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focus

May
2011

Preparing World Class Citizens

The 2011-2012 budget

South Colonie residents to vote May 17th on proposed \$91.1 million school spending plan

South Colonie Central School District residents will go to the polls on Tuesday, May 17th, to vote on a proposed \$91.1 million budget for the 2011-12 school year. The budget continues to support South Colonie's key educational initiatives despite a second straight year of cuts in state aid to the district over the current school year.



The polls will be open from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. at the district's five elementary schools (see voting locations on page 2).

In what has been yet another challenging budget development process again this year, the school board adopted a proposed budget in

April totaling \$91,177,000. The budget represents a 1.99 percent spending increase over the current school year (see complete figures on page 3). Though equalization rates will not be known until August, the district estimates about a 2.93 percent school residential and business property tax increase next year based on the budget submitted to voters. This means that the average Colonie homeowner whose property is assessed at \$150,000 would pay an additional \$105.79 in school property taxes next year or about \$8.82 more per month to finance education. This is a base increase and does not reflect any STAR exemption savings a homeowner may be entitled to.

A variety of factors hampered the 2011-12 budget development process, which got underway in

Continued on page 2 ... budget

NEW BUDGET AT A GLANCE

- **Total 2011-12 budget: \$91,177,000**
- **Budget-to-budget increase: 1.99%**
- **State aid decrease of: \$530,898**
- **Estimated South Colonie property tax levy increase of 2.93%**
- **District continues to work toward academic excellence despite facing major reduction in state aid**



The Sand Creek Middle School Cast & Crew student actors staged Willy Wonka as their spring musical this year.

Who can vote on Tuesday, May 17?

You are eligible to vote if you are a U.S. citizen, 18 years or older, and a resident of the school district for at least 30 days prior to the vote. Residents may vote at any location listed below.

Voting Time

11 AM to 9 PM

Voting Sites

FOREST PARK ELEMENTARY

100 Forest Drive (869-3006)

ROESSLEVILLE ELEMENTARY

100 California Ave. (459-2157)

SADDLEWOOD ELEMENTARY

100 Lorelee Drive (456-2608)

SHAKER ROAD ELEMENTARY

512 Shaker Road (458-1440)

VEEDER ELEMENTARY

25 Veeder Drive (869-4661)

PLEASE NOTE:
All of the voting will take place in the elementary schools. Also, there is NO voting at the high school or either middle school.

... Budget

Continued from page 1

January with several public planning sessions. Due to the recession and New York State's current fiscal crisis, 2011-12 will mark the third straight year the district experienced a downturn in state support for education. This includes another state aid loss in 2011-12 of nearly \$531,000, on the heels of a \$3.7 million state aid loss for the current school year, and flat state aid in 2009-10. Making up for those lost revenues has been very challenging for the district as costs continue to rise.

As a result of the massive loss in state funding for public education, the district has been forced to make about \$2.3 million in reductions to overall expenses for next school year. This includes cutting administrative positions, reducing teaching positions and restructuring support positions (*for a full list of reductions see page 4*). The district will seek to reduce most of these positions through attrition and the shifting of personnel.

Additionally, the district will continue to carefully apply part of its fund balance next year to offset rising expenses and possible further reductions in state aid.

There is good news

Throughout this difficult time, South Colonie has stayed "student focused" in its budget decision making, said Superintendent Jonathan Buhner, maintaining quality programs that will help students perform academically. This includes maintaining reasonable class sizes, Universal Pre-Kindergarten and Full Day Kindergarten at their current levels, Academic Intervention Services and support for students with special needs. The district will also provide early literacy/reading support for K-4 students during the summer and implement new after school support opportunities at the elementary level next school year to encourage youngsters to explore future studies and careers in the fields of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

Did you know?

This is the third straight year South Colonie has experienced a downturn in state support for education. This includes flat state aid in 2009-2010, reduced state aid (- \$3.7 million) for 2010-2011, and reduced state aid in 2011-2012 (-\$531,000). This has made it increasingly difficult for school districts to maintain academic gains and important initiatives while constructing budgets which hold down local property taxes.

Looking ahead

South Colonie is already bracing for another difficult budget planning process for the 2012-13 school year. The Federal Education Jobs Funds aid, which is a federal grant that totals over \$1.1 million, will expire in 2011-12 and state funding for education could again be reduced in the next New York State budget.

"Due to the overall uncertainty related to the economy and state aid, the District will need to take a multi-year approach to budgeting," Buhner said. "During this recession, and despite losing million of dollars in state aid, we have worked very hard to keep our tax rate as low as possible. Going forward in these difficult economic times, we must continue to be thoughtful about how we use every resource."

Estimated revenues

	2010-11	2011-12	Dollar Change
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 5,670,000	\$ 5,200,000	- 470,000
Continuing Education	78,250	78,200	- 50
Interest on Investments	200,000	100,000	- 100,000
Miscellaneous	1,709,800	1,900,400	+ 190,600
Rental-BOCES	104,500	93,250	- 11,250
State Aid*	20,105,502	19,574,604	- 530,898
Federal Education Job Fund Aid	0	1,123,029	+ 1,123,029
Local Taxes	60,867,925	62,652,949	+1,785,024
Youth Detention Center	359,023	354,568	- 4,455
Medicaid Reimbursement	300,000	100,000	- 200,000
TOTAL	\$89,395,000	\$91,177,000	+ 1,782,000

* As required by Education Laws 1608 and 1716, the district estimates its 2011 - 2012 State Aid to be \$19,574,604 or 21.47 percent of total expenditures.

Proposed expenditures

	2010-11	2011-12	Dollar Change
Board of Education	\$ 68,344	\$ 71,867	+ 3,523
Chief School Administrator	238,440	237,565	- 875
Finance	710,006	702,019	- 7,987
Legal/Personnel/Public Information	547,406	496,927	- 50,479
Operation & Maintenance	5,786,376	5,696,856	- 89,520
Messenger & Mailing	196,325	192,390	- 3,935
Information Technology	458,933	351,197	- 107,736
Special Items	880,167	860,674	- 19,493
Instructional Improvement/Admin	2,869,431	2,712,419	- 157,012
Regular Instruction	30,845,221	32,032,376	+ 1,187,155
Special Education	11,375,314	11,105,716	- 269,598
Summer School	190,736	230,736	+ 40,000
Library/Technology Instruction	2,196,801	2,230,610	+ 33,809
Pupil Services	2,582,286	2,413,040	- 169,246
Community Services	437,273	432,768	- 4,505
Co-Curricular Activities	196,937	200,105	+ 3,168
Interscholastic Athletics	668,257	644,691	- 23,566
Transportation	4,178,323	4,194,762	+ 16,439
Employee Benefits	19,253,303	20,818,635	+ 1,565,332
Debt Service	5,248,507	5,100,087	- 148,420
Interfund Transfers	145,000	153,000	+ 8,000
TOTAL	\$89,395,000	\$91,177,000	+ 1,782,000

District recognized for efforts to control energy costs

How are we saving?

- Since 2001, South Colonie has had an aggressive energy conservation program in place, avoiding more than \$3.3 million in energy usage.

- South Colonie was recognized in 2010 by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for the "superior energy management of our school."

- South Colonie has an Energy Educator who continually monitors energy usage and researches the latest technology available to keep costs under control. As a result, South Colonie schools have earned an Energy Star label from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) — signifying that they operate more energy efficiently than 75 percent of the schools in the United States.

- South Colonie is among 18 school districts, businesses and organizations recognized by the EPA for achieving significant energy savings and leading their fields in responding to the agency's Energy Star Building Challenge.

- Installing energy-efficient, auto-on, auto-off lighting fixtures in many schools and offices has substantially lowered lighting costs.

- The district uses a computer-automated system to monitor and control heating and lighting in all of its schools, and expects to continue modernizing this equipment in coming years.

Budget reductions & program adjustments

District and Board of Education worked to reduce costs for the 2011-2012 school year

The South Colonie Central School District will experience additional reductions and program adjustments totaling about \$2.3 million during the 2011-12 school year as a result of a three-year downturn in state support for education. This includes flat state aid in 2009-2010, reduced state aid (- \$3.7 million) for 2010-2011, and reduced aid in 2011-2012 (- \$530,898). All budget reductions and program adjustments have focused on protecting Internal programs, key Initiatives, and educational opportunities for our students while keeping expenses at a minimum.

- ▶ **Eliminating, combining and restructuring of administrative positions**
- ▶ **Reduction of teaching positions District-wide**
- ▶ **Reduction in Teaching Assistant positions (2)**
- ▶ **Additional reductions in the Athletic Department budget**
- ▶ **Reduction in monitor positions District-wide**
- ▶ **Elimination of (2) full time bus driver positions through attrition**
- ▶ **Elimination/restructuring of Literacy Coach position**
- ▶ **Elimination of AV/TV position at Colonie Central High School**
- ▶ **Suspend replacement of the Supervisor of Pupil Services**
- ▶ **Elimination of school psychologist Internship position**
- ▶ **Reduction in library monitors**
- ▶ **Additional reductions in Operation and Maintenance (O & M) budget**
- ▶ **Forego the scheduled replacement of an Operations & Maintenance vehicle**
- ▶ **Elimination of the After School Assistance Program**
- ▶ **Reduction in substitute teacher cost**
- ▶ **Salary savings based on Teacher and Teaching Assistant retirements**
- ▶ **Salary savings based on Social Worker retirement**
- ▶ **Reduction in Special Needs expenses — bringing programs back to District**
- ▶ **Reduction in library book purchases**
- ▶ **Savings realized by adjusting bus routes**

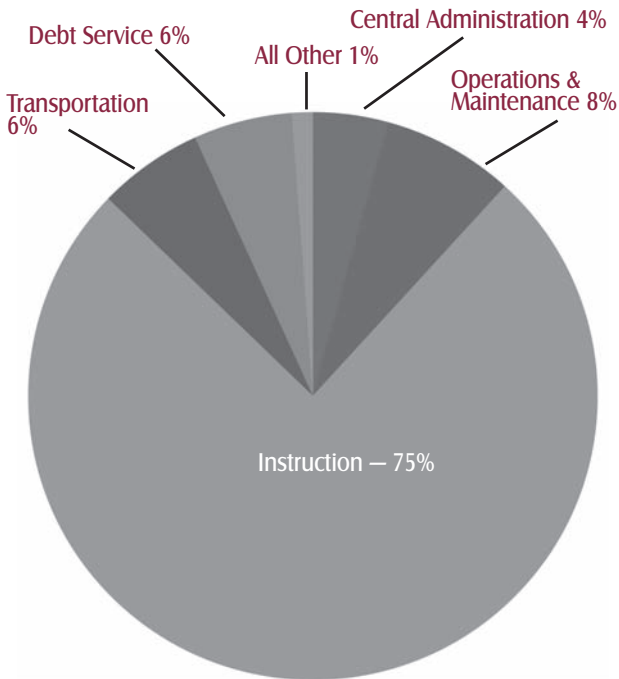


For more examples see the January 2011 newsletter on the district web site.

A great return on investment!

- ▶ South Colonie is consistently ranked high among 85 school districts in an 11-county area in an analysis performed by the Albany *Business Review* newspaper
- ▶ South Colonie has been named a Blue Ribbon District by *Expansion Magazine* — which ranked it in the top 33 percent of school districts in the United States.
- ▶ While all students are now required to graduate with a New York State Regents diploma, 58 percent of the Class of 2010 earned an Advanced Regents diploma, and 26 percent of the class had a Grade Point Average of 90% or higher.
- ▶ Nine out of 10 graduates continue their education at two- and four-year colleges, earning more than \$1.6 million in scholarship money last year.
- ▶ Colonie Central High School students are well rounded with 65% of students, on average, being involved in athletics and/or student clubs and various organizations. The district takes pride in developing a wide range of opportunities for all students.

2011-2012 Budget Breakdown



Contingency Budget Information

Under NYS law, school boards can submit a budget to voters a maximum of two times. If the budget is defeated twice, the board must adopt a contingency budget, which would put a cap on new spending based on the Consumer Price Index. For 2011-12, the state has set that cap at 1.60%. The items exempt for this cap include: debt service, tax certiorari settlements and costs associated with enrollment growth. If South Colonie is forced to adopt a contingency budget, it would require additional cuts of about \$310,087.

Estimated Property Tax Rate

Beginning in the 2009-2010 school year, South Colonie switched to a single property tax rate. This change benefited families and others who own residential property.

Year	Estimated Tax Rate per \$1,000 of Assessed Value		
	Colonie	Niskayuna	Guilderland
2010-11	* \$24.05	16.11	18.94
2011-12	* \$24.75	16.58	19.50

* Tax rates and increases for next year are estimates only. The district will set final tax rates in August based on final assessment figures and equalization rates as provided by the NYS Office of Real Property Services.

Budget Summary

New York State law requires all school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories – Program, Administration and Capital – and compare them to last year’s amount. South Colonie’s three-part budget breaks down as follows:

PROGRAM BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$68,882,587	\$71,345,814
% of Total Budget	77.0%	78.1%

The Program category includes: salaries and benefits of teachers and staff who deliver pupil services (guidance, health, library/media, etc.), textbooks and equipment, co-curricular activities, athletics and transportation costs (except bus purchases).

ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$8,646,056	\$8,102,486
% of Total Budget	9.70%	8.90%

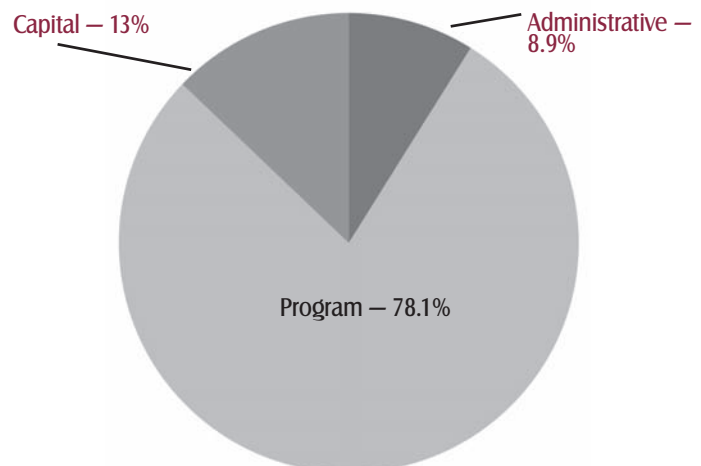
The Administrative category includes: salaries and benefits of administrators, supervisors and administrative clerical staff, public information and printing, curriculum and staff development, school board costs, tax collection and some legal costs.

CAPITAL BUDGET CATEGORY

	<u>2010-2011</u>	<u>2011-2012</u>
Dollar amount	\$11,866,357	\$11,728,700
% of Total Budget	13.3%	13.0%

The Capital category includes: salaries and benefits of maintenance and custodial staff, debt service on buildings, school bus purchases, utilities, general insurance and tax certiorari and court-ordered costs.

2011-2012 BUDGET SUMMARY





Jonathan W. Buhner
Superintendent of Schools

Tim Backus
Assistant Superintendent for Instruction

Beverly Miller
Assistant Superintendent/
Management Services

David Seaver
Director of Human Resources

Board of Education
Brian Casey, President
Leonard Motto, Vice President
Robert Domenici
Rick Dunn
Paul Gordon
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Please Don't Forget to Vote!
Tuesday, May 17th • 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Any of the five elementary schools

South Colonie Central School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2010-11 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2011-12 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2011-12 School Year*
Total Budget amount	\$ 89,395,000	\$ 91,177,000	\$ 90,866,913
Increase/decrease for the 2011-12 school year		\$ 1,782,000	\$ 310,087
Percentage increase (decrease) in each proposed budget		1.99%	
Change in the consumer price index		1.60%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for the 2011-12 school year		\$ 62,652,949	\$ 62,342,862
Administrative component	\$ 8,646,056	\$ 8,102,486	\$ 8,102,186
Program component	\$ 68,882,587	\$ 71,345,814	\$ 71,037,527
Capital component	\$ 11,866,357	\$ 11,728,700	\$ 11,727,200

* Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2011-12 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated.¹

Elimination of all non-contingent items: equipment purchases (\$115,204) and reduction in Universal Pre-K program: elimination of 4 teaching/teaching assistant positions (\$194,883)

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR² Exemption Savings

	Budget Proposed for the 2011-12 School Year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$ 497.70

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2011-12 by the qualified voters of the South Colonie Central School District, Albany County, New York, will be held at Forest Park, Roessleville, Saddlewood, Shaker Road, and Veeder Elementary Schools in said district on Tuesday, May 17, 2011 between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the above listed schools, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

¹ Provide a statement of assumptions made in estimating the contingency budget pursuant to section 2023 of the Education Law.

² The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.