



Soaring

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE ROCKY POINT UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

PRESERVING PROGRAMS WITHIN THE TAX CAP

PROPOSED BUDGET CARRIES TAX LEVY INCREASE BELOW 1%

The Rocky Point School District's Board of Education and administration have created a proposed 2014-15 school budget that contains operating costs and enhances educational opportunities for students at the lowest tax levy increase in more than 10 years. With a proposed tax levy increase of 0.98%, the budget also adheres to the limitations of the New York State tax cap.

With a strong commitment to fiscal accountability, the district is proposing to increase spending by 3.53% over the current year's budget to preserve all existing instructional programs, enhance support services designed to improve academic outcomes for all students and maintain athletic and co-curricular programs. Over the past few years, the Board has worked diligently to limit budget increases and maximize efficiencies while remaining steadfast in its commitment to prepare students to be college- and career-ready upon graduation. The result of this effort has been an increase in the graduation rate for Rocky Point High School seniors through the introduction of support programs and a near doubling of Advance Placement

course offers geared toward increasing academic rigor.

"In Rocky Point, we have continued to draw upon current resources to enhance our educational program while being mindful of the financial impact these changes have on taxpayers," said Board of Education President Michael Nofi. "As a result of our commitment to multi-year financial and long-range educational planning, we have been able to reduce expenditures as well as preserve and strengthen our programs for the benefit of today's and tomorrow's students. This proposed budget would not only allow us to continue to provide a well-rounded, comprehensive program, but also uphold our commitment to taxpayers by adhering to the tax levy cap."

In an effort to ensure all residents are provided with the information needed to cast an informed decision, greater detail about the proposed budget is included in the pages of this publication. Residents are reminded that the annual budget vote and Board of Education election will be held on Tuesday, May 20, 2014 from 7 a.m.-9 p.m. at Rocky Point High School.



Maintaining Programs, Enhancing Opportunities

While staying within the limits of the tax levy cap, the proposed budget:

- Maintains existing instructional program and staffing
- Supports Next STEP strategic plan initiatives, including ICARE and SHARP
- Continues existing fine and performing arts, co-curricular and athletic programs at all levels
- Continues to increase academic rigor with new Advanced Placement courses and improved curriculum
- Enhancing academic opportunities for students through expanded science research program and HS robotics program
- Expansion of Integrated Co-Teaching model (K-12)

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ROCKY POINT, NY 11778

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POSTAL PATRON

Remember to Vote

Budget Vote & Trustee Election

May 20, 2014

7 a.m. - 9 p.m. • RPHS

Building Upon *Tradition, Excellence & Pride*

COMMITTED TO FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ENRICHING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

The district has maintained a staunch commitment to fiscal oversight of district operations and the development of a multiyear financial plan to address the growing educational needs of students. Over the past four years, the district has not only created additional educational opportunities for high-achieving scholars, but has also put support services in place for those in need of academic assistance, all while holding the line on expenses to fiscally responsible levels.

- **Support for All Learners** – As part of the long-range strategic plan called Next STEP, the district has implemented a comprehensive, multi-tiered approach for supporting all levels of learners. SHARP (Striving for Higher Achievement at Rocky Point – grades K-5) and ICARE (Individualized Comprehensive Academic Response for Excellence – grades 6-12) service approximately one-third of the K-12 student population and are in place for all 12 months of the calendar year. Students receive academic support and specialized intervention services in order to better ensure improved outcomes for all students. Additionally, students are eligible for credit recovery and test prep programs. As tutoring is a large component of the initiative, advanced learners also benefit from support in honors courses, enabling them to continue to challenge themselves academically. Enhancing SHARP and ICARE, district-hosted READ 180 and System 44 programs are designed for struggling students in grades 4-12 who are reading significantly below grade level. These programs are currently used to bring more than 100 students up to grade level.
- **Opportunities for Advancement** – The number of Advanced Placement courses at the secondary level has nearly doubled in the last four years. Through these programs, students are challenged to master college-level material to advance their understanding of complex topics. Additionally, the district has created a science research program, which enables students to learn about and conduct original research. The program currently spans grades eight and nine and will be extended to the 10th grade in 2014-15, with grades 11 and 12 to be added in subsequent years.
- **Realizing Results** – As a testament to the success of the programs now in place, there has been a notable increase in the district's overall graduation



rate, from 85 percent in 2010 to 92 percent in 2013. There has been an equally impressive increase in the graduation rate for students with disabilities, from 54 percent in 2010 to 77 percent in 2013.

- **Focusing on Fiscal Responsibility** – Through multiyear financial planning, the district has completed a number of capital projects at no new cost to taxpayers, without accruing new debt (through bonds) while continuing to retire old debt. These included replacing the 40-year-old roof at the high school, refurbishing science laboratories to meet 21st-century learning needs, updating bathrooms and installing a new, energy-saving lighting systems and skylights in the high school. Additionally, the district was able to meet the community-initiated request to install a new track and turf field in the high school stadium at no additional taxpayer expense.

COMMENDABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS

- In June 2013, 93% of the graduating class pursued higher education.
- 90.7% of the graduating Class of 2013 earned a diploma with Regents designation; 37.7% were with either an Advanced or Honors designation.
- The College Board recognized 27 high school students as Advanced Placement Scholars, 13 of whom were named AP Scholars with Honor, and two as AP Scholars with Distinction.
- A senior was named a 2014 Outstanding Participant in the National Achievement Scholarship Program.
- A senior was named a 2013-2014 National Hispanic Recognition Program Scholar by the College Board.
- A senior was named a 2014 finalist in the National Merit Scholarship Program.
- Middle school students were named international finalists in Next Vista for Learning's Cool Insights video contest.
- A student was named a winner of a writing contest sponsored by the Long Island Ducks.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

- Students raised thousands of dollars for local and regional charities and organizations.
- The high school and middle school have an active National Honor Society and National Junior Honor Society.
- Hundreds of students participate in annual school musical productions.
- Widely successful annual Relay for Life and Mini-Relay for Life events.
- Middle school and high school robotics team members advanced to competitions.
- District's highly successfully ICARE and SHARP programs span grades K-12 and provide academic support, test preparation, tutoring and credit recovery for students.

ATHLETICS

- High school students participate in annual Athletics for All program.
- High school junior varsity and varsity cheerleading teams captured first place at the Long Island Cheerleading Coaches Association Long Island Championship meet. The varsity team was named National Champions for the third time.

- More than 20 teams were designated Scholar-Athlete Teams during the fall and winter sports seasons.
- Seniors were named Suffolk Zone Award winners based on academics, leadership and athletics.
- Nearly 20 seniors have signed National Letters of Intent and received scholarships to play sports at the college level.
- 15 teams received the Sportsmanship Award based on the character traits they displayed during competition.
- New track and athletic turf field at high school.

MUSIC

- Students were selected to perform at the New York State Council of Administrators of Music Education All-County Conference.
- Students were selected to perform in Suffolk County Music Educators Association All-County festivals.
- The high school band participated in Newsday's Regional Marching Band Festival at Hofstra University.
- Students were selected to participate in Long Island String Festival Association ensembles.

2014-2015 BUDGET SUMMARY

This summary indicates the total expenditures in each section of the budget and compares the current budget to the 2014-2015 proposed budget.

• BOARD OF EDUCATION

All expenditures for members of the Board of Education, including: contractual costs, the district clerk's salary, voting expenses such as voting machine rentals, advertising, printing and other election expenses.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$27,760	\$30,060

• CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT STAFF

All expenditures for central administration offices, including: accounting, budgeting, payroll, auditing (claims, internal and external), clerical staff, district treasurer and school attorney.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$1,630,790	\$1,655,495

• CENTRAL SERVICES

All expenditures for the operation, maintenance, and security of the physical buildings in the district, including: utilities, garbage removal, building repairs, central printing and mailing, and expenses for central data processing.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$4,887,495	\$5,272,723

• SPECIAL ITEMS

Cost of unallocated insurance, administrative charges for BOCES services and miscellaneous administrative expenditures.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$867,457	\$869,725

TOTAL GENERAL SUPPORT

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$7,413,502	\$7,828,003

• INSTRUCTIONAL ADMINISTRATION

Districtwide expenses for curriculum development, professional development, principals, assistant principals, coordinators, chairpersons and directors.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$2,501,496	\$2,597,623

• TEACHING

All expenditures of the instructional program, including: teachers, teacher assistants, monitors, textbooks, supplies and specific programs such as special education, summer school and community education.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$35,910,859	\$37,012,204

• INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA

All expenditures of the school libraries and audiovisual programs, including: library books, reference materials and computer-assisted instruction.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$922,569	\$981,239

• PUPIL SERVICES

All expenditures for attendance, certified guidance counselors, health office services, psychological and social work services, co-curricular activities and interscholastic athletics.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$3,192,656	\$3,270,040

TOTAL INSTRUCTION

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$42,527,580	\$43,861,106

• PUPIL TRANSPORTATION

All expenditures for district-contracted

transportation, including: drivers' salaries, buses, gas, parts and repairs.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$4,639,037	\$4,726,909

TOTAL TRANSPORTATION

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$4,639,037	\$4,726,909

• EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Insurances (life, dental, health, workers compensation and unemployment), payroll taxes and pension contributions.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$15,978,644	\$16,938,143

• DEBT SERVICES

All expenditures for principal and interest on short-term and long-term bonds and notes.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$3,602,819	\$3,416,881

• INTERFUND TRANSFER

Appropriations and transfers of monies to special aid fund.

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$100,000	\$115,000

TOTAL UNDISTRIBUTED

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$19,681,463	\$20,470,024

TOTAL GENERAL FUND BUDGET

INCREASE OF 3.53%

<u>2013-2014</u>	<u>2014-2015</u>
\$74,261,582	\$76,886,042



Questions *and* ANSWERS

Q: What does the budget support?

A: The proposed budget supports district programs at current levels as well as initiatives included in the district's Next STEP strategic plan; current athletic and co-curricular offerings are also maintained under the proposed budget.

Q: I have heard the Governor has proposed a "Tax Freeze Credit," what does it mean for me?

A: As the proposed budget is tax-cap compliant, eligible homeowners who qualify for this exemption will receive a rebate check from the government for their share of the proposed tax levy increase.

Q: If the budget were not approved, what would be the impact?

A: If the proposed budget is defeated on May 20, the district could either put up the same or a revised budget for revote in June. Should this budget not receive approval, a contingency budget would be adopted. To meet the requirements of such budget, the district would need to cut up to \$455,104 from the proposed budget.

Q: Where can I get more information?

A: Complete copies of the proposed 2014-2015 budget are available in the district office, and reference copies are available for inspection at all district schools and the public library. Budget information is also available on the district's website at www.rockypointschools.org.

VOTE MAY 20
7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
HS Gymnasium

You must register if:

- You are a new resident of the school district who has lived within its boundaries for at least 30 days prior to May 20, 2014, or
- You have not voted in a regular or special school district election, or in a general election covered by the Suffolk County Board of Elections, within the past four years

Qualified voters may register at the office of the district clerk in the Rocky Point School District Administrative Office from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Monday through Friday. The last day to register is Thursday, May 15. A special voter registration day will be held on May 13 from 9 a.m.-9 p.m. at Rocky Point High School.

You are eligible to vote if you are:

- A citizen of the United States
- 18 years or older
- A Rocky Point School District resident for at least 30 days prior to May 20, 2014
- Registered on the voter rolls of the Rocky Point School District or the Suffolk County Board of Elections

Absentee Ballots

Those eligible voters who expect to be out of town or unavailable to vote on May 20, 2014, may vote by absentee ballot. Applications for absentee ballots are available from district clerk Patricia Jones at the Rocky Point School District Administrative Office, 90 Rocky Point-Yaphank Road, Rocky Point.

2014 BOARD ELECTION

District residents will be asked to elect two individuals to the Board of Education, each for a term of three years. There are six candidates seeking election, and the two individuals receiving the highest votes will be elected.



MELISSA BROWN

I have lived in Rocky Point my entire life and have four children attending school in the district. I have been a special education teacher in the Sachem School District for the past 16 years and have also worked as a professional development coach and assistant supervisor of the Sachem Extended School Year program. I have a masters in special education and reading from Dowling College and a degree in building and district leadership through Stony Brook University. I am an active volunteer in the community, having served as a leader and cub master of a local Cub Scout pack and coach of intramural soccer teams for the Rocky Point Soccer Club.

If elected, my goal is to help make the district a frontrunner in student success. I feel this can be accomplished by including all stakeholders in creating a collaborative vision for the district, ensuring that the community feels welcome, heard and appreciated, and focusing our attention on maximizing the exceptional resources we possess.



DIANE BURKE

As vice president of the Board of Education for the past six years, I have worked to implement cost-saving measures, propose tax cap-compliant budgets and create a capital reserve fund, which has financed major state aid-compliant building and grounds improvements throughout our district without requiring the securing of additional outside funding. By hiring new district leadership during my first term in office, I have also worked to develop and implement new programs, which have increased student course offerings and successes at all grade levels, including an increase in our graduation rate by seven points (now standing at 92 percent) – something the previous administration thought was impossible. I am the CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Suffolk and a graduate of Northeastern University. I am married and have one child attending school in the district. If re-elected, I will continue to help develop valuable programs for students and will proudly serve as an independent representative of the community.



SEAN P. CALLAHAN

My wife and I have been residents of the district for over 39 years and our three sons attend school in the district. If elected, my goals would be to improve the transparency and collaboration of the Board of Education with the staff, parents and community. As an attorney practicing employment and labor law, I have experience representing school districts in various aspects of education and school law. Prior to graduating from St. John's University School of Law, I worked as an external auditor specializing in auditing school districts. Additionally, I am a certified NYS school business official and was the Miller Place School District treasurer from 2005-07. I am also a volunteer in the community – coach and board member of the North Shore Little League, CYO basketball and soccer coach, representative for local fire districts and supporter of the PTA and Friends of Music. Through these outlets I have the opportunity to listen to many residents on school issues and would look to expand upon these outreach opportunities if elected. I believe that my professional and personal background provides me with a solid foundation to represent our community.



KATHLEEN HEGGERS

I have resided in the school district since 2000 and have two children in the district. Committed to putting the children and community first, I have been involved in a multitude of community and advocacy groups since that time, including the Long Island Sound Sharks, Rocky Point PTA, Rocky Point Civics Association, St. Anthony's Education Ministries and Rocky Point district committees. I previously served as a trustee on the Rocky Point Board of Education, as well. Additionally, as co-president of the PTA, I have firsthand experience with fundraising and providing valuable programs for our children. I am an advocate for children with disabilities and recently implemented some very valuable resources to help further their college and career readiness. My experience as a Board trustee has enabled me to understand the complex dynamics this position entails. If elected, I vow to open the lines of communication to all, continue to stand up and speak out for the good of the children and staff, and continue to research and fact-find important information to make the most educated decisions this job requires. I look forward to working with our valued educators to provide the best educational outcome for all of our students.



DONNA MCCAULEY

My husband and I have lived in the district since 1995 and have one child attending the high school. I worked as a Pharmaceutical Sales Representative until becoming disabled by a rare genetic skin disease. I feel that my life experience as a person with a disability has prepared me to be an advocate and how to overcome challenges. I am an active community volunteer, having served as a Girl Scout leader for 10 years, including working as the Service Unit Coordinator overseeing over 40 Girl Scout Troops and serving as the Girl Scouts of Rocky Point Service Unit. I am a lector, catechist, the director of the vacation bible school program and volunteer in several ministries at my church, St. Louis de Montfort in Sound Beach. If elected, I would work to improve district communication and transparency as well as seek to establish liaisons between the Board, vital school committees and the student population. I hope to ensure that the budget is administered judiciously, keeping the education of all students at the forefront of decisions, and that district educational plans fulfill its goals.



MICHAEL NOFI

I am currently a senior financial executive with a global pharmaceutical company and hold a bachelor's degree in accounting from Villanova University and a license from New York State as a certified public accountant. I have been a resident and active member of the Rocky Point community for 14 years. With three children attending school in the district, I have a vested interest in the success of our schools. As a Board member for the past six years and president of the Board for the past five years, I bring experience and a strong skill set to the position. During my term, I have worked to draw upon current resources to enhance our educational program while being mindful of the financial impact these changes have on taxpayers. I have led the charge to implement cost-saving initiatives valued at over \$7 million and helped to identify a new leadership team focused on meeting today's challenges while ensuring long-term growth. If re-elected, I will continue my commitment to improving our district and its programs while ensuring the execution of our multiyear financial plan to meet the growing educational needs of all students. I believe my strong financial background and experience position me well to meet the challenges ahead as we face the next phase of New York State school finance reform.

BOARD OF EDUCATION

Michael Nofi, *President*
Diane Burke, *Vice President*
John Lessler, *Trustee*
Scott Reh, *Trustee*
Susan Y. Sullivan, *Trustee*

ADMINISTRATION

Dr. Michael F. Ring
Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Deborah De Luca
Assistant Superintendent
Gregory Hilton
School Business Official
Susan Wilson
Executive Director for Educational Services



District Mission Statement

The mission of the Rocky Point Union Free School District is to develop each child's full potential in a nurturing and supportive student-centered environment that will promote a foundation for lifelong learning.