



Outreach

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PRESERVING & ENHANCING OUR FUTURE WITHIN THE NYS TAX CAP

While most districts are facing the possibility of severe layoffs and program cuts, Mineola's Board of Education and administration are pleased to present the proposed 2012-13 budget, which preserves all current programs, as well as including some capital and program enhancements for students. This may seem like an anomaly, but Mineola has invested much time and effort in projecting our district's needs with a five-to-ten year outlook for each proposed budget. We are always mindful of projecting the need for capital improvements to protect the taxpayers' investment in our buildings, in staying ahead of the curve by implementing a program before it becomes a State mandate, and of constantly challenging our students by predicting the future of education and offering cutting-edge opportunities to further their success. While the tax cap surely poses some restrictions on how we can formulate our budget and will pose some setbacks for us next year when one of our long-term bonds has been completely paid off, we urge residents to remember that Mineola has been following a self-imposed tax cap for the last five years - with no tax levy increase exceeding 2.5% during that time. We have been fiscally prudent in anticipating this, and we are better equipped than most districts to follow tax cap guidelines with little or no effect on our program offerings.

The proposed 2012-13 budget:

- **TOTAL BUDGET: \$83,992,180**
- **BUDGET-TO-BUDGET DECREASE: (.27)%**
- **ESTIMATED TAX LEVY INCREASE: 1.93%**

This proposed budget features the following:

- Preservation of all curricular, extracurricular, and co-curricular programs, including all sports and clubs at each of the schools
- A projected salary savings of approximately \$1 million as a result of the final phase of reconfiguration and the closing of Willis Avenue School
- Final payment on the district's bond (former BAN) - early repayment on this has saved taxpayers an estimated \$5 million

- Implementation of new science curriculum for grades pre-K through 7, including new science labs for grades 3-7
- Building upon our foreign language program at the elementary level
- Expansion of our iPad program to all Middle School students, grades 5-7 (Acer Netbooks, in use at the MS this year, will be going to Meadow, Hampton and Jackson to create a mobile cart for use in classrooms). See page 2 for important information on how our technology projects are funded.
- \$600,000 transfer to capital for completion of the Meadow Drive Library and installation of a bus loop at Jackson Avenue (pending Board approval of the project)
- Reinstitution of the district's bus replacement plan; the district has not participated in this during the 2011-12 school year.

Although Mineola is below 2%, it is important to note that the tax cap is not actually 2%, but rather a number derived from a state formula, and specific to each district. Mineola's allowable tax cap levy this year was 1.93%. For a detailed description on the tax cap and a definition of terms you will hear throughout this budget process, and future budget seasons, please see page 3 of this newsletter and, as always, check the district website for presentations you may have missed at a recent Board meeting. We are frequently making presentations to enhance our community's understanding of this new information.

As the budget vote approaches, the district urges everyone to attend our Budget Hearing at 7 p.m. on May 3rd at the Willis Avenue. This will provide an opportunity for residents to ask any final questions about the budget. As always, the best source for information regarding the district's budget and the final phase of reorganization can be found on the district's website: www.mineola.k12.ny.us. Please exercise your right to vote on Tuesday, May 15.

VOTE TUESDAY, MAY 15

Meadow Drive, Jackson Avenue and Hampton
Street Schools and the American Legion Hall
(for former Cross Street voters)

6:00 AM to 9:00 PM

A complete copy of the proposed budget
is available on the district's website at
www.mineola.k12.ny.us

Mineola Union Free School District

121 Jackson Avenue,
Mineola, New York 11501

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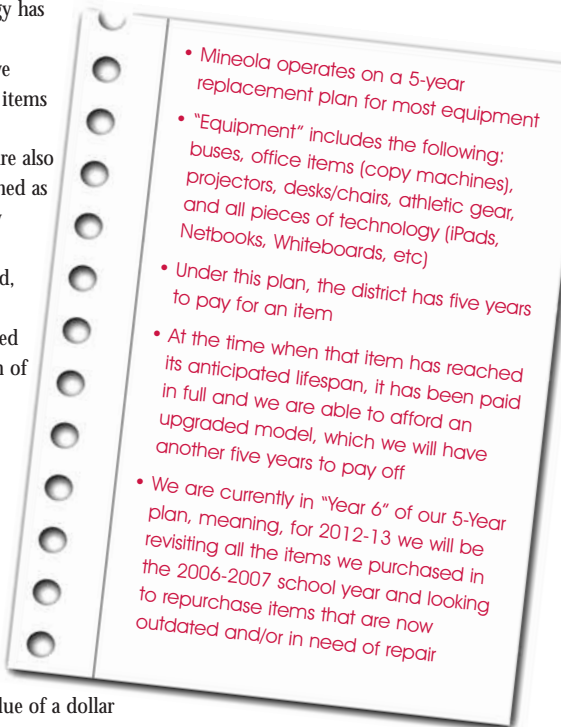
...On a Budget

Seen as the future of education, technology has been a strong focus for Mineola in terms of investments over the last five years. Interactive whiteboards, iPads, Netbooks ... these are all items our residents have heard touted for their extraordinary uses in our classrooms. These are also items for which the district has been questioned as to whether the expense of such items is really necessary, especially during a time when our economy is still trying to recover. Rest assured, Mineola has had the fiscal foresight to participate in a purchase lease program, offered through BOCES, which alleviates the burden of large, unexpected purchases for equipment. Here's an explanation of how this works and how the district takes advantage of the program.

Benefits of the 5-Year Replacement Plan:

- Students receive the most cutting-edge educational tools available
- The district is really able to stretch how much it can purchase at one time so the value of a dollar goes far
- We are never faced with unexpected large purchases for old, outdated, or non-repairable equipment
- Amount budgeted each year remains constant, it never increases or decreases
- It follows our belief in long-term planning
- If something goes wrong during the five-year period, the item being purchased is considered under warranty and is repaired or replaced at no additional cost to the district

As you can see, this program offers a unique opportunity to districts by enabling them to purchase the technology and educational tools of today, while not burdening taxpayers with the costs. Each year, Mineola allots approximately \$500,000 to support the maintenance and upgrades of the plan. While that may seem like a lot, the unforeseen need for repair or replacement of an item could result in a cost equivalent to, or more than, this amount. The benefits really do outweigh the cost.



The Tax Cap:

An Explanation for Mineola

First and foremost, it is important to note that the tax cap has been wrongfully referred to as the "2-percent tax cap." Districts are not restricted to 2%, but rather a calculated percentage that may fall below or above 2% and still be within the "cap" guidelines. These calculations are determined by the state and the formula is available to view in a presentation available on the district's website.

Based upon the state's calculations, Mineola's cap for the 2012-13 school budget is a 1.93% tax levy limit. This tax levy limit applies only to the school district's tax levy, NOT to tax rates or individual tax bills.

Since we are not exceeding the cap, our proposed budget will require the simple majority vote (not a 60% super majority) in order to pass. Just because we meet cap requirements does not mean we automatically pass a budget! Voter approval is still required.

If the proposed budget is defeated in May, the district has the option of putting up the same or a revised budget up for a revote, or to adopt a contingency budget. If a proposed budget is defeated twice by voters, a district must adopt a contingent budget. A contingency budget will prohibit spending in specific areas, including community use of buildings, certain salary increases, and new equipment purchases. More significantly, under the new law, a district that adopts a contingency budget may not increase its current tax levy by any amount, resulting in a zero-percent tax levy increase.

You can see the effect a contingency budget will have on Mineola in the article at right.

We urge all residents to remain informed with these changes and how it impacts our students, our budget and the future of Mineola schools. Please review all the content on these pages and visit the district website often, as we update it frequently with presentations. Join us at upcoming Board meetings and our formal budget hearing, scheduled for May 3. A complete listing of times and locations for budget meetings are listed on page 4 of this newsletter.

Key Terms for the 2012-13 Budget

With the new tax levy limit in place, the 2012-13 lends itself to some new terminology our taxpayers should be familiar with. Here, we will explain some of the most common terms you will hear during the budget process this year.

BUDGET: The Board of Education in collaboration with the Superintendent of Schools and administration, determine the educational plan for the upcoming school year. Once the Board of Education adopts the proposed budget needed to fund the plan, it is presented to the community for a vote on the third Tuesday in May.

REVENUE: Funding to support the proposed budget can come from several sources including Federal and State Aid, grants, rental fees, interest earnings and carry-over funds from the previous year.

TAX LEVY: The total amount of property taxes a school district must collect in order to balance its budget, after accounting for all other revenue sources, including state aid.

TAX RATE: In Nassau County, how a particular piece of property is taxed is based on three factors: the Tax Levy, the Adjusted Base Proportion for that Class or type of property, and the assessment for the property. The final Tax Rate is set by Nassau County, not the school districts.

TAX LEVY LIMIT: A calculated tax levy amount (based on a state formula) that sets the threshold by which a district is able to raise taxes for the upcoming school year. Despite its name, there is NO fixed number that is the limit, but rather it will vary from district-to-district based upon the state formula.

MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE TAX LEVY: The Tax Levy Limit PLUS certain exclusions. Exclusions to the tax levy limit include voter-approved capital expenditures, increases in the state-mandated employer contribution rates for teacher and

employee pension systems that exceed two percentage points, and judgments resulting from tort actions of any amount that exceeds 5% of a district's current levy.

STATE AND FEDERAL MANDATES: The State and Federal governments impose directives upon the school district. These requirements are often unfunded or underfunded, forcing taxpayers to assume the financial costs associated with the mandate.

CONTINGENCY BUDGET: According to state law, school boards may submit a proposed budget for voter approval a maximum of two times. If the proposed budget is defeated both times, the Board, by law, must adopt a Contingency Budget that carries a zero percent tax levy increase and is subject to additional spending controls by the state.

THE 2012-2013 SCHOOL BUDGET

Proposed Expenditures: Quick Look

	Approved Budget 2011-2012	Proposed Budget 2012-2013	Dollar Change from 2011-2012
Total Instructional Program	\$61,852,847	\$63,975,695	\$2,122,848
Total Capital	\$13,761,123	\$11,650,108	(\$2,111,015)
Total Administration	\$8,607,668	\$8,366,377	(\$241,291)

TOTAL BUDGET \$84,221,638 \$83,992,180 (\$229,458)

PROJECTED TAX LEVY INCREASE: 1.93% **BUDGET TO BUDGET DECREASE:** (0.27%)

For a detailed look at the district's proposed budget, including the entire three-part budget, please visit the district's website at: www.mineola.k12.ny.us

PROPOSED BUDGET VS. CONTINGENCY BUDGET

Proposed Budget
\$83,992,180

Contingency Budget
\$82,548,377

New this year, if voters defeat the proposed budget twice, the district must operate at the same budget as last year (less the transfer to capital, which paid for the Meadow and Hampton projects last year). This would force the district to cut approximately \$1.4 million from the proposed budget. This would result in the elimination of all proposed enhancements to program and equipment, as well as the need to further maximize staff. In turn, this would possibly lead to increased class size and/or reduced program offerings. Since our district has consistently approached each budget with a five-year outlook, Mineola is in a much better position than most others; however, a reduction of this magnitude could also affect our athletic program and result in a void that will only get harder to fill and restore, especially as we face more and more restrictions under the cap.

BOARD CANDIDATES

In addition to voting on the budget, this year residents will be electing two candidates to the Board of Education. The seats that will be voted on are the ones currently occupied by John McGrath and Christine Napolitano.

Residents will receive a separate mailing at the beginning of May, with more information on the candidates running for the Board.



Questions & Answers

Regarding the 2012-2013 Proposed Budget

Q. How are we able to add programs, while other districts are cutting programs?

A. As a result of the reorganization and closing of Cross Street and Willis Avenue Schools, the district has been able to increase program opportunity for students. This is mainly due to a reduced duplication of services, and thus a staff reduction and savings. The savings allowed us to not only keep the proposed tax levy increase at our "cap," but add programs to benefit our students, as well.

Q. What programs are included in the budget?

A. This budget includes funds for all current academic, co-curricular and extracurricular programs, as well as additional programs, such as the expansion of our iPad program at the middle school and foreign language program at the elementary level, new science labs and curriculum, addition of the Meadow library project, and a bus loop for Jackson Avenue. For detailed information on exactly what is included, please refer to Page 1.

Q. What happens if this budget fails?

A. If the budget fails, the Board of Education has the opportunity to make any changes to the proposed budget and put it up for another public vote in June. However, the Board of Education also reserves the right to not conduct a revote and go straight to a contingency budget. To see what a contingency budget would mean for Mineola, please see page 3.

Q. What is the savings we have generated by closing Cross Street School?

A. As a result of closing Cross Street, the district has been able to save money on the salaries and benefits of approximately 10 full-time employees, as well as saving on the utilities expenses. This has resulted in an estimated savings of \$1 million for 2012-13 alone.

Q. How does a Willis Avenue lease affect this budget?

A. Whether the district has signed a lease for Willis Avenue School at the time of the budget vote

has no bearing on the proposed budget. A signed lease would likely not result in a positive or negative impact to the budget for the 2012-13 school year.

Q. What is included in the budget for residents who do not have children in the public schools?

A. The Mineola Union Free School District serves all residents. All district buildings and athletic fields are available for use by community groups. The budget also provides more than 600 private and parochial school students with textbooks, computer software, health services, special education services, library materials and transportation to their respective schools.

Q. Are there tax exemptions for senior citizens?

A. The Mineola Board of Education is aware of the strain the tax levy increases can place on our senior citizens. In order to help ease this burden, the Board has approved senior citizen tax exemptions that may reduce property taxes for seniors by as much as 50%, based on the individual's annual income. This means that a senior citizen with low income may be eligible to pay only half the amount of the school tax that he or she would otherwise be required to pay. Seniors can apply for this exemption by contacting the Nassau County Department of Assessment at 516.571.1500.

Q. Are there any other exemptions which homeowners may qualify for to reduce school taxes?

A. All New York State residents who live in their own homes have the opportunity to see a reduction in their school property taxes, regardless of age or income, through the New York State School Tax Relief (STAR) Program. Senior citizens are eligible for an enhanced STAR credit. In order to receive this exemption, residents must apply to the Nassau County Department of Assessment at 516.571.1500. Seniors must reapply for the enhanced exemption each year.

IMPORTANT Budget Dates

Thursday, May 3

Board of Education Workshop Meeting
& Budget Hearing @ WI 7:00 PM

Tuesday, May 15

Board Election and Budget Vote
@ Elementary School where you reside:
Hampton, Jackson or Meadow
OR the American Legion Hall
(for former Cross Street voters)
6:00 AM to 9:00 PM

VOTER INFORMATION

Voting Requirements

To participate in the May 15, 2012 budget vote and Board election:

- You must be a registered voter who is a United States citizen 18 years of age or older, and a district resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote.
- You need not register if, during the last four years, you voted in a general election in Nassau County, voted in a Mineola Union Free School District election, registered with the Nassau County Board of Elections, or registered with the Mineola Union Free School District.

When and Where to Register

From now through May 10, 2012, registration is continuous, Monday through Friday from 11 AM to 3 PM in the Superintendent's Office, located at 121 Jackson Avenue, second floor. There will be a special registration opportunity on the evening of Tuesday, May 1, 2012 from 4 PM to 8 PM in your designated elementary school.

Who Needs to Register?

New Mineola residents and residents who have had a change in address must re-register by May 10, 2012.

When and Where to Vote

Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 15 between the hours of 6 AM and 9 PM at your designated elementary school or the American Legion Hall (for former Cross Street voters).

Absentee Ballots

If you will be out of the country or unable to vote in person on May 15, you can apply for an absentee ballot. Applications for absentee ballots are available in the Superintendent's Office, located at 121 Jackson Avenue, second floor. You may either call 516.237.2002 to have an application mailed to you, come into the office to pick one up in person, or download a copy from the district website at www.mineola.k12.ny.us.



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