

BURNT HILLS-BALLSTON LAKE 2010-11 PROPOSED BUDGET

VOTING:

- ▶ Tuesday, May 18
- ▶ 7:00 AM - 9:00 PM
- ▶ High School Gymnasium

BALLOT ITEMS:

- ▶ The 2010-11 Proposed Budget
- ▶ Bus Purchase Referendum
- ▶ Board of Education Candidates

On May 18, Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake school district voters will go to the polls to decide on a \$53.4 million budget for the 2010-11 school year. This is an increase of only **one-tenth of one percent** from the current year, **by far the lowest budget-to-budget increase in 40 years**. Pending the Legislature's decision on the state budget, the proposed school budget is expected to result in a tax levy increase of 2.2 percent.

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

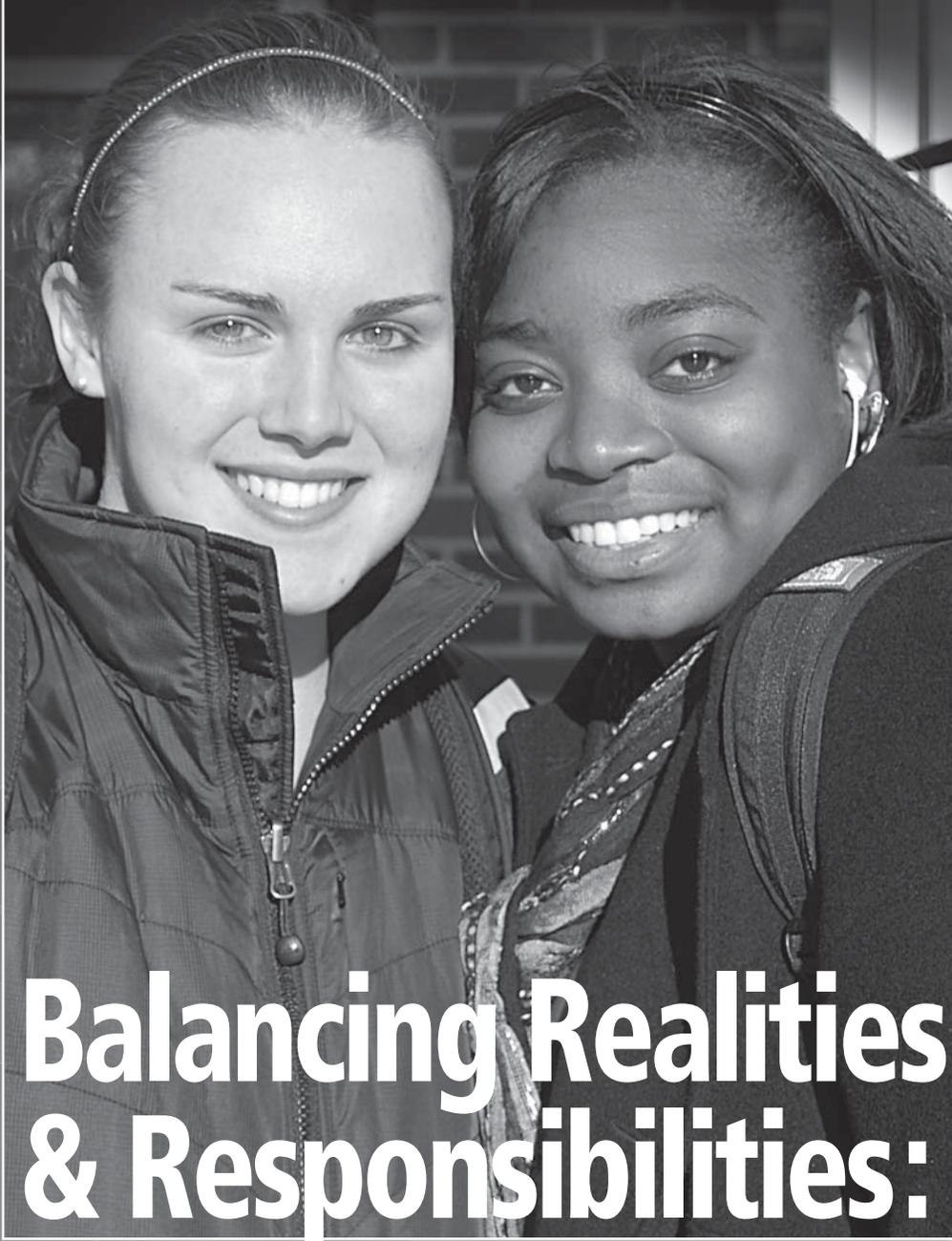
Creating a budget in the middle of one of this country's most severe economic downturns in generations posed unprecedented challenges, and the Board of Education has responded with the reluctant decision to cut the equivalent of 25 staff positions, as described inside.

When our state government does not have the money to send residents their income tax refunds

Continued next page

"Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot. Right now is the time his bones are being formed ... and his senses are being developed. To him we cannot answer 'Tomorrow.' His name is Today."

Gabriela Mistral, Poet & Nobel Laureate



Balancing Realities & Responsibilities:

A Budget for Tough Times

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in a timely manner nor to pay its current obligations to schools, road construction projects, and state workers on time, it is clear that the entire state has entered uncharted fiscal territory.

Multi-year problem

BH-BL Board of Education members see 2010-11 as year two in what will be at least a three year fiscal crisis for New Yorkers. This is a multi-year crisis, that demands a multi-year response to protect BH-BL core programs and keep

them as strong as possible.

In year one (the current school year), BH-BL took the unprecedented step of cutting over \$1 million and more than 16 full time equivalent (FTE) staff positions. New York State used federal stimulus money to pay many of its obligations, including state aid to schools, and it promised to spread that federal stimulus money over both 2009-10 and 2010-11.

This month as we prepare to enter year two, the state deficit continues to

grow, and the NY economy continues to struggle. In response, the proposed BH-BL 2010-11 school budget includes significant and painful reductions.

And what will happen in year three (2011-12) when the federal stimulus money has all been spent? No one knows the answer to this question, but while we wait for the economy to rebound, board members feel it is their responsibility to weigh both long-term and short-time needs and to budget even more conservatively than usual in this unprecedented situation.

Q How is the budget changing to respond to the economic crisis? A How were reductions made?

Making significant budget reductions in a school district annually documented to be one of the highest achieving districts in an 11-county area* was not easy. It took months of work by administrators and school board members. It also took extensive input from community members and staff.

Here is a summary of the process used and the thinking behind the proposed budget.

Even before Governor Paterson's proposal to cut aid to BH-BL by 8.5 percent or \$1.6 million, Board of Education members had been hearing from more and more residents about the economic pain they were feeling. Board members knew this could not be a "business as usual" year.

The personal hardships our residents are experiencing are supported by state and federal data. Wall Street numbers may be improving, but the unemployment rate continues to be much higher than usual. Also according to the US Department of Commerce, in 2009 Americans' personal income actually declined for the first time in more than 40 years. Nationally, in 2009 personal income declined by 1.72 percent, and in New York State, it declined by twice as much, 3.43 percent. This translates into real pain for both the state budget and our residents' budgets.

Where and how to cut?

The challenge in cutting school expenses for 2010-11 is that BH-BL had already cut so much to create the 2009-10 budget. We already lowered thermostats, reduced paper and duplicating costs, froze equipment and supply expenses, consolidated bus runs, eliminated fourth-level sports teams, and cut 16.8 full time equivalent staff positions.

How could the board reduce 2010-11 school costs and their tax impact significantly while continuing to protect core academic programs? Board and staff members launched several approaches to this issue (some of which are explained later in this newsletter). They decided to:

1. Lobby state legislators to restore aid to schools.
2. Use more of the fund balance to reduce taxes.
3. Search for new ways to cut operating expenses.
4. Reduce staffing and services in ways that will lessen the impact on students, and
5. Involve more residents and staff in weighing proposed cuts.

Roll-over 2010-11 budget numbers were announced in January, and Superintendent Jim Schultz and district administrators began meeting to identify and prioritize potential staffing and program reductions.

Three community Budget Forums were held in February and March to encourage public involvement. The forums were also broadcast live in an interactive format online. This enabled hundreds of residents and staff to participate and share their opinions with the school board whether they



* Every summer the Business Review newspaper ranks local school districts on the basis of state test scores and graduation results. BH-BL always ranks in the top 10. For 2009 we were 5th out of 85 districts. (Business Review, June 19, 2009, page 18)

attended in person or watched and typed in their responses online from their home or other computer.

A worksheet listing potential reductions was posted on the district website and shared at the forums, Finance Committee meetings, and other meetings to collect input. The list of potential cuts was arranged in prioritized tiers so that everyone could see what it would take to reduce school costs to a zero spending increase or

a zero tax increase, for instance. As input on the worksheet was received and researched, Mr. Schultz revised the worksheet, and updated versions were posted several times as the board moved closer to finishing the budget. (These and other steps in the budget process can be viewed at www.bhbl.org/District/Board/budgetintro.htm)

"Deciding on which cuts to recommend was one of the toughest things

I've ever had to do in my 38 years here at BH-BL," says Mr. Schultz. "While I believe the cuts are necessary in the current economy, they will undeniably change what we can offer children. The input and reactions we received from staff, students and residents during this process were a big help in creating what I hope will be a balanced answer to a very tough situation."

Q What's happening with the fund balance?

A Just as smart parents save money for emergencies and for future needs like retirement and their children's college education, school districts set aside money to handle emergencies and known future obligations.

Some money is set aside in funds designated for a specific purpose, such as the BH-BL fund to pay Workers Compensation and unemployment claims. (In fact, having a designated fund to draw upon and self-funding these claims saves BH-BL over \$400,000 a year compared to the cost of buying Workers Compensation and unemployment insurance.)

BH-BL also has approximately \$2 million in an undesignated fund balance or "rainy day" fund. This is the result of both good luck and careful economies to try to grow the fund balance over the past 10 years.

The undesignated fund balance would be higher now had our district not been hit with several unexpected emergencies in the last two years,

particularly the \$80,000 cost to refinish three gym floors due to a defective batch of floor finish (whose manufacturer we have sued) and the \$500,000 we were forced to spend to comply with DEC regulations and replace the bus garage wash bay drainage system.

The "rainy day" is here

Typically \$550,000 of the available fund balance is designated and used to balance the operating budget each year. After extensive discussion, Board of Education members have concluded that the rainy day we have been saving for is here now and that more of the undesignated fund balance should be applied to the 2010-11 budget to hold down the tax increase.

As shown in the Revenue chart on page 8, the school board is applying \$1 million or half of the undesignated fund balance to the 2010-11 budget, and plans to save \$1 million to apply to the 2011-12 budget as well.

"Using this much of the fund balance does carry a risk," says Mr. Schultz, "but



it's hard to imagine a worse economy than we face now. 2010-11 and 2011-12 are the storm we have been saving for, and our residents need help with their tax bills."

While this plan would use up the currently available fund balance, the district does have opportunities to regenerate some of this money. Looking ahead, Mr. Schultz anticipates some savings from new health insurance options over the next several years. Other possibilities include savings from a mild winter, lower than projected fuel costs, or receipt of grants that could cover some existing costs.

Q How are BH-BL staff pulling together to save money?

A While the worst fiscal environment in years erodes the financial support schools receive from the state, BH-BL staff are working together to find new ways to cut operating expenses, to take on more

responsibilities, and to make concessions regarding contractual benefits.

Lower costs can come from small things, like shutting off computers when not in use, copying on both sides of paper, and making sure lights are off

when rooms are vacant, all of which are standard practice in our schools.

Lower costs can also come from cooperative purchasing of supplies and services. For more than 20 years our Business Office has organized the joint



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purchase of a year's supply of copier paper for a group of local school districts at rock bottom prices. In fact, this BH-BL model has proven to be so economical that the seven Schenectady County school districts have now expanded it to get lower prices on the joint purchase of cleaning supplies, pool chemicals and bus parts.

We also save \$80,000 - \$100,000 per year by participating in consortia to purchase electricity and diesel fuel at below market prices.

Staff unions, particularly the Teachers Association, CSEA (representing

support staff), and the Administrators Association, have worked together to investigate savings in health care. They reduced health insurance costs by \$111,000 in 2009-10 by proposing that fewer health insurance providers be offered to staff. Currently they are recommending the addition of a Medicare Advantage plan that will begin saving us money in 2010-11 and has the potential to save more than \$200,000 a year once it has been fully implemented.

Staff concessions

With the severity of the fiscal environment, recent negotiations with bargaining units have taken a different direction. Give-backs of benefits were a part of 2009 settlements with administrators and support staff. An analysis by the conservative Empire Center for NY State Policy ranks BH-BL's administrative costs as 75th lowest out of 76 districts in the Capital Region, reinforcing the lowest settlement with that bargaining unit in years.

Superintendent Jim Schultz agreed to re-open his contract and gave back four days of salary for days worked in the current year as well as giving back benefits for 2010-11.

Making do with less

Just as families in our community have tightened their belts and budgets and are making do with less, BH-BL staff are feeling the impact of the job cuts we have already experienced and will experience even more in 2010-11.

Staff are pulling together to cover delivery of program for our students. Teachers are taking on larger class sizes, and are doing more monitoring of student safety in the halls. Custodians have added cleaning routines to fight H1N1 germs to their daily responsibilities despite having fewer custodians per school than last year. Administrators are taking on additional managerial, supervisory and clerical responsibilities as other positions have been reduced.

As we explore the impact of more staffing reductions for next year, staff, students and community members have started coming forward to offer their services as volunteers to replace the career fair being cut from the budget, to help elementary librarians supervise students checking out books, and to raise funds for athletic services being cut. Staff understand how serious New York's financial situation is and are pulling together to be part of the solution.

Q What reductions does the budget include? **A** How will these impact students and learning?

Since BH-BL is facing a reduction of up to \$1.6 million in state aid next year, going with a roll-over budget that funded all existing staff and programs would have resulted in a tax levy increase of 6.9 percent. This was not acceptable to the Board of Education.

Instead Board members used the process described on page 2 to identify more than \$1.5 million in reductions. This resulted in the 2010-11 proposed budget of \$53,428,188, which is an increase of only \$59,328 or 0.1 percent from the current year.

After three months of discussion, school board members approved

a package of 47 specific reductions spread across district departments, schools and services in a careful effort to share the pain and lessen the impact on students. These include part-time and full-time staffing cut-backs with a net loss of 25 full time equivalents (FTE) positions.

Other reductions were made in spending for services, programs and supplies. The complete list of 47 cuts made by the Board is posted on the district website (see www.bhbl.org/District/Board/budgetintro.htm) and summarized below.

Note: 0.2 FTE of teaching time equates to one secondary class section. Also, as administrators work to implement these cuts over the next several months, some adjustments will be made — not in the dollars being saved, but in the specific ways that reductions are implemented.

Reductions include:

- ▶ Elementary enrollment projections for next fall indicate that we will be able to maintain current class size averages with the loss of two regular class teachers and one special education teacher across the three schools.

- ▶ A slight decrease in middle school enrollment will ease the impact of teacher reductions there. The loss of 3.1 FTE teachers is expected to result in slightly higher numbers in grade 6 regular classes, in grade 7 music classes, and in academic intervention classes.
- ▶ Our high school currently has 1,140 pupils. With an extra 30 pupils expected there next fall and the loss of three teachers, class sizes will increase in some instances. Another way that teacher reductions will be addressed is by not offering some electives, or offering them only every other year.
- ▶ Although BH-BL already has the lowest interscholastic sports budget in the Suburban Council and 4th level teams were eliminated in 2009-10, the 2010-11 sports budget includes further reductions. Officiating and transportation costs will be reduced by cutting one scrimmage per varsity team and holding fewer non-league competitions.
- ▶ Like many businesses, BH-BL is cutting back on middle management. Many of the district's 21 administrators will be assuming additional managerial, supervisory and clerical tasks next year as other staffing is reduced or eliminated. Secondary school teacher leader assignments are being eliminated over 2009-10 and 2010-11. The Middle School

Positions Reduced in the Proposed 2010-11 Budget

Teachers	Support Staff	Administrators
(currently 274 FTE)	(currently 292 positions)	(currently 21 FTE)
3.5% of current staff	4.9% of current staff	5.7% of current staff

Dean of Students position (already reduced in 2009-10) will be further reduced to 0.4 FTE. Two K-12 district department head positions will be combined next year to create a joint Math/Science department head to supervise curriculum, instruction and assessment in those subjects.

- ▶ The loss of a part-time librarian will leave each school with one full-time librarian. The elementary schools are also each losing their library clerk and are currently evaluating several models to best accommodate this change.
- ▶ Several support staff aide and monitor positions are being reduced. Although BH-BL will also be losing its School Resource Officer, Trooper Healey, due to cutbacks in the state budget, the high school will still employ three security monitors (two of whom are retired police officers), who patrol school hallways, fields and entrances.
- ▶ Other cutbacks include a loss of \$1,000 per school in money for

out-of-district field trips. Staff will be seeking alternate ways to provide students with enrichment, such as more arts-in-education grants.

- ▶ Both elementary and secondary summer school offerings will be reduced. This means that some students who want to attend summer school may have to do so in a neighboring district.
- ▶ Reductions have been made in equipment and supply budget codes across the district, even though these codes have already been frozen for the past two years.
- ▶ Board members reluctantly decided to delay replacing the district's 13-year-old dump truck/sander/snow plow for yet another year.
- ▶ Other support staff reductions include the further loss of 1.5 FTE custodial positions, 1.4 FTE clerical positions, and six teacher assistants.

Q How will the proposed budget impact taxes?

A As this newsletter goes to press on April 20, we still have no state budget, which means that state aid — roughly one-third of BH-BL's revenue — is only an estimate. Gov. Paterson has proposed reducing aid to our district by \$1.6 million. Given the growing severity of the state deficit, even if the Legislature is eventually able to allocate a bit more aid to schools than the Governor has proposed, a sizable drop in aid from the current year appears likely.

The proposed school budget is increasing by only 0.1 percent (\$59,328), but taxes will need to increase a greater amount to make up for the loss of state aid. We project that September's total tax levy will need to increase by 2.2 percent.

Another way of saying this is that property taxes in the district's four towns will need to increase on an average of 2.2 percent to balance the proposed school budget.



Equalization rates

So what would a tax levy increase of 2.2 percent mean for BH-BL homeowners? Calculating tax increases is complicated by the fact that our school district contains parts of four towns.

Each year the actual tax increase varies from town to town due to equalization rates that the NY State Office of Real Property Services (ORPS) announces 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, for the fact that one town’s assessments may be more recent than the other towns’, and for the fact that property values don’t rise equally fast in all towns within the school district.

For instance, in BH-BL if ORPS determines that property values have risen more in one town than another in the past year, the tax increase in that town may be somewhat higher than the 2.2 percent average while the rate in an-

other town may be lower than average. This information is typically not shared with us until August.

Equalization differences tend to even out over several years, but they make it impossible to predict actual tax increases in each town accurately. Even the median assessed value of homes in the BH-BL portion of each town varies widely, as shown in the chart below.

The school district plays no role in determining what portion of the tax burden is placed on any one town or any one property owner.

The State ORPS office sets equalization rates that determine the portion of the total tax levy paid by each town, and the assessor in each town calculates individual assessments that determine how much is paid by each property owner.

2009 Median Assessments per Town & Estimated 2010 Tax Increases

Ballston:	\$204,350	\$90
Charlton:	\$152,600	\$89
Clifton Park:	\$101,300*	\$68
Glenville:	\$170,800	\$78

Understanding this chart: *If your home is in the town of Glenville and on last September’s tax bill its total ASSESSED value was \$170,800, your school tax bill could increase by \$78 this September. This is the best estimate the school district can make given existing data. Calculations will change when ORPS announces new equalization rates in August.*

**Reminder: Some town assessments are more up to date than others. Median assessment figures are calculated directly from the tax rolls and are based not on the entire town but only on the portion of the town within the BH-BL district.*

Q What happens if BH-BL gets additional state aid?

A Once again lacking an on-time state budget, this spring Board of Education members had to work with an estimate for the amount of state aid BH-BL would receive in 2010-11. Given the fact that the state deficit continues to grow and the Assembly and Senate appear far apart on solving NY’s fiscal crisis, the BH-BL Board felt it was wise to use conservative revenue projections. Therefore, revenue and tax figures given in this newsletter assume we will lose \$1.6 million in aid as proposed by the Governor.

often take a three-pronged approach to using that money. They like to give some back to the residents in a lower tax levy, put some aside as a hedge against higher taxes in the following year, and put some into program restoration. However, this is not a typical year.

As drastic as this spring’s problems appear, Board members are concerned that next year — when the state has no more federal stimulus money to rely on — our situation could be even worse. In a discussion of what they would do if we receive more aid than projected, Board members agreed they would put the majority of it into restoring the fund balance so as to avoid a higher tax increase in 2011.

What if we get more aid?

In a typical year, if we get more aid than estimated, Board members



Q What happens if the budget is defeated? A Would a contingent budget be different this year?

If the proposed budget is defeated at the polls on May 18, state law gives the school board three options. They can:

1. Put the same budget before the voters a second time,
2. Put a revised budget before the voters, or
3. Go directly to a contingent budget. If the voters defeat the budget a second time, the Board must go to a contingent budget.

The maximum size allowed by law for a contingent budget is tied to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increase. This year the contingent budget cap based on CPI is 0% plus other factors.

After some confusion in 2009 about contingent budget rules, the State Education Department has now clarified that a contingent budget must always

be LOWER than the proposed budget that was defeated at the polls.

BH-BL Board of Education members have discussed what they would do if the proposed budget is defeated this spring. Here are some key points on how a 2010-11 contingent budget would impact BH-BL programs:

- ▶ A BH-BL 2010-11 contingent budget would NOT restore the programs and staff being cut in the proposed budget; in fact it would have to be even lower than the proposed budget.
- ▶ While the MAXIMUM legally allowable contingent budget for BH-BL in 2010-11 would be \$53,389,903, Board of Education members have indicated they would consider going below this figure since it is so close to the proposed 2010-11 budget. Some areas the Board would ex-

plore for further reductions include third-level interscholastic sports teams, extra-curricular activities, and elementary computer assistants.

- ▶ Contingent budgets cannot include money for equipment or new capital projects.
- ▶ The district would have to raise the fees charged for public use of school buildings and grounds under the law.
- ▶ The district would be subject to various limits and controls on how the money within the contingent budget is spent. These rules tend to make it harder to pass a budget in the following years and harder to do multi-year planning. In other words, a contingent budget would substitute state rules for the Board's own strategic efforts to cut costs with the least damage to our educational programs.

Q Will homeowners still receive STAR exemptions? A How about other tax exemptions?

Yes, homeowners will still receive property tax exemptions under the School Tax Relief (STAR) program this year. The Legislature has eliminated the "Middle Class STAR rebate" and has been gradually reducing the value of STAR exemptions on your school tax bill for a number of years, but the exemption is still in effect. Here's how it works:

The **Basic STAR exemption** is available for owner-occupied, primary residences regardless of the owners' ages and incomes. Basic STAR will exempt the following amounts of the assessed value of your home from school taxes:

- ▶ Ballston: \$33,720
- ▶ Charlton: \$25,680
- ▶ Clifton Park: \$22,230
- ▶ Glenville: \$26,460

This exemption means that the state will pay an average of \$643 of BH-BL residents' school tax bill this fall.

The **Enhanced STAR exemption** is available on the primary residence of residents age 65 and up with yearly incomes below the state standard. The 2010 standard is an adjusted gross income of \$74,700 on senior citizens' 2008 tax return.

Enhanced STAR will exempt the following amounts of the assessed value of qualifying senior citizens' home from school taxes:

- ▶ Ballston: \$67,560
- ▶ Charlton: \$51,440
- ▶ Clifton Park: \$44,530
- ▶ Glenville: \$51,090

This exemption means the state will pay an average of \$1,278 of these residents' school tax bill in September.

Other tax relief options

BH-BL residents over the age of 65 with an income of \$37,400 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 \$37,400.

Applications for either exemption must be filed with your town assessor's office and must be renewed annually.

Call your town assessor (below) or visit your town website if you have questions about STAR or other exemptions, about how income limits are calculated, or wish to apply for any of these tax exemptions.

- ▶ Ballston: June Maniacek
885-8502, ext. 20
- ▶ Charlton: Robert Cromie
384-0152
- ▶ Clifton Park: Walter Smead
371-6460
- ▶ Glenville: Darlene Abbatecola
688-1200, ext. 403

Expenditures by Category

CATEGORY	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	PROPOSED 2010-11	% INCREASE '09-10 to '10-11
Staff Compensation & Benefits	\$38,091,402	\$39,508,563	\$40,360,072	\$40,382,475	0.06%
BOCES/Special Ed. Contracts	3,457,394	3,570,942	3,791,367	3,827,406	0.9%
Equipment & Furniture	262,482	299,381	299,381	64,554	-78.4%
Textbooks, Software & Supplies	1,405,342	1,637,420	1,637,420	1,658,778	1.3%
Utilities & General Insurance	1,949,389	2,084,150	2,171,550	2,230,195	2.7%
Debt Service	3,883,419	3,904,779	3,928,536	3,949,579	0.5%
Renovation, Maintenance & Other Services	1,194,202	1,235,109	1,180,534	1,315,201	11.4%
Total Expenditure	\$50,243,630	\$52,240,344	\$53,368,860	\$53,428,188	0.11%

Expenditures by Service

SERVICE	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	PROPOSED 2010-11	% INCREASE '09-10 to '10-11
Instruction	\$33,641,353	\$34,846,912	\$35,766,519	\$35,900,884	0.4%
Pupil Services (Library, Athletics, Guidance & Health)	3,241,560	3,318,004	3,381,178	3,260,502	-3.6%
Operation & Maintenance	3,145,246	3,221,672	3,309,797	3,227,952	-2.5%
Utilities & General Insurance	1,949,389	2,084,150	2,171,550	2,230,195	2.7%
Transportation	2,804,389	3,214,075	3,170,747	3,184,413	0.4%
Debt Service	3,883,419	3,904,779	3,928,536	3,949,579	0.5%
Central Support	1,578,274	1,650,752	1,640,534	1,674,663	2.1%
Total Expenditure	\$50,243,630	\$52,240,344	\$53,368,860	\$53,428,188	0.11%

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.

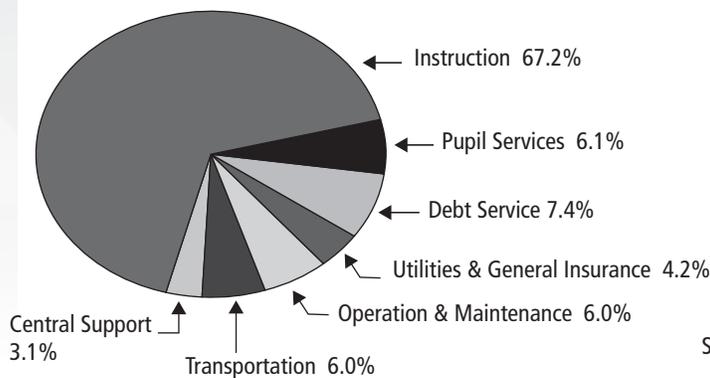
Revenue Summary

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	PROPOSED 2010-11	CHANGE '09-10 to '10-11
State Aid	\$18,836,577	\$19,083,065	\$19,315,300	\$18,109,553	-\$1,205,747*
Local Property Tax	29,948,153	31,556,379	32,306,060	33,386,135	1,080,075**
Tuition & Admissions	147,900	122,900	133,000	137,000	4,000
Rents, Investments, Refunds	641,000	725,000	602,500	680,500	78,000
Federal Medicaid Reimbursement	170,000	170,000	105,000	115,000	10,000
Year End Fund Balance	500,000	583,000	907,000	1,000,000	93,000
Total Revenue	\$50,243,630	\$52,240,344	\$53,368,860	\$53,428,188	\$59,328

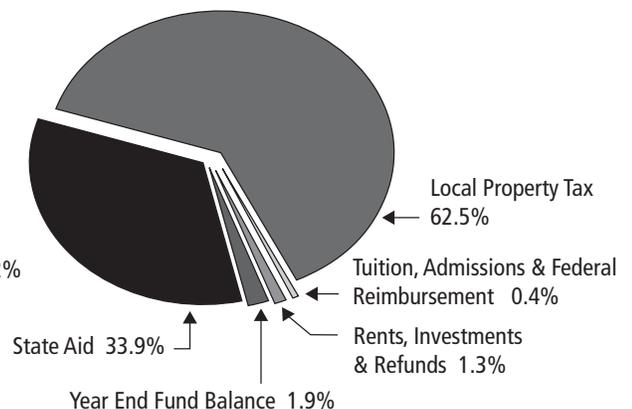
* Assumes a \$1.6 million decrease in operating aid as per the Governor's proposal and a small increase in building aid for 2010-11.

** \$730,075 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 \$4.5 million of the property tax levy will be paid by the state under the STAR program. See page 7.

Expenditures by Service



Revenue Summary



Q What else will we be voting about on May 18?

A The Board of Education is seeking the voters' approval to borrow up to \$350,000 to replace seven of the oldest vehicles in our fleet in 2010-11. This coincidentally is the same amount we are using to purchase four larger buses in the current year.

With a fleet of 73 buses to maintain, the district's long-standing policy has been to replace a few of the oldest each year. The vehicles to be purchased in 2010-11 will be:

- ▶ Two 66-passenger buses
- ▶ Two 20-passenger buses
- ▶ One 7-passenger van
- ▶ Two 4-passenger sedans.

The van and sedans are used to transport students to private and parochial schools within specific mile limits as required by law. Switching from 30-passenger to 20-passenger buses for our mid-sized vehicles is being done because the 20-passenger models get better mileage and cost less to purchase.

The buses being replaced are 10 - 11 years old and have already accumulated between 86,000 and 120,000 miles. Beyond these limits, vehicles typically become prohibitively expensive to repair given the ultra-strict state safety codes for buses and other vehicles used to carry children. The old buses will either be sold or traded in, depending on which option is the better deal.

Approximately 70% of the cost of buses is reimbursed by state aid. Payment for these buses would be spread over five years beginning in 2011-12, and would be phased in as payments on other buses are complete. Annually funding buses in this manner results in NO increase in the budget or taxes.



What does the future hold for BH-BL?

"Ensuring opportunities for learning, personal growth and social responsibility"

Those words are highlighted in a burgundy sign with a Spartan logo that hangs near the front entrance of all BH-BL schools. Their intent is not just to announce the district's mission statement but to remind students, staff, parents and visitors alike that education is serious business here — that parents and taxpayers expect a great deal from this school district and that our mission is central to the community's health and future.

The 2008-09 School Report Cards and other data published recently by the State Education Department provide evidence of the effectiveness of BH-BL programs. When a number of high schools are struggling to reach the state's graduation rate benchmark of 55 percent, in 2009 BH-BL achieved a graduation rate of 93 percent, the highest in Saratoga County and the Suburban Council.

The question in many people's minds is whether results like this can continue when the 2010-11 proposed budget marks the second year in a row that the Board of Education has cut school programs and staffing by more than \$1 million. Even though the reductions were carefully chosen to minimize

damage to instructional programs, will school be the same under these circumstances?

No, it can't be the same. The loss of roughly 4 percent of BH-BL staff will be felt in many ways, from slightly larger class sizes and more students who can't get their first choice of electives to the loss of some services and a greater use of volunteers. However, can student achievement remain high under these circumstances? Yes, we believe it can and it will, given the kind of dedicated students, parents and staff who live and work here.

The district mission statement also reminds us that teaching children social responsibility includes modeling responsibility ourselves. Members of the BH-BL Board of Education feel it is their responsibility, in light of the unprecedented economic pain our state and community are suffering, to make significant reductions in school programs to reduce taxes.

The Board has actively listened to input and reactions from staff, students and residents over the past several months in an effort to develop a budget that balances fiscal restraint and a commitment to high quality schools. May 18 is your opportunity to give the question of the future of the BH-BL Schools your thoughtful consideration and make your opinion count.

Board of Education Candidates

BH-BL residents will elect two members of the Board of Education on May 18. Board members all run at large and serve a three-year term of office at no pay. Three candidates filed nominating petitions for seats on the board this April. The two highest vote getters will be elected.

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 **Tuesday, May 4**, in the High School Library.



William Farmer

William Farmer is seeking his first term on the Board. He has been a district resident for 15 years and employed by Creatacor, Inc., in Clifton Park for 20 years. As vice president for client services, William supervises 11 Creatacor staff members and oversees marketing functions. He volunteers with the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce, has served on the BH-BL Citizens Review Committee to evaluate critical school infrastructure needs and has coached T-ball. He and his wife live in Glenville, where their two sons attend Pashley Elementary.

"For the last two years, our district has struggled with a sagging economy and a state government that is providing less and less. The response of the district includes a raise in taxes and a decrease in services. Both the taxpayer and more importantly, our children are suffering. The children spend 13 years in the school system, each year represents almost 8% of their academic career. Wasting just one of these precious years can't be tolerated so we must maximize their experience every year and provide each student with the appropriate challenge in order for them to achieve later in life. Today's children are our future and we have a responsibility to provide the highest caliber education we can offer.

But we need a new approach because the current model is broken. Continual tax increases are not sustainable. Rising costs and lower quality are not in the best interests of anyone. Quality teachers are the key to education, there is no substitute. With the current budget, we will have lost almost 20 teaching positions the last two years. While BH-BL is currently a top area district, if we keep cutting programs and teachers, our rank will fall and more importantly, our children will pay the price.

In a downward budget cycle, we need to take more advantage of shared services, not less. We need to look at the entire system and develop creative, new approaches for spending that improve the educational system. The time to re-evaluate and change the system is now. Time and money are not on our side. As Albert Einstein is famously credited for saying, 'Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.' We need creative solutions, not the same old cuts.

I care deeply about our children's future and I respectfully request your vote on election day."



Lee-Ann Mertzlufft

Lee-Ann Mertzlufft is seeking her first term on the Board of Education. A BH-BL resident for four years, she is the director/owner of Options With Learning, LLC, a 10-person agency that has provided services to students with special education needs for 17 years. A Girl Scout leader for 10 years, Lee-Ann is a member of the BH-BL Business & Professional Association, the Town of Ballston Ethics Committee, and a past member of the Ballston Community Library Strategic Planning Committee. She and her husband live in Ballston Lake. They have one child at the BH-BL high school, one at the middle school, and a preschooler.

"Superior BH-BL Schools are central and vital to our community and way of life – we all know that inferior schools shortly lead to inferior community – nobody wants that.

Unfortunately, we all are living through an unprecedented combination of events – deep recession, lack of clear, responsible leadership at the state government funding level, already high taxes ... the list goes on. Closer to home, our district faces immediate issues of shrinking revenue, critically aging infrastructure, projected increasing enrollment and pre-negotiated cost of services increases for years to come.

It is my belief that both present day financial realities combined with the opportunity to take advantage of new, innovative technologies will push school districts to places we have not yet explored. Can we cut costs AND advance our educational system? Yes. It will require new and different thinking at every level and from every constituency in our district – from parents of school children, teachers, administrators, tax payers and from our State's leadership.

I believe that my nearly 20 years experience as an educator and director of an independent, for-profit, educational agency leaves me uniquely qualified to help explore opportunities and implement solutions to some of the district's most pressing needs. Knowledge, drive and courage are required in difficult times – I have these and ask for your vote."



Robert Speck

Robert Speck is completing his 36th year on the Board of Education and has been president of the board multiple times. A retired GE engineer and manager, Bob is a former president of the Stevens PTA and the Capital Region BOCES Board. He also served 10 years on the board of the NY State School Boards Association. He has earned awards from both the

"This is an exhilarating and challenging time to be a BH-BL school board member. We must continue to exercise our role as a policy-making body and support our superintendent in the administration and operation of our school district.

One measure of our success as a team of educators, students and community is the Business Review's 'School Report' issued in June 2009. This report ranked BH-BL #5 of 85 districts in the Capital Region. BH-BL was also highest ranking district with an average needs to resources ratio as a measure of the effective use of our resources. Congratulations to our staff, students and community on this achievement.

At the PTA Founders Day dinner in February, Mr. Schultz made available to the community a paper titled 'Who will carry the torch next for BH-BL?' Prior to this I was considering

Speck statement continued

local and national PTA. Bob and his wife live in Burnt Hills. Their four children are all BH-BL graduates, and three grandchildren now attend district schools.

not being a candidate for another term. After discussions with my family, I decided to run again. Within about two days, I obtained the required signatures and submitted my petition.

Budget development has been an open process, involving many people accepting the challenge of difficult decisions and a demanding schedule of meetings and community decisions. I am proud of our Board of Education, district personnel and community in accepting the challenge of tough times as something we can all build on in the future. In summary, I believe the message of our current focus on Culture – Team – Data presents the challenge for district and community. We have experienced difficult situations before, by working together we can regain our long-standing continuous improvement plans to promote excellence. I do want to be part of that challenge.”

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2009-10 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2010-11 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2010-11 School Year*
Total budgeted amount	\$53,368,860	\$53,428,188	\$53,389,903
Increase (decrease) for the 2010-11 school year		\$59,328	\$21,043
Percentage increase (decrease) in each proposed budget		0.11%	0.04%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		- 0.4%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2010-11 school year		\$33,386,135	\$33,347,850
1. Administrative Component	\$5,752,663	\$5,717,492	\$5,715,292
2. Program Component	\$38,548,365	\$38,648,706	\$38,617,546
3. Capital Component	\$9,067,832	\$9,061,990	\$9,057,065

* Assumptions made in projecting a Contingency Budget for 2010-11, should the proposed budget be defeated: While this may be adjusted, we assume that the proposed budget would be reduced by removing non-contingent expenses for equipment and new capital project costs. As the law requires, debt service is excluded from the calculation of contingency budget costs. See page 7.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR** Exemption Savings:

	Budget Proposed for the 2010-11 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$643 (est.)

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2010-2011 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 18, 2010, 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 open to vote by voting machine.

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

The box on the left 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 page 8.

DEFINITIONS

- 1. Administrative costs** include the salaries and benefits of administrators and supervisors, 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, general insurance, 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, fire insurance, tax certiorari, and other court-ordered expenses.



Board of Education

Joe Pericone,
President

John Blowers
Elizabeth Herkenham
Timothy Kelliher
Patre Kuziak
James Maughan
Robert Speck

Superintendent

Jim Schultz

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Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake

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12 BHBL Burnt Hills-Ballston Lake Central School District

REMEMBER to VOTE!

- ▶ Tuesday, May 18
- ▶ 7:00 AM - 9:00 PM
- ▶ High School Gymnasium

BALLOT ITEMS:

- ▶ The 2010-11 Proposed Budget
- ▶ Bus Purchase Referendum
- ▶ Board of Education Candidates

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 18, 2010, if you registered for or voted in either a school election or a general election anytime since May 2006. 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 am and 4:00 pm, Monday-Friday, through May 13. Or you may register in person or by mail with your County Board of Elections through May 13.

Absentee Ballots

Registered voters may vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to appear at the polling place on May 18.

To receive an absentee ballot, voters must obtain an application from Clerk of the Board Jacqueline St. Onge at the district office. (Or the application form can be downloaded and printed from the BH-BL website at www.bhbl.org/district/board/voterinfo.htm)

The application must be returned to Ms. St. Onge 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 am to 4:00 pm.

Absentee ballots will be counted only if they are returned to the Clerk of the Board no later than 5:00 pm on election day. For more information, contact Christy Multer at 399-9141, ext. 5017 or Ms. St. Onge at 399-9141, ext. 5025.

