



*The Future  
Belongs to Those  
with the Skills*

2006-2007 PROPOSED

# Budget



On May 16, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake school district voters will go to the polls to decide on a \$46.9 million budget for the 2006-07 school year. The proposed budget is up 5.1% from the current year and will result in an average tax increase of 5.8%.

Most of the increase in this year's budget comes from higher costs for salaries, health insurance, pensions, and fuel. Debt service costs, on the other hand, are decreasing. More information on all these items is inside.

In addition to the budget, voters will consider a proposition to replace three school buses and will elect two members to the Board of Education.

***"The future belongs to those with the skills"***

The title of this year's budget newsletter comes from a talk by NY State Education Commissioner Richard Mills about the challenge of preparing children for the world of the future. His words resonate with parents who want their children to be ready to face whatever unknowns may lie ahead and with educators who see human knowledge growing and tomorrow's careers changing faster than we can measure.

The fact is that hundreds of thousands of jobs are leaving America for India, China and other countries. The share of U.S. jobs that don't require at least some college-level training is projected to drop from 31% to 9% over the next

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**BALLOT ITEMS:**

- ▶ The 2006-07 Proposed Budget
- ▶ Bus Purchase Referendum
- ▶ Board of Education Candidates

**VOTING:**

- ▶ **Tuesday, May 16**
- ▶ 7:00 AM - 9:00 PM
- ▶ High School Gymnasium



## Continued from Page 1

15 years. As Commissioner Mills said “We all need to know more, for work, for citizenship — for life.”\*

These are some of the reasons why for the past decade the State Board of Regents has been dramatically raising educational standards for the elementary grades on up to the Regents diploma. And more students are reaching these higher



standards. Since 1996, the share of graduates earning Regents diplomas has risen across the state from 42% to 57%, and at BH-BL from 68% to 94%.

Achievements like this have not been easy for many of our pupils, and have raised costs for our taxpayers. Higher state and federal standards have brought BH-BL more unfunded mandates and have required administering and grading thousands more tests, providing more individualized and small group support for students who struggle, and restructuring many courses and curricula.

The central question is how best can our district and our pupils continue to meet rising standards and rising costs? In years like this when the district faces higher costs for items like health insurance, fuel and pensions — higher costs over which we have little control — the

Board of Education’s budget development focus becomes one of retrenchment to protect the core instructional program.

The following pages describe what is driving 2006-07 cost increases and the reasoning behind reductions made in the proposed budget.

No other New York governmental entity shares as much information about its successes and failures as public schools. And that is as it should be because the success or failure of our children is not only near and dear to us as parents and neighbors but also vital to our future as a community and as a nation.

The Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Board of Education offers the following proposed 2006-07 budget as a reasonable balance among the often conflicting demands of students, parents and taxpayers.

## How was this budget developed?

**A.** Development of the 2006-07 budget started in November with projections of significantly higher prices for fuel, utilities, health insurance, pensions, and overall salary costs. These estimates plus the Governor’s proposal in January that districts like BH-BL actually receive a state aid cut in 2006-07 led to fears that taxes could grow by as much as 10 to 14% based on preliminary numbers. These numbers put an end to any thoughts of potentially adding enhancements or significant new programs in our district next year.

Instead, the January through March period was full of discussions about the best ways to preserve instructional quality while reducing the budget in our various depart-

ments and programs. By early March Superintendent Jim Schultz had put together a package of 34 recommendations that would reduce preliminary 2006-07 budget expenses by \$759,504 and provide an additional \$276,900 in non-tax revenue.

### Community input

The Board of Education’s next step in March was to take this Superintendent’s recommended version of the budget “on the road” at budget forums and share it with parents, residents and staff for their reactions. A number of residents asked the Board to protect specific programs that they valued, and many spoke of the need to keep instructional programs strong. People had concerns about the fact

that our community is growing and had questions about long-term plans to handle growth (see page 9 for more on this). But the most frequent concern voiced at these budget forums was that residents are feeling pinched by rising prices and are worried about taxes.

Thanks to an on-time state budget, in early April the Board of Education received confirmation that contrary to the Governor’s January proposal, our district will be receiving a small increase in aid next year. The last step in the Board’s budget discussion was deciding to apply most of this additional aid to tax relief this September and to the fund balance — thereby improving the district’s ability to manage its finances.

\* Anthony Carnevale & Donna Desrochers, “Standards for What? The Economic Roots of K-16 Reform,” ©Educational Testing Service, 2003.  
Richard P. Mills, “Charge to the Summit,” November 2, 2005, [http://usny.nysed.gov/summit/Commissioners\\_charge\\_Nov2.htm](http://usny.nysed.gov/summit/Commissioners_charge_Nov2.htm).



## Q. What parts of the budget are changing the most — and why?

**A.** The proposed 2006-07 budget is \$46,988,583. This represents a 5.1% increase over the current year's budget of \$44,697,678. There are no new programs in the proposed budget. Nearly all of the increase comes from three areas: staff compensation, benefits and fuel.

**1. Compensation** for regular staff, coaches, tutors and substitutes will increase by \$1,171,292 or 4.7%. Education is a people business, and 77% of the total budget goes for labor costs (salaries and benefits). Thus it is natural that the largest increases are in these areas. The 4.7% increase includes the cost of special education staff added since last year's budget was approved (to serve new special ed pupils) and a significant increase in substitute costs, since this area was under-budgeted in the current year.\*

**2. Health insurance** is projected to increase by \$769,340 or 16.7%. Unlike some school districts and many cities, BH-BL staff and retirees all pay a portion of their health insurance costs.

**3. Pension costs** are rising by \$125,239 or 5.2%. Pension benefits are not changing, but the rates we must pay into state retirement systems are. The state-required employer contribution rates vary each year as economic factors (principally the stock market) vary.

**4. Heating fuel** is increasing by \$395,000 or 72%, and **diesel fuel and gasoline** are increasing by \$108,000 or 90% in the proposed budget. Both of these areas were under-budgeted in the current year, since no one foresaw Hurricane Katrina and the subsequent national rise in fuel costs. Hence these increases reflect both actual price increases in the current year and projected figures for next year. Efforts to economize in these areas are noted below.

**5. Social security costs** (FICA and Medicare) are shared 50/50 by employer and employee under federal regulations. The district's share of this cost will rise by \$95,000 or 4.9% in 2006-07.

**6. Debt Service costs** are decreasing next year by \$406,757 or 11.7%.



**Hidden costs of testing:** This year New York doubled the number of required No Child Left Behind state exams in grades 3-8. In addition to paying for the exams themselves, BH-BL now budgets \$25,000 a year to pay substitute teachers for covering classes while our teachers are grading state exams, like the team of math teachers above, who spent nine days correcting math exams in grades 3-8, requiring nearly 100 substitute days.

\* Note: the district cannot exceed the approved budget. Mid-year unforeseen cost increases — whether for serving special needs children who move into the district, higher gas prices, or emergencies — must be taken out of the fund balance. See also the charts on page 7.

## Q. What reductions are included in this budget?

**A.** The proposed budget for 2006-07 does not include any new initiatives or new programs. While the Board of Education decided to add 0.4 FTE (full time equivalent) teaching service at the Middle School for \$20,000 to address increased enrollment there, most discussions involved finding the best ways to reduce expenses while preserving the core strengths of the instructional program.

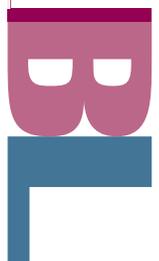
The proposed budget would:

1. Eliminate two elementary teaching positions to save \$104,000. Projections for next fall indicate that we can do this and keep class sizes comparable with other Suburban Council schools.
2. Reduce special education staff by \$23,000. Depending on student needs next fall, this could be either a loss of 1.0 FTE teaching assistant or 0.5 FTE teacher.
3. Eliminate the 0.4 FTE position of Information Technology Specialist for a savings of \$20,000.

Staffing Changes in the 2006-07 Budget (in Full Time Equivalents)	
Middle School teacher	+0.4 FTE
Information Tech. specialist	-0.4 FTE
Elementary teachers	-2.0 FTE
Special Ed. staff	-1.0 FTE
<b>Net Change</b>	<b>-3.0 FTE</b>

4. Cut budget codes for school supplies, printing and textbooks by \$45,000.

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5. Reduce computer purchases by \$20,000.
6. Cut the budget for summer curriculum projects by \$15,000.
7. Eliminate spending for furniture to save \$35,000.
8. Encourage pupils to pursue internships through our high school instead of the BOCES New Visions program to save \$24,000.
9. Increase the fees charged for community groups to use school facilities and charge admission to more varsity competitions to raise \$10,900 in revenue.
10. Reduce transportation costs by ten field trips per school plus some sports trips to scrimmages and non-league competitions, thereby saving \$8,000.
11. Cut budgets for central printing, personnel advertising, and Board of Education conferences by \$14,000.
12. Return to the 2004 level of athletic trainer time to save \$4,650, and reduce the number of modified (i.e., middle school) sports competitions to save \$7,000.
13. Save \$40,000 over two years by buying buses in March instead of the summertime. Since higher bus prices now take effect on April 1 each year, we can save money by buying buses already authorized by the voters before April 1.
14. Sell a 26-acre parcel of district land on Swaggertown Road, using \$75,000 of the sale proceeds in 2006-07 and the remainder to reduce taxes over the next several years.



## What other efforts has the district made to contain costs?



In addition to the above new items, efforts over the past several years to deliver programs at the lowest cost include:

### ENERGY & UTILITIES

- ▶ We buy electricity and natural gas directly from the producer as part of a consortium of school districts and businesses organized by the BOCES. In the past this has saved us as much as \$30,000 a year. Even under today's higher costs, on average we are getting prices 15-20% lower than school districts not purchasing energy through a consortium.
- ▶ Installation of energy-efficient, auto-on, auto-off lighting fixtures in all schools has resulted in substantially lower costs for lighting.
- ▶ Removing many appliances from district classrooms and offices in 2005 has resulted in both safer use of electrical outlets and lower energy costs.
- ▶ We now use a computer-automated system to monitor and control the heating in all five schools. While the system is not zoned for specific rooms or wings of buildings, the Supervisor of Buildings and Grounds can check and adjust school heating levels from his office, for instance to respond to outside temperatures changes.
- ▶ Several of the larger projects in the 2003 renovations referendum were designed to save energy and money. Replacing more than 40-year-old boilers at the Middle and High Schools with smaller, more energy-efficient models should result in significant savings, particularly since we will no longer need to keep one boiler running year-round just to provide hot water in building faucets. The referendum also includes other

energy conservation projects, such as replacing some old single-pane windows with double-pane units as in the High School library.

- ▶ Conversion to a new telephone system let us eliminate five high-speed data communication phone lines, saving about \$25,000 a year.
- ▶ To save energy, staff are instructed to turn off computer monitors and processors at the end of the day.

### SALARIES & BENEFITS

- ▶ Increased enrollment does not always mean more teachers. Class sizes have increased in several areas, particularly at the secondary schools.
- ▶ We use consultants or BOCES-contracted services when it is cost-effective to do so. This can be significantly less expensive than hiring people outright, particularly since the district is reimbursed for a portion of the cost of BOCES services through state aid.
- ▶ All district employees and retirees pay a portion of their health insurance costs.
- ▶ Self-funding of Worker Compensation and unemployment benefits saves the district more than \$230,000 a year.

### TRANSPORTATION COSTS

- ▶ Current costs for bus fuel would have been twice as high had we not converted to more fuel-efficient diesel buses some years ago.
- ▶ To get the best price, we are part of a three-district consortium that buys diesel fuel and gasoline as a group. This has enabled BH-BL to get prices that are consistently lower than state contract prices even since Hurricane Katrina.

- ▶ In 2005 we used the early payment of state aid on bus loans to pay those loans off early, thereby saving roughly \$15,000 in interest.
- ▶ We double-up as many of the out-of-district bus trips as we can when required to carry children to private and parochial schools.

### OTHER COSTS

- ▶ The district uses cooperative purchasing of materials and services whenever it is advantageous to do so. For example, for years the BH-BL business office has organized a multi-district joint purchase of a year's supply of copier paper, resulting in below-state-contract prices. The seven Schenectady County school districts have now formed a new consortium to apply this idea to other products, such as cleaning supplies.
- ▶ The district's award-winning attention to safety policies and any type of potential safety risk has reduced the premiums we pay on general liability insurance. We also reduce these premiums by sharing risk management ideas and practices with other school districts statewide.
- ▶ Public information, staff Haz-Com training, tax billing, some data processing, and instruction for certain disabled pupils are services that have proved to be both more effective and less expensive when purchased cooperatively through the BOCES.
- ▶ Using district maintenance staff rather than outside contractors saved at least \$75,000 on the cost of installing Internet wiring in our schools.
- ▶ This winter the newly mandated Building Condition Surveys of our schools cost \$27,000 less than estimated because staff were able to provide much of the needed data and assistance.

## *How will this budget affect taxes?*

**A.** The proposed budget for 2006-07 is 5.1% higher than the current year's budget. Thanks to the on-time state budget, we know how much state aid BH-BL will receive. Therefore, we know that a 5.8% tax levy increase will be needed to balance this budget.

In 2005 (that is, before the recent property reassessments by Ballston and Glenville), the median value home in the BH-BL school district was assessed at \$124,000.

For the homeowner whose home was assessed at \$124,000 in 2005, the proposed budget would roughly mean a tax increase of \$144 before deducting the impact of the basic STAR exemption or an increase of \$103 after the basic STAR exemption.

Calculating exact tax increases is complicated by the fact that our school district contains parts of four towns and that two of these towns just reassessed their properties.

The actual tax increase will vary somewhat from town to town due to equalization rates that the NY State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) will announce in August. As their name implies, equalization rates are intended to spread the tax burden across the four towns as fairly as possible. They attempt to "equalize" or compensate for differing assessment practices and for towns where property values may be rising faster than in other towns within a school district.

For instance, if ORPS determines that property values have risen more in one town than another, the tax increase in that town may be somewhat higher than the 5.8% average while the rate in another town is lower than the average. These differences tend to even out over several years.

The school district plays no role in determining how much of the tax burden is placed on any one town or



property owner. The State ORPS office determines how much of the total tax levy is paid by each town, and the assessor in each town determines how much is paid by each property owner.

**See page 6 for more information on taxes.**

## *What happens if the budget is defeated? How would a contingent budget affect our programs and taxes?*

**A.** If the proposed budget is defeated at the polls on May 16, state law gives the school board three options. Board members may decide to put the same budget before the voters a second time, put a revised budget before the voters, or go directly to a contingent budget. If the voters defeat the budget a second time, the Board must go to a contingent budget.

The rules for a contingent budget are as follows:

- ▶ A contingent budget cannot contain money for furniture, equipment, or new capital projects. Unlike some years ago, contingent budgets can now fund interscholastic sports and the

same level of busing previously provided in a school district.

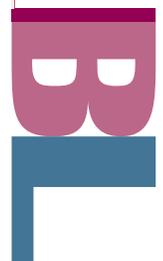
- ▶ The administrative proportion of the budget cannot be larger than in the previous year.
- ▶ Most importantly, the amount that a contingent budget may increase is tied to the cost of living increase as defined by the Consumer Price Index. This means that, except for debt service and court-ordered expenses, no New York school district's 2006-07 contingent budget can be more than 4.0% higher than their current year's budget.

### **Impact of contingent budget**

For BH-BL, these rules mean that

the Board of Education would have to cut a further \$1,048,316 from the proposed budget. Given the amounts already cut and the fact that three-quarters of the budget is staffing costs, most additional reductions would have to come from cutting staff.

**Under a contingent budget the district would need to cut 16-20 staff positions (teachers, administrators, coaches & support staff), plus all equipment and many extracurricular and summer activities. Yet taxes on a median value home (assessed last year at \$124,000) would still increase by 3.1% or \$77.**



## Q How will property reassessments impact taxes?

**A.** This spring, property owners in Ballston and Glenville received new property assessments from their town assessor's office, many of which were significantly higher than the old assessment. Although the school district plays no role in this process, we know it is hard to grasp how reassessment will impact school taxes. Here is some helpful information.

Reassessment does not cause the overall tax burden (the tax levy) to rise or fall; it merely redistributes who pays the levy in an effort — hopefully — to distribute the tax burden more fairly.

### One common mistake

When trying to calculate the impact of a new assessment, you cannot simply multiply the NEW assessment by the OLD tax rate. The fact that property values have increased does not change the amount of money the school district needs (the tax levy). In fact, when property values go UP throughout a town, the tax rate per thousand dollars of assessed value tends to go DOWN.

The key factor is: how much did assessments increase on average in your town? For instance, if assessments in your town increased on average by 50% and yours did too, your school tax increase will be close

to the overall 5.8% tax levy increase. If assessments rose by 50% on average, but yours rose by only 30%, you may actually see a school tax decrease.

Equalization rates dictated by the state ORPS office (as described on page 5) are a part of this process too. Therefore, specific individual tax calculations cannot be made with certainty until late August.

For more information on this process, including a timeline showing how school tax bills are determined and an example of how taxes are redistributed after reassessment, go to [www.bhbl.org/District/Board/reassessment.htm](http://www.bhbl.org/District/Board/reassessment.htm)

## Q How will STAR exemptions affect school taxes?

**A.** Homeowners can receive tax exemptions under the School Tax Relief (STAR) program. The state reimburses schools for taxes that residents are exempted from paying under STAR.

Senior citizens age 65 and older with an adjusted gross household income of less than \$66,050 per

year (minus IRA distributions) qualify for an **Enhanced STAR** exemption, where the state pays the school taxes on \$50,000 of the assessed value of their home. For BH-BL residents, this means the state will pay about \$1,249 of your tax bill.

For other homeowners, \$30,000 of your home's value is exempted from school property taxes under the regular or **Basic STAR** program. This exemption means that the state will pay about \$749 of your school property tax bill.

Homeowners receiving the regular STAR exemption need not reapply each year. Only senior citizens receiving the enhanced exemptions must reapply each year to prove that their income is still within the income limit.

Call your town assessor if you have questions about this program or about income limitations:

- ▶ Ballston: June Maniacek 885-8502
- ▶ Charlton: Vicki Hayner 384-0152
- ▶ Clifton Park: Walter Smead 371-6461
- ▶ Glenville: Rosalie Fahey 384-0093

## Q What other exemptions can BH-BL residents receive?

**A.** Property tax exemptions are also available for low income senior residents and for disabled residents.

In an effort to respond to the concerns of fixed income senior citizens, this spring the Board of Education raised the income limit for the seniors exemption. Residents over the age of 65 with an income of \$32,399 or less can be exempted from paying school taxes on 5-50%

of their home's assessed value depending on their income.

The district also grants a disability exemption ranging from 5-50% for qualifying residents of any age with disabilities and incomes of less than \$32,399. These exemptions are in addition to the STAR exemption and certain qualifications apply. Applications for either exemption must be filed with your town assessor's office and must be renewed annually.



### Expenditures by Category

CATEGORY	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	PROPOSED 2006-07	% INCREASE '05-06 TO '06-07
Staff Compensation	\$23,174,607	\$24,025,524	\$24,873,278	\$26,044,570	4.7%
Staff Benefits	6,886,562	7,336,063	9,069,461	10,048,040	10.8%
BOCES/Special Ed. Contracts	2,850,355	3,010,591	3,167,257	3,200,020	1.0%
Equipment & Furniture	118,015	199,044	280,055	268,244	-4.2%
Textbooks, Software & Supplies	1,132,711	1,224,959	1,274,565	1,353,177	6.2%
Utilities & General Insurance	1,149,600	1,399,600	1,484,000	1,862,020	25.5%
Debt Service	2,950,096	2,889,078	3,464,023	3,057,266	-11.7%
Renovation, Maintenance & Other Services	938,685	1,023,097	1,085,039	1,155,246	6.5%
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$39,200,631</b>	<b>\$41,107,956</b>	<b>\$44,697,678</b>	<b>\$46,988,583</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

### Expenditures by Service

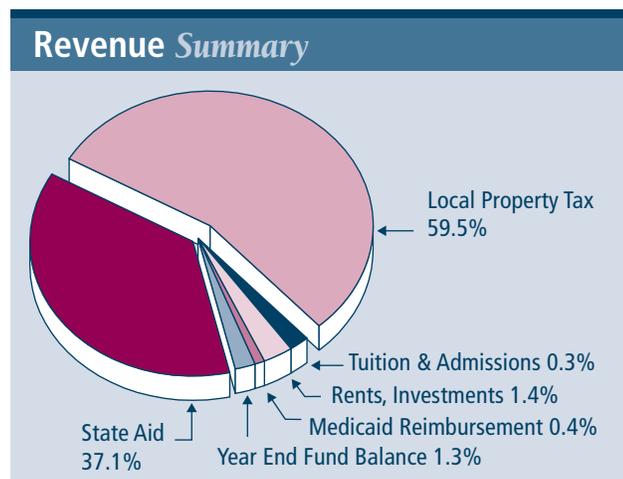
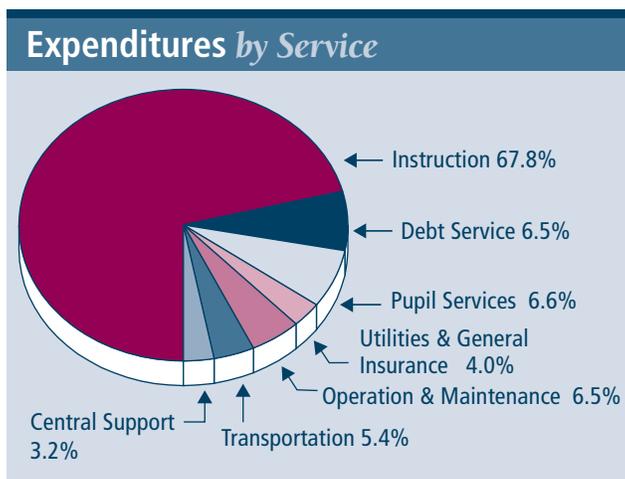
SERVICE	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	PROPOSED 2006-07	% INCREASE '05-06 TO '06-07
Instruction	\$26,743,235	\$28,019,069	30,164,787	\$31,856,912	5.6%
Pupil Services (Library, Athletics, Guidance & Health)	2,671,292	2,717,640	3,041,897	3,109,470	2.2%
Operation & Maintenance	2,456,264	2,618,957	2,877,459	3,073,826	6.8%
Utilities & General Insurance	1,149,600	1,399,600	1,484,000	1,862,020	25.5%
Transportation	1,951,632	2,085,637	2,229,126	2,529,762	13.5%
Debt Service	2,950,096	2,889,078	3,464,023	3,057,266	-11.7%
Central Support	1,278,513	1,377,975	1,436,386	1,499,328	4.4%
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$39,200,631</b>	<b>\$41,107,956</b>	<b>\$44,697,678</b>	<b>\$46,988,583</b>	<b>5.1%</b>

Each item in this chart includes amounts budgeted for staffing, supplies, equipment & all costs directly related to that service. No funds are budgeted for the school lunch program, whose entire cost (including staff salaries) is paid for by meal purchases and state and federal aid.

### Revenue Summary

	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	PROPOSED 2006-07	CHANGE '05-06 TO '06-07
State Aid	\$14,488,709	\$15,328,896	\$17,053,500	\$17,444,991	\$391,491
Local Property Tax	23,243,922	24,274,860	25,957,178	27,971,692	2,014,514 *
Tuition & Admissions	223,000	228,200	187,000	147,900	- 39,100
Rents, Investments, Refunds	535,000	576,000	630,000	646,000	16,000
Federal Medicaid Reimbursement	160,000	150,000	170,000	170,000	0
Year End Fund Balance	550,000	550,000	700,000	608,000	-92,000
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$39,200,631</b>	<b>\$41,107,956</b>	<b>\$44,697,678</b>	<b>\$46,988,583</b>	<b>\$2,290,905</b>

\* \$1,514,514 of this change is from the tax rate increase. The remainder is tax revenue on new construction added to the tax rolls since last year. An estimated \$4.9 million of the property tax levy will be paid by the state under the STAR program. See pages 5-6.





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

## School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2005-06 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2006-07 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2006-07 School Year*
Total budgeted amount	\$44,697,678	\$46,988,583	\$45,940,267
Increase (decrease) for the 2006-07 school year		\$2,290,905	\$1,242,589
Percentage increase (decrease) in each proposed budget		5.1%	2.8%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		3.4%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2006-07 school year		\$27,971,692	\$27,273,376
Administrative Component	\$4,890,791	\$5,244,569	\$4,524,569
Program Component	\$32,353,863	\$34,056,976	\$33,954,660
Capital Component	\$7,453,024	\$7,687,038	\$7,461,038

\* Assumptions made in projecting a Contingency Budget for 2006-07, should the proposed budget be defeated: We assume that the budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses for furniture, equipment and new capital project costs.

## Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR\*\* Exemption Savings Based on a Median Value Home Within the School District with a Full Value of One Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$100,000)

	Budget Adopted for the 2005-06 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2006-07 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$708	\$749 (est.)
School tax increase (decrease)	\$121	\$117***
Net Basic STAR tax savings	\$587	\$632

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2006-2007 by the qualified voters of the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District, Saratoga & Schenectady Counties, New York, will be held at the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Senior High School in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2006, between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Senior High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting machine.

\*\* The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

\*\*\* This number differs from the \$144 estimated average tax increase shown on page 5 because the state calculation of \$117 is based on a home valued at \$100,000 while the district's calculation of \$144 is based on a home valued at \$124,000, the actual median value home in the district in 2005.



## DEFINITIONS

- 1. Administrative costs** include the salaries and benefits of all certified staff who spend 50% or more of their time in administration, plus the salaries and benefits of clerical staff. Also, school board costs, curriculum development, staff development, tax collection, legal and auditing costs, central printing, central data processing, BOCES administrative costs, research, planning, and evaluation.
- 2. Program costs** include the salaries and benefits of all teachers and staff delivering pupil services (health, guidance, library and athletics). Also, textbooks, instructional materials, equipment, extracurricular activities, BOCES program costs, and all costs of the transportation program except bus purchases.
- 3. Capital costs** include the salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, plus debt service, bus purchases, utilities, general insurance, tax certiorari, and other court-ordered expenses.

## **Q** *What plans are underway to handle growing program & enrollment needs?*

**A.** A major strength of the BH-BL school district is its emphasis on multi-year planning and long range anticipation of needs whenever possible. With the residents' support, we have been successfully planning and passing major renovations referenda every five years for the past 25 years, which is the main reason why the recent state-mandated Building Conditions Survey of all school infrastructure systems found our schools to be in better shape than in many districts.

Currently, a lot of our planning energy is going into the question of how to handle growth in the community. The district has enrollment data for the past 30 years and projections for the next four years. We have instituted new procedures to work collaboratively with officials in our four towns to monitor the location and number of new building permits.

An enrollment study completed in 2005 concluded that the district would gain 212 additional pupils within the next four years as a result of new housing permits, and that 70% of these would be elementary pupils.

With our three elementary schools now nearing capacity, it appears likely that we will need more elementary classrooms in a few years. Options for providing more classrooms include: building additions onto one or more of the existing schools, renovating and reopening the Hostetter Building (the former Glenhaven School), or building a new school, perhaps on district-owned land on Jenkins Road.

The Board of Education is now discussing how it will study this question and make a decision, with an eye toward a possible construction referendum in 2007 or 2008.



## **Q** *So how are we doing with efforts to raise educational standards at BH-BL?*

**A.** In 1998 the New York Board of Regents embarked on a challenge of historic proportions to raise the standards for a Regents diploma yet also require that ALL pupils meet that standard. Many changes have come along since then, most notably the federal No Child Left Behind legislation that is forcing all states to raise standards and testing levels.

As this newsletter goes to press in mid-April, New York school districts still have not received the state-issued School Report Cards with 2004-05 data, which means that we do not have the ability to compare our most recent test scores with other schools and state averages. However, we can report that BH-BL children are making great progress

in meeting higher state graduation requirements.

If the future belongs to those with the skills, will BH-BL children be counted among those individuals? We have many indications that the answer to that question is yes.

Our overall Regents diploma rate has risen dramatically, as seen in the chart on the right. Another important indicator is how our special education pupils are handling higher standards. Of the 23 special needs pupils in the Class of 2005, a record 10 pupils earned Regents diplomas with eight receiving local diplomas and four, IEP certificates.

Other rising numbers include the percentage of BH-BL pupils going on to college (90% of the Class of 2005)

and the number of BH-BL High School courses that offer college credits (30).

Rising BH-BL Regents Diploma Rate	
Class of 1993	56%
Class of 2003	70%
Class of 2004	72%
Class of 2005	94%

Our children continue to challenge themselves and to go beyond graduation requirements. For next fall, 185 high school students have signed up for Pre-Calculus and AP Calculus, and 361 students have asked to take one or more of our 20 computer science and computer application courses.

BH-BL children are graduating with competencies in not only reading, writing and math, but also advanced technology and computer skills. The proposed 2006-07 budget is designed to maintain this progress.



**BOARD of EDUCATION****Candidates**

BH-BL residents will elect two members of the Board of Education on May 16. Board members serve a three-year term of office at no pay. Nominating petitions for Board candidates were due by April 18 under state law. Three candidates filed petitions this year.

Residents will have an opportunity to pose questions and hear the candidates discuss their views at **Meet the Candidates Night at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 10**, in the High School Library.



**Elizabeth Herkenham** is seeking her second term on the Board. Currently the board vice president and Finance Committee chair, she was previously president of the Charlton Heights PTA and a parent member of the Charlton Heights and Middle School Building Councils. A PTA

Founders Day Award winner, she is currently working with IAN Regions, a not-for-profit organization developing educational initiatives to support the growth of high tech industries in our area and beyond. A district resident for 17 years, Elizabeth and her husband live on Maple Avenue in Charlton. Their two children attend the High School and Middle School.

*“As a Board of Education member for the last three years, I have been involved in networking opportunities with neighboring school districts and regional associations. Our school district is highly regarded in the region. This is no accident. BH-BL strives to be a high performing school district, despite the regulatory demands that all school districts face, such as increased financial accountability, more student testing, and gradual reductions in state aid revenues. We are also a school district with a limited commercial tax base; therefore, we must be fiscally responsible as changes in our expenses mainly impact local homeowners.*

*Looking back, I feel fortunate to have ‘learned the ropes’ by working with experienced, highly respected Board of Ed members and hardworking, caring BH-BL staff members in a community that values education. I have been involved with*

*many aspects of district planning including spearheading the budget process and participating in the selection process of key administrative positions.*

*Looking to the future, we see the landscape of our community changing before our eyes with new single homes and housing developments being built. Our elementary schools are nearing enrollment capacity, a trend that will continue throughout the schools as time goes on. We must also recognize the changes taking place within the global business world and the importance of teaching the life skills our students need to be prepared for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The BH-BL Board of Education must continue to focus on the important work of maintaining high performing schools while minimizing the tax impact. I would be proud to continue to serve the BH-BL community, as a member of the school board for the next three years.”*



**Joe Pericone, Jr.** is seeking his first term on the Board of Education. A mechanical engineer, he has worked for GE for 27 years, including the past six years as an instructor at their Energy Learning Center. A former Lakehill Soccer coach, he has been active with both Girl Scouts and

Cub Scouts. He helped develop the Pathway Program, which introduces middle and high school pupils to engineering by bringing them to the GE Learning Center for hands-on lessons with power industry equipment. Living on St. Stephens Lane in Glenville, Joe and his wife have been district residents for 13 years. Their four children include one BH-BL graduate now in college, two high schoolers and one middle schooler.

*“Over the years, I have seen the Board of Education do an excellent job leading our school district. Besides making an effort to keep the quality of education high, they have had to deal with late State budgets, as well as managing the increasing costs that have affected us all. This is a credit to them, as well as the students, staff, parents and community members who have worked with them. As I look forward to serving on the school board, I know I will bring the same enthusiasm and excellence they have given to the community.*

*Living in Burnt Hills and being a part of this community has had an enormously positive impact on my family and myself. My wife and I have always taken education seriously. That was one of the reasons for choosing to come to Burnt Hills. The high quality of education my children are receiving is allowing them to excel in their academic work by challenging them to bring out their best. I have taken my*

*commitment to education outside of the traditional classroom by opening my workplace to the community through an engineering program designed for college bound students. In addition, I run a program for middle school students that emphasizes the importance of math and science, to encourage them to start to think about pursuing engineering in High School. My wife and I have also enjoyed watching our children play the wide variety of sports available to them including recreational, modified and varsity sports both as spectator and a coach. I have also volunteered for the grade school plays and fun fair that are always happening in our community.*

*By serving on the School Board I will be able to bring my working experience teaching world wide, as well as my perspectives on helping Burnt Hills provide the high quality of education we have come to expect.”*





**Michael Wolf** joined the Board of Education in 2004. An operations manager at State Farm Insurance, he served on the district committee that identified major school renovations needs in 2003. He has served as Spartan Junior Girls Basketball Commissioner for the past five years and previously coached basketball and soccer in the district. A district resident for eight years, Michael and his wife live on Midline Road in Ballston Lake. Their three children attend the High School, Middle School and Stevens Elementary.

*"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the district voters for allowing me to serve the community on the Board of Education for the past two years. In that time, I have learned a great deal about public school governance, state and federal mandates, and the budget process. I have been involved in the selection of our current Superintendent, both Assistant Superintendents, and two Principal positions. I also served on the district's Nutrition Committee as the Board Representative. I have been proud to serve on a School Board that models a teamwork philosophy that is aligned with our Administration and district staff — one that focuses on success for all children.*

*This district has a lot to be proud of. Our five schools have achieved an*

*enviable record of pupil performance, staff accountability, and program efficiency. These accomplishments are a reflection of students who are intelligent and willing to work hard and their parents who value education.*

*There are significant challenges that lie ahead for our district such as enrollment growth, testing mandates, staff-related expenditures, and long range planning. My focus will continue to be to find the appropriate balance between fiscal accountability and curriculum improvement. This district has been successful in the past in getting exceptional results with competitive expenditures. This is the type of return on investment we will continue to strive for in the future. I thank you for your consideration."*

## **Q** Why are we replacing fewer school buses this year?

**A.** At the May 16 election, the Board of Education is also seeking the voters' approval to borrow \$175,000 to replace three of the oldest buses in our 65-bus fleet during 2006-07. These will be:

- ▶ One 20-passenger wheelchair bus,
- ▶ One 20-passenger bus, and
- ▶ One 9-passenger Suburban.

The vehicles being replaced are either 10 or more years old or have accumulated more than 130,000 miles. Beyond these limits, vehicles typically become prohibitively expensive to repair given the strict state safety codes for school buses.

If approved, this referendum will allow us to borrow funds to replace the buses before the opening of school in September 2007.

Seventy percent of the cost of buses is reimbursed by state aid. Payment for these buses would be spread over five years beginning in 2007-08 and would be phased in as payments on other buses are com-

plete. Annually funding buses in this manner costs the average homeowner \$18 to \$21 per year.

### **New procedures save money**

Typically the district replaces five to eight buses a year, but the plan this year is to replace only three buses for two reasons. First, our mechanics feel it will be possible to get more than 10 years service out of a few of our old buses, and second, we are changing the time of year when buses are purchased.

As the marketplace changes, so must we, to stay cost-effective. State contract prices for school buses are



now subject to an automatic annual price increase on April 1. Hence, if we buy buses in March every year instead of the summer, we can save significantly. For example, this past March we saved roughly \$20,000 on the price of buses already authorized by BH-BL voters in May 2005, and we expect similar savings in the 2006-07 budget.





## 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.

## Registering to Vote

You are already registered to vote on May 16, 2006, if you registered for or voted in either a school election or a general election anytime since May 2002. If you are not already registered, you may do so in either of two ways. You may register for the school election by coming to the school district office in the Hostetter Building, 50 Cypress Drive, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, through May 11. Or you may register in person or by mail with your County Board of Elections through May 11.

## Absentee Ballots

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 16.

To receive an absentee ballot, voters must obtain an application from Jacqueline St. Onge, Clerk of the Board. The application must be returned to her at least seven days 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 from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the Clerk of the Board no later than 5:00 p.m. on election day. For more information, contact Ms. St. Onge at 399-9141, ext. 5025.



PLEASE REMEMBER TO:

**VOTE** ▶ Tuesday, May 16  
 ▶ 7:00 am - 9:00 pm  
 ▶ High School Gym

### Board of Education

**Timothy Kelliher,**  
*President*

**Brian Bielecki**

**Nancy Della Pia**

**Harry Durand, Jr.**

**Elizabeth Herkenham**

**Robert Speck**

**Michael Wolf**

### Superintendent

**Jim Schultz**

Visit us on the Web:

**[www.bhbl.org](http://www.bhbl.org)**

### Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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