capital Project	4.00%

Expenditures Summary

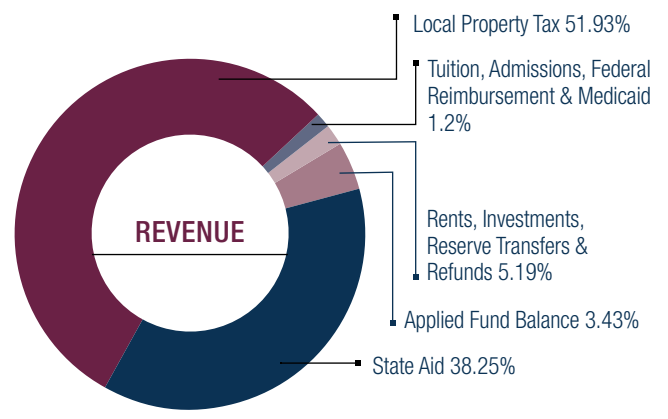
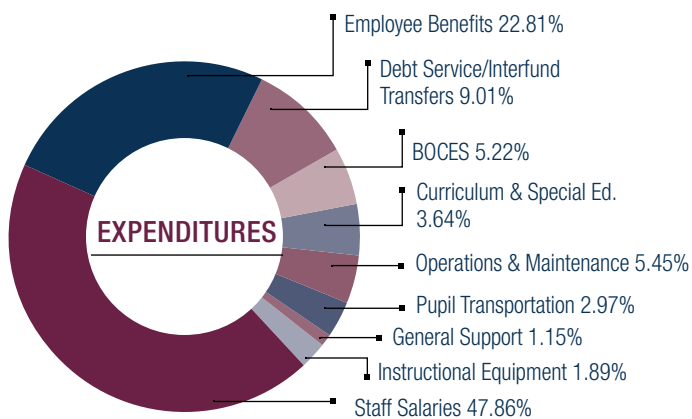
CATEGORY	2025-26	PROPOSED 2026-27	% CHANGE '25-26 to '26-27
General Support <i>(Includes district supplies & materials, legal services, general insurance)</i>	\$1,091,625	\$1,088,625	-0.27%
Curriculum/Spec. Ed. Private Placements*	3,009,827	3,460,750	14.98%
BOCES*	4,489,998	4,952,696	10.31%
Instructional Equipment, Furniture & Materials	1,717,420	1,793,606	4.44%
Operations & Maintenance**	2,791,641	5,169,350	85.17%
Pupil Transportation***	2,492,954	2,814,525	12.90%
Employee Benefits & Payroll Taxes	20,577,095	21,635,474	5.14%
Debt Service & Interfund Transfers****	8,083,619	8,544,410	5.70%
Staff Salaries	44,945,321	45,408,333	1.03%
Total Expenditure	\$89,199,500	\$94,867,769	6.35%

* These figures include additional out-of-district costs for pupils with special needs, and contracts for related service providers.

**This figure reflects increased costs for power & natural gas as well as a transfer to Capital Project funded through transfers from the debt service fund and reserves.

***This figure reflects an increase for school bus purchases based on the replacement schedule.

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



Revenue Summary

	2025-26	PROPOSED 2026-27	% CHANGE '25-26 to '26-27
State Aid	\$34,785,104	\$36,290,975	4.33%
Local Property Tax	47,602,396	49,268,480	3.50%
Tuition, Admissions & Services	935,000	935,000	0.00%
Rents, Investments, Refunds, Transfer from Reserves*	2,677,000	4,919,383	83.76%
Federal Aid/Medicaid Reimbursement	200,000	200,000	0.00%
Applied Fund Balance	3,000,000	3,253,931	8.46%
Total Revenue	\$89,199,500	\$94,867,769	6.35%

*This figure reflects GASB 87 accounting entries, revenue from the NYSBIP grant associated with electric bus purchases, and funding from the debt service fund and reserves for the transfer to Capital Project. (See page 9.)

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

\$6.5M

The total dollar amount in scholarships that students from the Class of 2025 received for college.

2,850

The number of college credits students from the Class of 2025 earned through participation in the school's College in High School (CHS) program.

41

The number of students from the Class of 2025 who completed licensing or college credit programs through Capital Region or Saratoga Career & Technical Education.

91

The number of high school students inducted into the Math and Science Honor Societies in the 2025-26 school year.

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2025-26 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year	Contingent Budget for 2026-27 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$89,199,500	\$94,867,769	\$93,201,685
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-2027 School Year		\$5,668,269	\$4,002,185
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		6.35%	4.49%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount			
	\$47,602,396	\$49,268,480	
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)			
	\$47,602,396	\$49,268,480	\$47,602,396
F. Total Permissible Exclusions			
	\$2,989,808	\$3,229,621	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions			
	\$44,944,214	\$46,146,673	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)			
	\$44,612,588	\$46,038,859	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval)			
	\$331,626	\$107,814	
Administrative Component** (See below)			
	\$8,643,889	\$8,668,511	\$9,031,243
Program Component** (See below)			
	\$64,132,411	\$66,618,561	\$67,012,012
Capital Component** (See below)			
	\$16,423,200	\$19,580,697	\$17,158,430

Basic STAR Savings Impact**

Estimated Basic STAR Savings¹

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

The annual budget vote for fiscal year 2026-27 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 19, 2026, between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., prevailing time in the BH-BL Central School District, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

**Budget Components Definitions

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



Stevens Superstars are diving into a world of logic and creativity, coding Bee-Bots to navigate mazes. This and other innovate activities can be found in the school's makerspace designed by Library Media Specialist Heidi Brower: "In our makerspace, students are free to imagine what is possible and are given the tools to bring ideas to life." Makerspaces aim to encourage solution-oriented thinking and trial-and-error patience in a risk-free and friendly environment.

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 2026-27, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, the district assumes the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses, such as new equipment purchases. To result in a no tax levy increase as the law requires, we would also need to cut a number of staff positions and increase class sizes.

** At the time this newsletter went to print, the 2026-27 STAR exemption savings calculations had not yet been updated.

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

Budget Q&A

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

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

CONTINGENT BUDGET RULES

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

Bringing the BH-BL tax levy increase down to zero would force the board to reduce the proposed budget by \$1,666,084. In doing this, it is unlikely that the board will be able to adhere

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

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

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



Q. Are new buses being purchased for next year?

A. Yes, new buses, both electric and diesel, are included in the budget for next school year. The total estimated cost of the new buses is included in the budget proposal rather than as a separate proposition. Bus purchases are done this way so the district doesn't have to borrow funds and incur debt. The proposal includes \$1,962,525 for the purchase of six new buses to replace some of the district's oldest buses. This figure includes funding for two full-size buses and one small diesel bus as well as three full-size electric buses. However, electric buses will only be purchased if the district receives grant funding for a significant portion of the total cost.

The district anticipates being reimbursed approximately 72 percent or \$1.37 million of the cost of the buses through state transportation aid in subsequent years. Additionally, by purchasing buses outright, the district saves an estimated \$50,000 annually in interest and legal fees associated with borrowing funds.

BUS REPLACEMENT PLAN

The buses scheduled to be replaced in the 2026-27 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 890,000 miles a year, transporting more than 3,100 students to and from its five schools. The buses are also used for sporting events, out-of-district school placement runs, shared transportation runs, field trips, summer school, and other events.

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



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

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

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

The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of taxpayers age 65 and older with yearly incomes of \$110,750 or less.

OTHER TAX RELIEF OPTIONS

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

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

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

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

2025** Estimated STAR Values

2025** Estimated STAR Values	
Basic STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$609
Charlton	\$612
Clifton Park	\$617
Glenville	\$527

2025** Estimated STAR Values	
Enhanced STAR	MAXIMUM TAX SAVINGS
Ballston	\$1,591
Charlton	\$1,592
Clifton Park	\$1,664
Glenville	\$1,216

***STAR Program Savings:** For questions related to the STAR program, please contact the NYS Department of Tax and Finance through its website at www.tax.ny.gov/star/ or by phone at 518-457-2036.

**At the time this newsletter went to print, the state's 2026 STAR values had not been updated.



Spartans had a stellar time celebrating the Lunar New Year and welcoming in the Year of the Fire Horse! At the elementary schools, guest speakers from the Chinese Cultural Center taught students key Chinese phrases, shared storied traditions, and performed vibrant cultural dances, which the students even participated in. The celebration continued at the high school, where the Asian Culture Dance Troupe wowed the audience with several elegant and lively dances before inviting students onstage to don traditional festive attire and test their skills with dance props. As it turns out, quite a few Spartans have a natural talent for making ribbon dragons soar! Visit the district's Facebook and Instagram accounts for additional photos.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

18

The number of students recognized in the prestigious National Merit Scholarship Program over the past five years. Congratulations to **Carter St. Louis** who is this year's National Merit Scholarship Commended student.

42

The number of official student clubs and organizations at the high school, which includes new clubs such as Sources of Strength, Racquet Club, and Cursive Club.

30

The number of students from the Class of 2025 who achieved the New York State Seal of Biliteracy upon their graduation last year.

Board of Education Candidates

VOTE FOR THREE

On May 19, residents may also elect three members to the Board of Education for three-year terms.

MEET-THE-CANDIDATES NIGHT, MAY 13

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

Scan the QR code (right) with your phone or visit bhbl.org to complete a Google Form to submit questions ahead of time or if you are unable to attend in person.



* *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.*

Lakshmi Nagarajan

is seeking her third term on the BH-BL Board of Education. During her six years on the board, Lakshmi served as both president and vice president,



and as an active member of several committees such as Audit, Finance, Health & Safety, and Diversity. She was also a member of the 2023 Capital Project Committee and played an integral role in the Superintendent Search. She is an officer for the high school's PTSA and involved in many school-related activities. Professionally, Lakshmi is a Certified Financial Planner, holds multiple securities licenses and is a Senior Wealth Manager and partner at Holistic Wealth Advisor. She holds her Master's in Business Administration from the University of Connecticut. She and her husband, James, are 19-year residents and have two children in the district. *See Lakshmi's position statement at right. ➔

I have had the privilege of serving on the Board of Education for the past six years. In that time, I have gained a better understanding of our education system and, more importantly, our community. I firmly believe that while our opinions, politics, and beliefs may be different, our core values are shared.

As we build on our district's success, it is essential that all voices and perspectives from our community are heard. I am passionate about fostering meaningful community involvement. Constituents should be able to debate different policies and proposals while administrators and educators should be empowered to implement best practices. This process should be transparent to all stakeholders to encourage open communication, trust, and collaboration.

While involvement is important at the district level, we need to stay competitive at state, national and global levels. Education is facing rapid change, particularly with the growing influence of technology, which must be carefully evaluated for its impact. At the same time, we must remain mindful of ongoing economic pressures that impact us all.

Our community is best positioned to identify what our needs are to sustain the district's high levels of achievement. Although we rely on financial support from the government, we must advocate for ourselves—pushing back on mandates that do not serve our community while maximizing monetary and infrastructure support for which we qualify. Competing demands for resources across all grade levels must be carefully considered and balanced against budgetary constraints, as well as the reality that taxpayers face financial priorities beyond education that continue to put pressure on household budgets. Recognizing and weighing the priorities of all stakeholders is key to our continued success.

As a BH-BL resident for almost 20 years, I am proud of our community's values. I remain fully committed to serving the best interests of our community and our schools, and I will always look for a path that considers the betterment of both.

I would be truly humbled and honored for the opportunity to continue to serve on the Board of Education so we can continue moving our district forward—thoughtfully, responsibly, and together.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

878

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

104

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

436

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.

13

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

James Ireland

is seeking his second term on the BH-BL Board of Education.

He and his wife, Kim, have been district residents for 24 years. They

have two children, a senior and a 2023 BH-BL High School graduate.

Jim holds a Bachelor's degree from St. Lawrence University where he studied math and economics. Professionally, he is a Mortgage Loan Originator for Ballston Spa National Bank. Jim is also a member of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Business & Professionals Association, a member and vice president of the Leadership Saratoga Alumni Association, and a volunteer for the community-wide Flag Day Parade. He and his family also play an integral role in the BH Track Club, both within the district and the community. *See Jim's position statement at right. ➡



It has been an honor serving as a member of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake School Board for the last three years. I am seeking a second term to the board to build on our successes and to lead during the inevitable challenges ahead.

During my tenure, the Board of Education has:

- ▶ Overseen a Capital Project Plan, overwhelmingly supported by the community, that makes strategic investments in our school's infrastructure;
- ▶ Expanded academics and programs to meet the growing needs of our students;
- ▶ Managed the district's finances in a manner that keeps tax rates affordable while supporting educational programs;
- ▶ Conducted a leadership search that will see Dr. Christopher Abdo as the district's new superintendent;
- ▶ Implemented a successful smart phone policy; and
- ▶ Created an Artificial Intelligence policy founded on academic integrity that recognizes that this is an ever changing topic that will require many tough conversations in the future.

I believe that BH-BL's utilization of Shared Decision Making is fundamental to the success of our district's operations and is a practice I will continue to support. It enables varied stakeholder groups to come together to guide important conversations. It allows decisions to be made that benefit our children, staff, and community.

When I came to the board, I had experience having already served on two hiring committees, co-chaired the last two Capital Project Committees, and was a member of the O'Rourke Middle School Building Council for six years. I visited the classroom teaching Junior Achievement at Charlton Heights, participated on the Charlton Heights Playground Build Committee, and served as President of the BH Track Booster Club.

My wife and I have been members of the community for more than 24 years. We chose to raise our family here those many years ago for good reason—the quality of the school. Our oldest is a junior at SUNY Geneseo studying to become a history teacher. Our youngest will walk across the stage this June and will head to Plymouth State University to study Environmental Science. While my family's time in the schools will shortly come to an end, my interest and commitment to the district does not.

I look forward to continuing to serve this community and humbly ask for the voters' support.

John Shillito

is seeking his first term on the BH-BL Board of Education. He has been a Burnt Hills resident for more than 20 years.

For the past nine years, John has served in the Civil Air Patrol as a Cadet First Lieutenant. Professionally, he works at Gil's Garage in Burnt Hills as a technician. In this capacity, he is also responsible for mentoring local high school students who have an apprenticeship at Gil's Garage either through a BOCES Career & Technical Education program or through the work study program at BH-BL High School. John was also a volunteer firefighter for three years and currently volunteers as a pit crew member at the Albany-Saratoga Speedway in Malta. *See John's position statement at right. ➡



Greetings, my name is John Shillito. I have been a resident of Burnt Hills for more than 20 years. I take great pride in this town and have a great appreciation for the men and women who assist in the development of the next generation. I would love to give back to the community that has supported me by running as a candidate for the BH-BL school board.

I am currently employed as a Technician at Gil's Garage here in Burnt Hills. I have been employed there for three years. My current duties are general maintenance and mentoring students who apprentice at the Shop through either BOCES or the BH-BL Shop program. I have nine years of leadership training and experience through Civil Air Patrol, where I achieved the grade of Cadet 1st Lieutenant. I also have 15 years of Public Speaking experience through Civil Air Patrol and speaking at individual events. I believe that these skills make me an excellent candidate for the School Board.

My main priorities are first, to create an environment suitable for training and teaching the next generation of great leaders in sacrificial leadership, and to continue the legacy of our great town into future generations. Secondly, I want to guide our Schools into a strong financial position free from debt. And finally, I want to give our Schools the ability to pivot with changing times. I strongly believe that my experience and training give me an excellent advantage to accomplish these goals.

If I am elected, I will seek to build up Leadership and Financial programs to equip our youth to face the ever-changing world, seek to create financial stability in our school through a balanced budget, and give alternative views on current problems. I want to continue the legacy that our School was founded on, and create a bright future for our community here in Burnt Hills and Ballston Lake, our state, and our nation.

Thank you for your consideration of my candidacy for the BH-BL school board.



Spartan Studios on the Rise

The house lights dim in the high school auditorium, but far back in the balcony, the energy is just beginning to surge. As student musicians take their positions on stage for their concerts, a second group of students is orchestrating a symphony of a different kind. In the production booth, members of Spartan Studios are poised at the ready on the soundboards, cameras, video switchers, and computers, preparing to live stream the evening's performance to an audience that spans beyond the walls of the auditorium.

In just three short years, Spartan Studios has transformed from a modest extracurricular club into a semi-professional student media team. What began as a dedicated crew of five students has grown into a 35-member powerhouse. This growth reflects more than just popularity; it represents a fundamental shift in how

students engage with technology and their school community.

The team's operational reach is also impressive. This year alone, they successfully delivered 20 live-streamed concerts, ensuring that every note played on stage reached families and fans from across the country and even from other parts of the world.

Spartan Studio's portfolio isn't limited to music; the team has created advertising-style videos for various school clubs, broadcasted the Veterans and Memorial Day ceremonies, and produced digital content, such as a man-on-the-street interview style video about the state's cell phone policy.

Professional Spaces & Skill

Coupled with student ambition and keen interest, the secret to the team's success

also lies in its access to professional-grade equipment and high-caliber environments that mirrors the professional industry. By using a variety of specialized school spaces, such as the Black Box Theater, the new Podcast Studio, the auditorium's production booth, and the business department's TV studio, students gain hands-on experience in diverse settings. Through this hands-on approach, students are learning marketable skills in project management, team leadership, and strategic communication.

Future Expansion, More Student Opportunities

During a recent concert, the team managed a complex, multi-angle live stream while simultaneously airing a series of short videos during breaks to keep the digital audience engaged. Last year's concert broadcasts alone garnered more than 11,000 views, a testament to the high production value and the wider community's desire to stay connected.

This team's success has sparked a vision for the future. In fact, the momentum of Spartan Studios is the primary reason for a new budgetary proposal: the development of Spartan Studios, Jr. at O'Rourke Middle School. (See page 9.) By expanding the program, the district aims to create more opportunities, giving younger students interested in the technical side of productions a head start on the skills they'll need for the future of digital media production.

Want to see the Spartan Studios team in action? Scan the QR code to view a recent student-produced live streamed concert.



RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

20

The number of 2025 varsity teams (fall & winter) recognized by NYSPHSAA as scholar-athlete teams for maintaining a collective GPA of 90% or higher.

1,704

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

2

The number of athletic teams (fall & winter) that won state championship titles: Field Hockey and Boys Cross-Country teams.

7

The number of Section 2 championship titles (fall & winter seasons) won by Field Hockey, Girls Cross Country, Boys Cross Country, Boys Volleyball, Girls Volleyball, Boys Indoor Track and Unified Bowling (Division champs).

2026-27 School Budget Vote Continued from page 1

simultaneously identifying key areas for cost savings.

► **Reductions & Realignments.**

The budget includes a cost savings by not filling some retirement/resignation vacancies and strategically realigning those role responsibilities among current staff. This includes the reduction of a K-12 administrative position, a district-level supervisor role, a district office position, and three teaching and two teacher assistant positions. “We are confident that reallocating these roles in-house and distributing responsibilities among existing experienced staff and administrators will allow us to preserve the quality of programming and leadership our students are accustomed to and our community expects,” says Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Dr. David Collins.

► **Expanding the Security**

Department. The budget supports restoring a Director of Security position, which is also a cost-neutral addition. The position is vital for maintaining the proactive security model currently practiced at the schools and also for providing consistent, high-level supervision of security personnel across all campus locations. Having a Director of Security ensures the district can strike a balance between a secure environment and a supportive, welcoming school climate. The district will continue to partner with the Glenville Police and the Saratoga County Sheriff’s Office to support two SROs.

► **Expanding extracurricular offerings.** Next year, each elementary school drama club will have an additional advisor to better support students exploring everything from acting, singing, and

dancing to the technical behind the scenes side of set design and production. Early exposure to drama clubs can be an outlet for encouraging children to tap into their creative side and hone their collaborative skills, which can help when they step into the middle and high schools’ advanced theatrical productions. The proposed budget also supports additional funding for the middle school’s Organizational Club and the O’Rourke Observer (news publication club), the high school’s Mock Trial and Crocheting & Knittings Clubs, the PEACE Exchange program, and a districtwide Rugby Club.

► **Creating Spartan Studios, Jr.** A spin off of the high school’s audio/video production team, Spartan Studios (see page 8), this new club at O’Rourke Middle School will be a stepping stone into the world of multi-media production. Students will be introduced to everything on the creative side such as copy writing and producing to the technical precision of filming, editing, and multi-camera setups. Students will also gain hands-on experience with professional-grade video cameras, microphones, lighting, video editing software, etc. The junior club’s main project will be a weekly video for their peers featuring school news, athletic recaps, event highlights, etc. “As the multi-media landscape continues to evolve, it’s important that young people understand it and properly acquaint themselves with it not just as consumers of media, but also as skilled creators,” adds Superintendent McGrath.

► **Expanding athletic offerings.** The 2026-27 budget proposal supports the addition of two new modified 9 teams—girls flag football and boys soccer. Students in grades 7-9 are eligible to play on Mod 9

teams. As the popularity of these sports increase, the harder it is for the existing levels to accommodate the demand, often resulting in the difficult decision to turn students away. Providing another level of play can reduce the risk of discouraging student athletes from pursuing a sport altogether. Additionally, modified play is crucial in helping students develop the skills needed to seamlessly transition to higher level competitive play in high school. The budget also includes the addition of a part-time Aquatics Director to provide more opportunities for students and the community to use the swimming pool when not in use by swim teams.

► **Constructing a new baseball field.** This work is being done as a direct extension of the 2023 Capital Project, which supports the construction of a second multipurpose turf facility on the site of the current varsity baseball field. The project **does not** impact the tax levy because it is funded primarily through the use of existing district funds earmarked for construction-related costs. The 2026-27 budget supports the replacement of the high school’s outdated space with a modern field featuring professional-grade drainage, a leveled playing surface, a precision-built pitching mound, and new dugouts. This work will also alleviate significant safety concerns caused by foul balls landing in the stands and on the surface of Centennial Field.

RESULTS BY THE NUMBERS

6

The number of middle and high school robotics teams at BH-BL. This number has tripled in the past two years fueled by the skyrocketing popularity of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs and careers.

407

The number of Advanced Placements (AP) exams students took last school year. There are a dozen AP courses offered at the high school. The average score on all exams was 3.7 (out of 5) with 87% of students achieving a score of 3 or better.

137

The number of academic elective courses offered to students at the high school. It includes courses from the business, computer science, English, FACS, music, art, health, math, physical education, science, social studies, technology and world languages departments.

JUST CAN'T
HIDE THAT

Spartan PRIDE

**ABOVE**

Achieving historic heights! BH-BL hosted the first-ever girls OUTDOOR volleyball match as part of regular season league play. Floors and a net were set up on the high school's turf field to create a court, and the bleachers were filled with fans watching history get made on Centennial Field. (The team took the win, too!)

BELOW

When a candy cane and volleyball tournament are truly so much more! O'Rourke Middle School Kare Club members sold Candy Grams to their peers and staff, and held a pay-to-play volleyball tournament raising \$1,177 for the Make-a-Wish foundation.

**ABOVE**

Congratulations to high school senior Carter St. Louis (pictured with her guidance counselor Jennifer Raucci) for being named a 2025 National Merit Commended Scholar. She is recognized for her exceptional academic promise demonstrated by her outstanding performance on the PSAT. Of the roughly 1.4 million students who took the exam, St. Louis is among the 34,000 high performers across the United States to be named a Commended Scholar.

**ABOVE**

This spring, BH-BL High School and Career & Technical Education (CTE) students Autumn Siatkowski (pictured above) and Mary Guyer were first place winners at the regional SkillsUSA competition. Their wins secured them spots in the state-level competition. Siatkowski is studying Diesel Technology and took first place in the Employment Application Process category. Guyer is studying Veterinary Sciences and took first place in the Prepared Speech category. Lark Abraham, Automotive Trades Technology, is also competing at states.

BELOW & RIGHT

The Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath, and Athletic Director Joe Scalise recognized the **Field Hockey** team (right) for winning the 2025 Class B NYS Championship for the second consecutive year. Congratulations to players Anna Caccamo, Carah DiCaprio, Gabriella Donahue, Madeline Fish, Maddie Flores, Charlie Gardner, Aven Gregory, Maggie Hernandez, Addisyn Knapik, Penelope Kniskern, Grace Kogut, Katie Lansley, Taylor Loria, Lily Mastrella, Kayla Mosher, Lily Nafus, Ella Peconie, Maggie Rodecker, Riley Rodecker, Layla Sharp, Quinn Stowell-Melley, Frankie Wemyss, and Isabel Yecie. The **Boys Cross Country** team (below) of Jackson Cooper, Caden Flores, Nolan Gillooley, Liam Herbage, Cooper Johnston, Jackson Majewski, Logan Muller, Ethan Owen, Luca Piccirillo, and Dylan Piel won the NYS Class B Championship. This is the cross-country program's 13th state title!



BELOW

High school students in the Investing 101 class put their skills to the test at the Junior Achievement Stock Market Challenge. Competing against 400 students from 11 different schools in a high-energy simulated trading floor environment, students used a fictitious million dollars to buy and sell stocks and other securities. They had an hour to see who made the most money on the simulated stock market. Congratulations to BH-BL students for earning the most! They won first place and a future trip to the Stock Exchange on Wall Street in NYC.



BELOW

The BH-BL Robotics program continues to reach record-breaking growth and success. Since 2024, the program has expanded to include two high school FIRST Tech Challenge teams and five middle school FIRST LEGO League teams. (Previously, each school only had one team.) This season, the MechaSpartans (pictured below) were honored with the Sustain Award at the NYS Regional Qualifier. Additionally, Ali Rispole, Ben Carter, and Nevin Gordon will represent BH-BL at the FIRST Robotics World Competition to present the high school's TechFest outreach model to a global audience. Congratulations also to the newest high school team, MechAgoge, for earning impressive second-place finishes in two separate Alliance Robotics Competition Qualifiers and competed in the NYS Regional Qualifier.

BELOW

BH-BL Board of Education, Superintendent Dr. Patrick McGrath, and Fine Arts Director Sarah White officially recognized and congratulated high school students Emeline Comulada Fried, Regan Crary-Gracz and Hikaru Matsue for being accepted into the elite New York State School Music Association Conference All-State String Orchestra (Emeline), Symphonic Band (Regan), and Symphony Orchestra (Hikaru).



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BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

**DON'T FORGET
TO VOTE ON** **May
19**

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

- ✔ The 2026-27 Proposed Budget
- ✔ Elect three 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 19 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 19, or by early mail voting ballot if they would rather vote by mail.

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

The completed applications must be returned to Rebecca Manson at least seven days (May 12) 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 am and 4 pm.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the clerk no later than 5 pm on May 19. For more information, call 518-399-9141, ext. 85020.



BH-BL's Unified Bowling team wrapped up their season on the highest possible note, taking home the divisional title in a thrilling final match. Unified sports are all about breaking down barriers and building friendships through competition, and this winter, that teamwork led straight to the top of the leaderboard.