

2019-20 budget includes initiatives in reading, writing, math and curriculum planning

Spending plan would increase taxes by 3% or \$3.19 per month for the typical home

The \$19.95 million spending plan going to the community on Tuesday, May 21 is the result of weeks of give and take by Board of Education members.

The budget includes initiatives for students (see page 3) while plugging a significant shortfall caused by higher-than-expected insurance cost increases.

"This was a very difficult budget to put together," said Interim Superintendent Joseph Natale, who has 30 years' experience compiling budgets.

"We knew the programs that we wanted to bring to our students; we just didn't expect to get hit with a huge increase in expenses out of nowhere."

He is referring to a 25% increase in staff health insurance costs from the

NY44 Health Trust. While the district budgeted for a \$250,000 hike, the final bill shows a \$500,000 increase.

All employees who receive health insurance will also feel the pinch since they pay toward their own insurance costs. Teachers, for example, pay 12.5% of the premium and that is increasing to 15% in July. Other employees pay 10% of their own insurance premiums.

The budget to be considered by the community includes a 4% spending increase over the current budget.

While the maximum state tax levy increase, or cap, for OESJ is 4.53%, school board members settled on a budget with a 3% tax levy increase.

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2019-20 Budget

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Grade 4 students Brooke Boyer and Emma Countryman add vinegar to an "exploding volcano" project during the first OESJ Elementary Science Fair. Nearly 60 students and their families and friends set up shop at the Elementary School to show off their scientific creations.

WHAT WILL I SEE ON THE MAY 21 BALLOT?

Community voting will be held from 12 noon to 8 p.m. on May 21 at the OESJ Jr./Sr. High School auditorium (44 Center St., St. Johnsville) and at the OESJ Elementary School gymnasium (6486 State Highway 29, St. Johnsville) on these proposals (see page 6 for more information):

- \$19,954,357 budget carries a 3% tax levy and rate increase; the state's maximum tax levy increase allowed for OESJ is 4.53%.
- Four candidates for three seats on the Board of Education.
- Allow the district to buy two 65-passenger buses and a wheelchair bus for \$315,000 from the district's reserve. This would have NO IMPACT on the 2019-20 tax levy.
- Create a capital reserve fund for future facilities improvements and construction. All expenditures from this reserve would have to be approved by a vote of the community.
- Purchase of a maintenance building in St. Johnsville. This would have NO IMPACT on the 2019-20 tax levy.



An overview of the 2019-20 OESJ budget

Where the money comes from...

	Budgeted 2018-19	Proposed 2019-20	\$/% Change '18-19 to '19-20	% of budget
REVENUES				
State Aid	\$13,920,431	\$13,908,831	-\$11,600/-0.08%	69.7%
Property Taxes	\$4,829,668	\$4,974,558	\$145,125/3.0%	24.9%
Transfer from Reserves	\$0	\$400,000	\$400,000	2.0%
Other	\$254,721	\$470,968	\$216,247/84.9%	4.4%
Fund Balance	\$184,522	\$200,000	\$15,478/8.4%	1.0%
Total Revenue	\$19,189,342	\$19,954,357	\$765,250/4.0%	100%

...and where it is spent

	Budgeted 2018-19	Proposed 2019-20	\$/% Change '18-19 to '19-20	% of budget
EXPENDITURES				
Instruction	\$9,577,364	\$9,553,908	-\$23,456/-0.24%	47.9%
Employee Benefits	\$4,832,875	\$5,519,512	\$686,637/14.2%	27.6%
General Support*	\$2,789,170	\$2,869,246	\$80,076/2.9%	14.4%
Pupil Transport.	\$1,180,163	\$1,214,397	\$34,234/2.9%	6.1%
Debt Service	\$809,770	\$797,294	-\$12,476/-1.5%	4.0%
Total Expenditures	\$19,189,342	\$19,954,357	\$765,015/4.0%	100%

*District-wide operations such as business, property insurance, operations and maintenance

Three-Part Budget

	Budgeted 2018-19	Proposed 2019-20	\$/% Change '18-19 to '19-20	% of Budget
Administrative	\$2,672,740	\$2,864,188	\$191,448/7.2%	14.4%
Program	\$13,820,773	\$14,300,906	\$480,133/3.5%	71.6%
Capital	\$2,695,829	\$2,789,263	\$93,434/3.5%	14.0%
TOTAL	\$19,189,342	\$19,954,357	\$765,015/4.0%	100%

Questions about the 2019-20 OESJ school budget

How would the proposed budget affect my taxes?

In 2019-20, the tax levy will increase by 3 percent. Using the true value tax rate, which equalizes the tax rates in the seven towns, the school tax bill on a home with a typical \$50,000 assessment would increase by \$38.26 per year or \$3.19 per month before savings from the state's STAR program.

Does the proposed budget plan reflect NYS's property tax cap?

Yes. The state's eight-step property tax levy cap formula for OESJ yielded a 2019-20 maximum tax levy cap increase of 4.53%. Believing that was too high, Board of Education members developed a budget proposal calling for a 3% tax increase – below the state maximum. Property owners *will* qualify for the state tax rebate because OESJ stayed below the maximum levy limit.

What if the budget were defeated on May 21?

Under New York state law, if the school budget is defeated, a board of education can either put the same or a modified budget up for another vote, or immediately adopt a contingent budget. If residents defeat the proposed budget during a second vote, the board must adopt a contingent budget.

A contingent budget would require a \$393,058 reduction in the proposed OESJ budget.

Budget initiatives, from page 1

The tax bill on a home with a \$50,000 assessment would increase by approximately \$38.26 per year, or \$3.19 per month before savings from the state's STAR program.

LEARNING INITIATIVES

Despite the insurance setback, the Board of Education was determined to include initiatives designed to boost teaching and learning at OESJ. With test scores rising, board members did not want to stop the progress made over the past few years. The proposed budget includes:

- the **addition of an elementary reading teacher**;
- an **instructional coach through BOCES**;
- added **curriculum work** around the state's Next Generation Learning Standards;
- in-service training for the development of an **elementary writing program**; and
- expansion of the Ready Math program to grades 3, 4 and 5**, all other grades have already been using the program.

State aid didn't help the budget situation this year, Natale said. Overall, OESJ is slated to receive \$11,600 less in aid next year than this year. That includes the annual decline of \$146,616 tied to the December 2012 merger.

In an effort to keep taxes in check, the Board of Education dipped into reserve funds for \$400,000 and increased the use of fund balance by \$15,000 for a total of \$200,000.

"That's an additional \$600,000 that we were able to use instead of raising taxes further," said Natale.

In addition, the budget eliminates 1.5 positions to save money. No employees will be laid off; vacancies will not be filled.

Since the 2012 merger, taxes have been very stable in OESJ (see chart, right).



Licinda Coffin and Kirsten Swartz, both grade 8 students, adjust their windmill blades during the second annual KidWind project at the Jr./Sr. High School. Students created unique projects that harness the wind. OESJ will send one high school team and three middle school teams – 15 students in all – to the regional competition

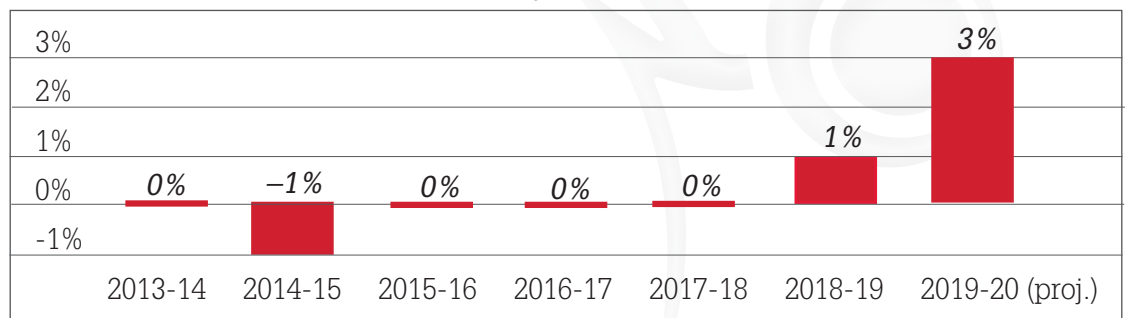
WHY ARE WE BUYING A MAINTENANCE BUILDING AT 6 SOUTH DIVISION STREET IN ST. JOHNSVILLE?

The former maintenance area was located where the new agricultural and technical classroom is being built at the Jr./Sr. High School. As a result, the maintenance department has no place to store its vehicles, equipment (lawnmowers, snowblowers, etc.), make repairs and store its tools.

The Board of Education last year set aside \$180,000 in the budget to build a new maintenance building. The purchase on the May 21 ballot would cost \$80,000. This means that \$100,000 of the original cost is left in the budget. It is less expensive to purchase an existing building than to build a new one. This proposal would have NO IMPACT on the 2019-20 school tax levy.

A 7-YEAR HISTORY OF TAX STABILITY AT OESJ

Taxpayers were promised during the 2012 merger between Oppenheim-Ephratah and St. Johnsville that there would be no tax increases for at least five years. OESJ upheld its commitment and even decreased taxes by 1% in 2014-15.





POINTS OF PRIDE: OESJ

THERE ARE MANY POINTS OF PRIDE AT OESJ, SOMETHING THAT MAKES THIS A UNIQUE AND SPECIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT. HERE ARE JUST A FEW.*

14

students are enrolled in **Career and Technical Education (CTE)** at the HFM BOCES.



100%

Every student at both OESJ schools receives a **free breakfast and lunch**.

\$1.029 million

in BOCES aid for OESJ was generated in 2017-18 for a total of \$1.731 million in **shared services** through the HFM BOCES.

7

courses are offered over the **Distance Learning computer network**, such as Calculus AB, Equine Science, Hospitality Management and Syracuse University Project Advance (SUPA) Psychology.

100%

All staff has received **mental health first aid training** and the district works closely with Catholic Charities and St. Mary's to assess students and offer counseling services when necessary.

***INFORMATION ON THIS PAGE WAS PROVIDED BY BOTH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT AND THE HFM BOCES.**



35

OESJ children benefit from the **Backpacks for Kids Program**, which provides meals on weekends.

The program also **received a \$17,000 donation** from the 100 Women Who Care of the Adirondack Foothills.

16

college-level courses are offered to OESJ students through Fulton-Montgomery Community College and Herkimer Community College.



2

Number of **school resource officers** – one at each building.

45%

of students in grades 4-6 **are listed on the honor roll** each quarter.

#2 in NY state

OESJ's Boys Basketball team won as Section 2 Class D Champions, Class D Regional Champions and made it to the **New York State Public High School Athletic Association Class D Championship game**, which they lost by a close 67-54.



17

number of students enrolled in **Business (8) and AG (9) PTECH programs**.

38

students are enrolled in OESJ's **full-day prekindergarten program** that includes art, music and physical education.

#3 in NY state

OESJ's Odyssey of the Mind team **finished third at the state competition at Binghamton University**. The team competed against 19 teams from across the state.

86.8%

of students graduated with either an Advanced Regents diploma or a Regents diploma.

5

Advanced Placement (AP) courses are offered to OESJ students: US History, Biology, English, Calculus AB and Calculus BC

14

students participate in **work-based learning and/or related services** through the HFM Special Education Divisions.



100%

Every student is provided with a laptop computer as part of the **OESJ 1:1 Chromebook initiative**.

Required NYS School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2018-19 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2019-20 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2019-20 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$19,189,342	\$19,954,357	\$19,561,300
Increase/Decrease for the 2018-19 School Year		\$765,015	\$371,958
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.98%	1.9%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.44%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$4,829,668	\$4,974,558	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A+B+C-D)	\$4,829,668	\$4,974,558	\$4,829,668
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$10,558	\$100,621	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$4,851,396	\$5,048,522	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E-B-F+D)	\$4,819,110	\$4,873,937	
I. Difference: G-H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$32,286	\$174,350	
Administrative Component	\$2,672,740	\$2,864,188	\$2,839,188
Program Component	\$13,820,773	\$14,300,906	\$14,260,906
Capital Component	\$2,695,829	\$2,789,263	\$2,461,206

*** Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2019-20 school year: should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law. If the budget were defeated and a contingency budget were adopted, the Board of Education would cut \$393,057 from the proposed budget. These cuts would include the bus purchase, maintenance equipment, and projects.**

Description	Amount
** List Separate Propositions that are <i>not</i> included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)	
Use of Capital Bus Reserve (purchase two 65 passenger buses and one wheelchair bus)	\$315,000
Establish Capital Reserve Fund - Facilities (10-year Max)	\$10,000,000

Under the Budget Proposed
for the 2019-20 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings
(The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.) **\$462.11**

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2019-20 by the qualified voters of the OESJ school district, Fulton, Montgomery and Herkimer counties, New York, will be held at **OESJ High School and the OESJ Elementary School** in said district on **Tuesday, May 21, 2019 between the hours of 12:00 pm and 8:00 pm**, prevailing time in the schools, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Board of Education

Neil Clark, **President**

Dean Handy, **Vice President**

Chad Barnes

Sarah Barnes

Jeremy Brundage

Susanne Sammons

Shellie Walrath

Joseph L. Natale, **Interim Superintendent**

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Robert Hanlon, **Editor**



OESJ

Oppenheim-Ephratah-St. Johnsville

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OESJ

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More budget news

Voter eligibility

To be eligible to vote, a resident must have lived in the school district for at least 30 days prior to the May 21 vote, be at least 18 years of age and be a U.S. citizen.

Voting locations

Community voting will be held from 12 noon to 8 p.m. at the:

- **OESJ Junior/Senior High School** auditorium, 44 Center St., St. Johnsville
- **OESJ Elementary School** gymnasium, 6486 State Highway 29, St. Johnsville

If you are unsure where to vote, contact District Clerk Stephanie Bonk at stephanie.bonk@oesj.org or by calling (518) 568-7280.

Voter registration

If you are registered to vote in national, county and town elections through the county where you live, you do not have to do anything. You are already

registered to vote in the school district election.

If you are not registered to vote, you may register just for the school district election or to request an absentee ballot application by contacting District Clerk Stephanie Bonk at stephanie.bonk@oesj.org or by calling (518) 568-7280.

Absentee ballot information

Residents who will not be in the area on May 21 or are otherwise unable to vote in person may apply for an absentee ballot at the District Office, 44 Center Street, St. Johnsville.

- If the absentee ballot is to be mailed to the voter, the application must be submitted at least seven days prior to the vote – by **May 14**.
- If the absentee ballot is to be picked up by the voter in person, applications will be accepted until **May 20**.
- Completed absentee ballots must be returned by 5 p.m. on **May 21**.

MAY 21 BALLOT PROPOSALS

In addition to the \$19.95 million budget, community members will be asked to consider these proposals –

- Select three Board of Education candidates for three, three-year seats. The candidates in ballot order are:
 - Jarrod Parsons
 - Neil Clark
 - Susanne Sammons
 - Dean Handy

Clark, Handy and Sammons are the incumbents.

- Allow the district to buy two 65-passenger buses and a wheelchair bus from the reserve. This will have no impact on the 2019-20 school tax rate.
- Create a capital reserve fund for future facilities improvements. All expenditures from this reserve would have to be approved by a vote of the community.
- Purchase a maintenance building at 6 South Division Street, St. Johnsville for a maximum cost of \$80,000. That money is in the current budget. The former maintenance area is being replaced by the new agricultural and technical classroom. This will have NO IMPACT on the 2019-20 tax levy (see story on page 3).