

NEWS from Port Jervis

SCHOOL DISTRICT

Annual budget vote set for May 20

Budget moves district forward

Port Jervis students in all grades will benefit from the boost in academic spending included in the proposed \$58,562,024 budget for the 2008-09 school year.

On May 20, district residents will have the opportunity to vote on the school budget, which carries a tax levy increase of 2.9 percent. Offset by state Foundation Aid, the proposed spending plan represents the lowest tax increase in over a decade and a major investment in our schools.

If the budget is approved, school taxes for the average Deerpark homeowner with an assessed property value of \$81,735 would increase approximately \$104 for the year or \$8.66 per month. In Port Jervis, the average resident with an assessed property value of \$47,971 would see their school taxes increase by \$79 for the year or \$6.58 a month. These estimates do not include STAR benefits. Please see page 5 for more STAR information.

Foundation Aid is providing the district with the means to meet its primary budget goals to keep costs down and to improve student learning. "The increase in state aid is particularly



Reading is on the rise in the Port Jervis School District. Motivated by the fun and easy-to-use Accelerated Reading (AR) program, students at both elementary schools and the middle school are reading more often and at a higher level. Added to the curriculum in the 2007 budget, the AR Program is part of the district's ongoing initiative to improve student learning through technology.

important this year because it will allow us to continue to make needed improvements across the district and to gradually restore staff lost five years ago," said Superintendent John Xanthis.

After listening to teachers, building administrators, parents, and community members, Xanthis says the district developed a budget that offers something for all students. Middle school students will benefit from more academic assistance programs, high school students will have more course offerings, elementary students will enjoy smaller classes and new playground equipment, and athletes in some sports programs will get new equipment.

2008-09 Budget

At a glance

Total Budget:
\$58,562,024

Projected Tax Increase:
2.9% - Lowest in over a decade

Average Home Tax Increase:
Deerpark - \$104/year or \$8.66/month
*Prior to STAR benefits

Port Jervis - \$79/year or \$6.58/month
*Prior to STAR benefits

inside

VOTE:
Tuesday,
May 20

Polls Open:
6 a.m. - 9 p.m.

On the ballot:

- The 2008-09 District Budget
- Election of Four School Board Candidates
- School Bus Proposition

Budget continues to support strong educational programs

New textbooks, smaller classes will address students' needs

Registration information

If you are registered to vote in general elections, you are automatically eligible to vote in school elections. If you are not registered, you can obtain a registration form at the district office or at any district school.

Voter registration forms are also posted on the district Web site, www.pjschools.org.

For more details, call Michele O'Donnell in the District Office at 858-3175.

Three-part budget comparison

	2007-08 Budget	2008-09 Budget
ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET		
General Support	773,492	843,929
Building Administration	2,692,752	3,055,063
Employee Benefits	1,038,925	1,078,775
TOTAL ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET	4,505,169	4,977,767
PROGRAM BUDGET		
Regular Instruction	16,655,035	17,886,303
Special Education	10,570,670	11,427,611
Instructional Support	3,740,681	3,918,821
Pupil Activities	586,724	640,130
Transportation	2,736,593	3,172,908
Employee Benefits	10,090,681	10,134,216
TOTAL PROGRAM BUDGET	44,380,384	47,179,989
CAPITAL BUDGET		
Operations and Maintenance	3,514,558	4,233,650
Debt and Legal	888,510	1,420,588
Employee Benefits	722,045	750,030
TOTAL CAPITAL BUDGET	5,125,113	6,404,268
GRAND TOTAL	54,010,666	58,562,024

The proposed budget represents an 8.43 percent increase over last year's budget and a 2.9 percent projected increase in the tax levy.

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What's included for students in the budget...

Needed staffing

- Three elementary teachers
- Two middle school teachers
- Two high school teachers

Program enhancements

- Enhance library selections.
- Increase middle school academic support programs.
- Continue technology up grades by purchasing new Elmo visual projectors, digital cameras, microscopes, and iMac computers for the high school technology program.
- Adopt new textbooks for Grades K-6 - social studies; Grade 8 - science; High School - geometry, AP history, and business.
- Create new high school business program and expand electives.
- Enhance Accelerated Reader selections for K-8 students
- Maintenance Projects - Some of the needed work includes restoration of athletic fields and playgrounds; replacement of carpeting and ceiling tiles; painting sections of all school buildings.

Signs of success

Did you know...

- **Port Jervis is now a District in Good Standing.** On March 25, the State Education Department announced that it has removed Port Jervis from its In Need of Improvement list. Port Jervis is one of only two districts statewide that worked its way off the list by making adequate yearly progress in all academic areas for two consecutive years.
- **Port Jervis High School earned its way off the Corrective Action list** by making adequate academic progress in mathematics for the past two years.
- **Anna S. Kuhl and Hamilton Bicentennial Elementary Schools were honored** last year by the New York State Education Department for academic performance.
- **Test scores on the New York State assessments** for grades 3-8 have increased significantly and attendance rates are up.
- **Students in all grades have unprecedented access** to web-based educational programs, laptops, upgraded computer labs, and Smartboards.
- **Phase I of the Capital Project** addressed many needed building repairs last summer. Work has already started on the Summer 2008 projects.

Board of Education elections

Four of the nine seats on the Port Jervis Board of Education are up for election. On May 20, voters will select the new Board members from the following candidates. Three of the those elected will serve the full three-year term. One will serve the one-year balance on a vacant seat.

Ron Cecchini

Ron Cecchini is running for his first term. A real estate investor, Cecchini manages property in Port Jervis and Deerpark. He has also owned and operated a retail store. Cecchini and his wife, Geraldine, reside in Godeffroy.



Reason for running: "Someone once said, 'experience is what you get, when you don't get what you want; and it can be the most valuable thing you have to offer.' With seven biological and adopted children (five of whom graduated from Port), what more experience can one offer the 3,500 children in my district?"



Robert Habig

Robert Habig is running for his fifth term. He chairs the education and transportation committees and serves on the buildings and grounds and audit committees. He is

also a past board president and vice president.

A semi-retired architect, Habig continues to serve as a consultant for his former firm, Habig and Cirillo Architects. Habig, and his wife, Ellie, have two children. Both are Port Jervis alumni.

Reason for running: "I have always believed that a good education will allow you to succeed in life. (It is important) to develop a habit of learning so that your education never stops and the habit of learning enables you to grow and become successful. Our educational system is the beginning of the learning habit."

Brendan Hess

Brendan Hess is running for his third full term. He currently serves as board vice president, chairman of the buildings/ground committee, and is a member of the finance and labor committees. He previously chaired the labor committee.

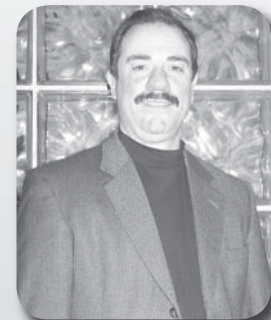


Hess is a vocational training instructor at the Federal Prison in Otisville. Hess and his wife, Patricia, live in Port Jervis. Their three daughters graduated from Port Jervis.

Reason for running: "I would like to continue to serve my community to build on the success of educational excellence of the past three years and to see through the community's commitment to repairing and updating our facilities for the education of generations to come. Much has been accomplished in adding, rebuilding, reinstating and improving the educational program and extra-curricular activities, while being well aware of the community's ability to pay."

Kenneth Jones

Kenneth Jones is running for his second term. He currently serves as board president and chairs the labor committee. He also chaired the finance committee.



Jones currently serves as the Undersheriff of the Orange County Sheriff's Office. He also served for 23 years as a NY State Police investigator. Jones and his wife, Karen, are residents of Deerpark. Their three children currently attend Port Jervis schools.

Voluntary Exit Poll

A voluntary exit poll of voters will be conducted May 20. All survey results will be anonymous.

The purpose of the exit poll is to gather feedback from voters and to gain insight into what residents think about their schools and the budget.

The information will be used to help the district make future decisions.

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Voter information

You may vote if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older, have been a district resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote, and are registered with either the school district or the county Board of Elections.

School Board Candidates *continued from page 3*

Ken Jones' reason for running: "In the past three years, the majority of the board has ushered in a period of solid progress. Broader educational opportunities, more clubs, more sports, cleaner and safer schools, better test scores were all accomplished with tax growth at an all-time low. There is more to do."

Roger Kalin

Roger Kalin is running for his first term. A veteran teacher, Kalin chairs the English Department at Goshen High School and the co-administers the Goshen High School alternative evening program. He also taught at Warwick Valley Middle School, worked in marketing and personnel, and served on the Trinity Catholic Elementary School Board. Kalin and his wife, Sue Ann, live in Sparrowbush. Both of their children graduated from Port Jervis High School.

Reason for running: "I have a stake in this community and want to make it better. I value education and want to promote it. I am grateful for the education our schools provided my children and want to give something back. I also have a vision for a new spirit of teamwork, congeniality, and professionalism on the board."



Brandy Nicolette

Brandy Nicolette, of Deerpark, is running for her first term. A Port Jervis graduate, Nicolette holds an undergraduate degree from Franklin and Marshall and a Juris Doctor from Albany Law School. Prior to deciding to take time off to raise her two young children, Nicolette worked in the Orange County District Attorney's Office.

Reason for running: "I would like to shift the focus of education. My family and I were born and raised in Port Jervis. I feel there is no better way to give back to our community than to ensure that ALL students are afforded the opportunity for the best, well-rounded education possible."



William Smith

William Smith is running for his third term. Smith was on the school board previously for seven years, serving as vice president, chairman of the transportation committee, and board delegate to the Orange County School Board and the NY State School Board Association. He also served on the Deerpark Town Council.

An Air Force veteran, he runs Smith Tents and Family Events. Smith lives in Huguenot with his wife, Regina, and their two children. Both children attend Port Jervis schools.

Reason for running: "To rebuild the respect, identity, and character of the School Board and to strengthen communications with the administration so that they can run our schools safely and efficiently. And, to actively seek out ideas to bring tax relief, and at the same time, improve our academics, interscholastic, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities."



Earl Walker, Jr.

Earl Walker is running for his second full term. Walker served previously on the school board from 1992-1995. He was also appointed to fill a one-year vacancy in 1985.

Prior to his retirement, Walker was responsible for product labeling at Lederle and Wyeth Laboratories. He also served as the supervisor of a clinic chemistry laboratory at Cornell University. Walker and his wife, Gretel, are Port Jervis residents. Their daughter is a Port Jervis High School graduate.

Reason for running: "To help assure the best possible educational opportunities are available to our students, while recognizing that controlling costs is essential to community buy-in. And, to enable district administrators to do their jobs without micromanaging and interference from the board."



Voters to decide on bus proposition

A separate proposition will be placed on the May 20 ballot seeking voter approval to purchase four 65-passenger buses, one passenger van, one passenger van with wheelchair accessibility, and one car. The maximum cost of the new vehicles is \$515,938.



How many students does the district transport every daily?

District buses make two separate runs a day – one to transport students in grades 7-12 to and from school, and one to transport students in grades K-6. Additional runs are made each day to transport students to athletic and extracurricular events. On an average school day, about 2,500 students ride the buses.

Why does the district need new buses?

The vehicles are needed to replace some of the district's oldest buses. Currently, most of the buses are over 10 years old and have clocked more than 99,000 miles. The mileage on some is close to 150,000 miles. All but five buses exceed the recommended standards of 65,000 miles and 5.5 years.

What will it cost me?

If the purchases are approved, approximately 90 percent of the money will be returned to the district through state aid. This would reduce the projected district cost to \$20,000 a year for five years.

Voting by absentee ballot?

Absentee ballots are available if you are unable to vote in person because you are ill, plan to be away on vacation or business, are confined to prison due to conviction of an offense other than a felony, or are accompanying a spouse, parent, or child of the same residence who can't come to the polls for one of the above reasons.

You can obtain an absentee ballot by calling Michele O'Donnell in the District Office at 858-3175. Absentee ballots must reach the District Office no later than 5 p.m. on election day, May 20.

STAR savings to continue for homeowners

Basic STAR recipients will save close to \$398 on school tax bill

How will STAR affect school taxes? All New Yorkers who own their own homes can significantly reduce their school taxes through the School Tax Relief (STAR) program. The Basic STAR exemption is available for owner-occupied, primary residences - regardless of the owner's age or income. The Enhanced STAR exemption is available on the primary residence of residents, age 65 and up, with yearly household incomes below the state standard.

Will middle class taxpayers receive STAR rebate checks this year? Yes, the Middle Class STAR program, established last year, will continue to provide a rebate check to taxpayers, based on their income. Homeowners with incomes below \$250,000 will receive a rebate check in addition to their STAR exemption. Rebate amounts are determined based on a combination of factors, including the income bracket for the property, the tax rate for the school district where the property is located, and the city or town where the property is located. It's estimated the average rebate check will be approximately \$600 for homeowners in the \$0 - \$90,000 income bracket. This program is not administered by school districts and does not directly reduce school tax bills. The savings are provided in the form of a tax rebate check.

More information on the STAR program is available at www.orps.state.ny.us.

VOTE
Tuesday,
May 20

6 a.m. to
9 p.m.

Polling
Locations

Election
District #1

Huguenot Fire House

Election
District #2

Deerpark Municipal
Building 2

Election
District #3

Sparrowbush
Fire House

Election
District #4

Port Jervis
Middle School

School district budget notice:
Overall budget proposal

	Budget adopted for 2007-08	Budget proposed for 2008-09	Contingency budget for 2008-09*
Total budgeted amount	\$54,010,666	\$58,562,024	\$58,040,162
Increase for 2008-09 school year		\$ 4,551,358	\$ 4,029,496
Percentage increase in each proposed budget		8.43%	7.5%
Change in consumer price index		2.8%	
Resulting estimated property tax levy for 2008-09 school year		\$23,843,619	\$23,321,757
Administrative component	\$4,505,169	\$ 4,977,767	\$ 4,797,667
Program component	\$44,380,384	\$47,179,989	\$46,980,227
Capital component	\$5,125,113	\$ 6,404,268	\$ 6,262,268

* The increase in Foundation Aid is protected from the contingency calculation. Equipment purchases, not included in the Contract for Excellence, are not allowed under a contingency budget. Contingency requires that the district charge for use of the facilities.

Basic STAR exemption impact

Estimated basic STAR exemption savings based on a hypothetical home within the school district with a full value of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000)

	Budget proposed for 2008-09 school year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$398

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2008-09 by the qualified voters of the Port Jervis City School District, Orange County, New York, will be held Tuesday, May 20, 2008, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine at the following locations: Huguenot Fire House, Deerpark Town Municipal Building, Sparrowbush Fire House, and Port Jervis Middle School gym. For more information, call Michele O'Donnell in the District Office at 858-3175.

NOTE: The above notice is mandated by state law. If you have any questions or need more information, please call the District Office at 858-3180. Additional information is available at community budget meetings and the district Web site, www.pjschools.org.

Impact of Contingency

If the proposed budget is defeated, the School Board has three options: to put the same budget up for vote, put a revised budget before voters, or go directly to a contingent budget. Last year, the state changed the contingent budget rules. Districts must now calculate the contingent cap, then INCREASE that by the increase in Foundation Aid they will receive. While this brings the contingent budget much closer to the proposed budget, a contingent budget would have the following impact on students: Port Jervis would have to cut \$521,862 from 2008-09 budget and charge clubs/organizations to use district facilities.

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