

# HOME PAGES

POCANTICO HILLS SCHOOL BUDGET INFORMATION BULLETIN

APRIL 2009

## Dear Community Members,

You are cordially invited to participate in the development of our proposed 2009-2010 school budget and are encouraged to attend the School Board meeting at 8:00 p.m. on April 14 in the school library. The Board has held nine budget workshops over the past several weeks and is scheduled to adopt a proposed budget on April 14.

This newsletter contains budget information for you to consider. In addition, the latest working draft of the budget may be reviewed on our District's website at [www.pocanticohills.org](http://www.pocanticohills.org) or you may pick up a copy at the school between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. We encourage your ideas, questions and comments. If you are unable to attend the meeting on April 14, please forward your questions and comments to [budgetinfo@pocanticohills.org](mailto:budgetinfo@pocanticohills.org). We look forward to hearing from you.

## About the 2009-2010 Proposed Budget

**Here are questions and answers about the preliminary Pocantico Hills budget prepared by the District administration.**

### **Q. How is the school budget communicated to District residents?**

**A.** The District has prepared a communication plan that can be found on the District's website, [www.pocanticohills.org](http://www.pocanticohills.org). Pocantico Hills is seeking input from the community before the Board's adoption of the budget on April 14, 2009. Essentially the same budget presentation has been made at each budget workshop to ensure that a resident missing one or more budget work sessions would not miss part of the description of the budget. The budget has been presented in its entirety at each community budget workshop, plus it will have been presented at two PTA meetings, to each employee group of the District, and to the student government. A PowerPoint presentation and other documentation, including the most recent working draft, are posted on the District's website.

The District's intention is to communicate more effectively with the community, and to seek input and suggestions to explain the budget in terms more easily understood by the community, and to ensure that the budget meets the needs of the District's students and residents.

### **Q. How much has the budget increased over the 2008-2009 budget, and in what areas have expenditures increased the most?**

**A.** The overall proposed budget represents an increase of \$889,624. Debt Service for the construction project approved January 2008, salaries, benefits, tuition, utilities and the Incarcerated Youth Program reflect the largest increases in the proposed budget. Although included in the expenditure budget, the increase in the Incarcerated Youth Program is completely funded by State Aid, and it has no impact on the tax rate paid by District residents.

Figures are enumerated on the following page.

The increases and decreases in the budget are as follows:

Salaries	\$290,065
Benefits	28,155
Equipment	(8,624)
Contractual Expenses	(14,428)
Supplies	(5,944)
Tuition	200,780
Textbooks	(436)
BOCES	(239,638)
Utilities	(92,068)
Debt Service	560,484
Software	(9,000)
Incarcerated Youth	180,278
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>889,694</b>

**Q. Why has the assessed valuation of the District decreased from 2003-2004 through the present?**

**A.** The assessed valuation of the District has decreased primarily as a result of tax certiorari claims and settlements. The assessed valuation has decreased from 16,715,484 to 14,033,100 in Mount Pleasant, and from 41,933,416 to 32,171,124 in Greenburgh from 2003-2004 through 2009-2010. The effect of this decrease over time has contributed significantly to the tax rate increases in each of the prior years. For 2009-2010 the District’s assessment is expected to cause an increase in the tax rate of 5.88% of the total projected tax rate increase of 7.77%.

**Q. What is a tax certiorari claim?**

**A.** Tax certiorari claims are made by commercial property owners when they believe that their property is assessed at too high a level, and their tax bill is also too high. A court-ordered judgment can reduce the assessment of a commercial property and provide for refunds to the commercial property owner for taxes they might have overpaid in prior years.

**Q. What is the budget-to-budget increase?**

**A.** The budget-to-budget increase proposed for the 2009-2010 school year is 3.92%. This is the lowest proposed increase in the budget in 10 years.

**Q. What is the increase in the property tax levy?**

**A.** The increase in the property tax levy refers to the additional amount of funds requested from the District’s residents to operate the School District. The increase in the tax levy is projected to be 1.89%.

**Q. Why is the budget-to-budget increase larger than the increase in the property tax levy?**

**A.** The budget-to-budget increase includes items that are funded by sources other than the property tax levy. For example, the budget provides for the costs to operate the Incarcerated Youth Program that is completely funded by State Aid.

**Q. What is the projected tax rate increase?**

**A.** The projected tax rate increase is 7.77%. This is the lowest tax rate increase proposed in 10 years.

**Q. Since the tax levy, or the amount of money that the District is requesting from residents to operate the School District is increasing by 1.89%, why is the tax rate projected to increase by 7.77%?**

**A.** The difference between the percentage in the tax levy increase (1.89%) and the projected tax rate increase (7.77%), or 5.88%, is directly attributable to the decrease in the District’s assessed valuation. The decrease in the District’s assessed valuation is caused by the settlement of tax certiorari claims made against the School District by commercial property owners.

**Q. How does the percentage increase in the tax levy compare to the increase in the consumer price increase?**

**A.** The increase in the consumer price increase is 3.80%, and the increase in the funds requested to support the 2009-2010 school budget is 1.89%.

**Q. What will happen if the community does not approve the school budget on May 19, 2009?**

**A.** State law provides that the Board of Education can, if it wishes, resubmit the same or a different budget to the community for approval once. If it is disapproved by the community again, or the Board of Education decides not to resubmit the budget, the School District will operate on a contingency budget.

**Q. What is the contingency budget increase, how does it compare to the proposed budget increase, and what will the tax rate increase be under a contingency budget?**

**A.** New York State law places a spending cap on a District’s contingency budget, with a few exceptions made for repaying debt, costs associated with enrollment growth, etc. The State-imposed spending cap for 2009-10 is 4%, and the proposed contingency budget considered by the Board of

Education provides for a contingent budget increase of 3.91%. The projected tax rate increase under the contingency budget is 7.76% while the tax rate increase under an approved budget is projected to be 7.77%.

**Q. How is the community impacted if the District operates under a contingency budget?**

**A.** Under a contingency budget, the community will not be able to utilize the District’s buildings and grounds in the same way that the District’s facilities can be used under an approved budget. State regulations require the School District to calculate the cost of the use of the buildings and grounds by community groups, and to pass these costs along to the community groups utilizing the District’s buildings and grounds.

**Q. Why are the tax rate increases under a contingency budget and an approved budget virtually the same?**

**A.** New York State law allows the costs associated with enrollment growth and new debt service to be excluded from the calculation of the maximum contingency budget. Under the maximum contingency budget permissible, the budget-to-budget increase would be 12.55%, and the tax rate increase would be 19.31%. However, since the School Board has reduced the proposed budget below the contingency spending cap, the proposed budget and contingency budget are virtually the same, reflecting a 3.92%, and 3.91% increase in the budget, respectively.

For more information, please visit our website:  
[www.pocanticohills.org](http://www.pocanticohills.org)

### 2009-2010 Budget Highlights

Modern Shop/Pre Engineering Curriculum	\$ 62,706
Shade Replacement Program	\$ 15,000
Summer Camp	\$292,527
Swim Program	\$146,306
After-School Program	\$ 65,597
Replacement of Student Information System	\$ 35,000
Field Trips	\$ 32,000
Instructional Supplies and Materials	\$104,400

### Budget-to-Budget Increase

2008-09 Budget	2009-2010 Proposed Budget Expenditures	Budget-to-Budget Increase	Percent of Budget-to-Budget Increase
\$22,699,313	\$23,588,937	\$889,624	3.92%

# IMPORTANT BUDGET DATES

**April 14, 2009**

**Board of Education Meeting –  
Adoption of Proposed Budget**  
8:00 p.m., School Library

**April 20, 2009**

**Last Day to File** petitions for  
Board of Education seat and propositions

**April 30, 2009**

**PTA Budget Presentation**

**May 5, 2009**

**PTA Meet the Candidates Night**  
8:00 p.m., School Library

**May 11, 2009**

**Budget Hearing**  
8:00 p.m., School Library

**May 14, 2009**

**Last day to register to vote.**  
Voters may register to vote at any time up to  
May 14 at the District office, Monday through  
Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**May 19, 2009**

**Budget Vote** 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 p.m.  
School Library

**Applications for Absentee Ballots may  
be applied for at:** The office of the School  
District Clerk, 599 Bedford Road, Sleepy  
Hollow, N.Y., or by calling: 914-631-2440,  
ext.103.

**Completed applications** for absentee ballots  
must be received by the School District  
Clerk prior to 5:00 p.m. on May 12, 2009, if the  
ballot is to be mailed; by May 18, 2009, if  
picked up in person.

**Absentee ballots must be received by** the  
District Clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. on the  
day of the vote – May 19, 2009.

For more information, please visit our website:  
[www.pocanticohills.org](http://www.pocanticohills.org)

POCANTICO HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL  
599 Bedford Road  
Sleepy Hollow, N.Y. 10591

**Board of Education**

Mr. Robert W. Balog  
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Mrs. Katherine Yu  
*Vice President*

Mr. Maurice Curran  
*Trustee*

Mr. John Conrad  
*Trustee*

Mr. David Wilens  
*Trustee*

**District Administration**

Dr. Freddie D. Smith, *Superintendent of Schools*  
Mr. Jay Scott-Friedman, *Assistant Superintendent*  
Mr. Stanley Steele, *Principal*

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