



The ChalkBoard

May 2017

WINDHAM-ASHLAND-JEWETT CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWSLETTER
VOTER AND BUDGET INFORMATION FOR WAJ PARENTS AND RESIDENTS

2017-2018 Proposed Budget

Proposed Budget Maintains Student Programs

Windham-Ashland-Jewett CSD continues to develop annual budgets that meet the instructional needs of our students and that are fiscally prudent. The proposed 2017-2018 school budget is \$11,957,611. This increases spending by \$226,183, or 1.93% from last year's budget and maintains quality student programming while keeping spending in check. The 2017-2018 projected tax levy increase is 2.20% over last year's levy. This proposed budget complies with the state tax cap, which is 3.69% this year, and with the tax freeze legislation requirements.

The proposed budget utilizes \$250,000 of fund balance and \$158,635 of unexpended capital reserve dollars to help reduce the overall tax levy. WAJ anticipates the continued use of this revenue stream over time to help guard against state aid fluctuations and to keep the budget under the state mandated tax cap.

WAJ continues to perform at a high level. A recent study conducted by the *Albany Business Review* ranked Windham-Ashland-Jewett Central School #1 in the entire Capital Region for the highest graduation rate. WAJ has achieved a 97% graduation rate for two years in a row. In 2016 the publication ranked WAJ #1 for college placement and #11 for overall district performance out of the entire Capital Region. With the communities' strong support, WAJ graduates are attending highly competitive programs in universities throughout the country, including: Harvard, University of Pennsylvania, Boston University, and the State University of New York, just to name a few. Our program offerings and strength of schedule have allowed our motivated students to earn the equivalent number of credits as an associate's degree while attending WAJ. The district will continue to carefully balance the need to prepare our students for college and career readiness while staying fiscally responsible.

www.wajcs.org

Proposed Budget is below the "Tax Cap"

Although often referred to as the "two percent tax cap", New York's tax levy "cap" law does not restrict any proposed tax levy increase to two percent. In fact, pursuant to the law, each public school district must follow an eight step calculation to determine its permissible tax levy limit. That limit then determines what level of voter support is required for budget approval.

The 2017-2018 tax cap for WAJ is 3.69%. WAJ's proposed tax levy of 2.20% is below the state cap, requiring a traditional simple majority passage rate. According to 2014 property tax freeze legislation, when a district complies with the tax cap and demonstrates at least one percent savings in the next three budget years, the modest budget increase is expected to be refunded to eligible taxpayers directly later this fall.

District Reserves

The district continues to maintain several reserves that cover unexpected emergency expenses or significant infrequent expenses. The reserves include the Repair Reserve (\$126,302), the Liability and Casualty Reserve (\$301,766), the Unemployment Insurance Reserve (\$182,539), the Bus Purchase Reserve (\$153,588), and the Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve (\$398,679). The district constantly monitors these reserves to determine if they are adequately funded and what the potential needs may be. The district also maintains an undesignated fund balance, which is determined on an annual basis and is limited by regulation to 4% or less of the budget. These funds may be used on an annual basis to cover emergency expenditures or other unanticipated expenditures that are not covered by the reserves mentioned above. The district has tried to maintain over time an unrestricted fund balance of between 3% to 4% of the budget.

Public Vote
Tuesday, May 16, 2017
1 PM to 9 PM
School Cafetorium

2017-2018 Proposed School Budget: APPROPRIATIONS

District appropriations are broken out into major component areas, with descriptions of general services covered under each component, with multiple years of data for comparison.

Budget Service Area	2013-14 Budgeted	2014-15 Budgeted	2015-16 Budgeted	2016-17 Adopted	2017-18 Proposed
Board of Education	\$16,300	\$16,725	\$16,700	\$17,225	\$17,225
<i>Contractual, training, meetings, elections, district clerk, supplies</i>					
Central Administration	\$201,932	\$219,121	\$218,893	\$224,776	\$230,440
<i>Salaries apportioned to the Office of the Superintendent, district clerk, equipment, contractual services, materials & supplies, postage</i>					
Finance and Business Administration	\$208,195	\$219,121	\$219,499	\$239,431	\$244,246
<i>Salaries apportioned to the Business Office, equipment, contractual services, materials/supplies, tax collector expenses, external audit, newly required internal audit function, fiscal agent expense, BOCES contractual expense</i>					
Legal & Personnel Services	\$33,000	\$33,000	\$34,000	\$34,000	\$34,000
<i>Legal Services, contractual services, fees, contract negotiation services, advertisements, recruitment, certification, newsletters, printing, calendars</i>					
Central Services	\$680,089	\$677,716	\$708,882	\$705,683	\$779,833
<i>Salaries of custodial & maintenance personnel, utilities, fuel oil, contractual services, material/supplies, equipment, trash and snow removal, grounds upkeep</i>					
Special Items	\$207,000	\$210,000	\$186,205	\$205,000	\$199,500
<i>Insurance, tax refunds, BOCES administrative and rental costs</i>					
Instruction Administration & Improvement	\$272,660	\$288,975	\$296,632	\$300,250	\$309,508
<i>Salaries apportioned for building administration support, including ASCI and principal, clerical staff, staff development, contractual services, training, fees, materials, supplies and equipment</i>					
Teaching Regular School	\$3,099,738	\$2,990,305	\$3,102,810	\$3,144,942	\$3,316,618
<i>Teacher, substitutes, & support staff salaries, equipment, instructional materials/supplies, contractual expenses, exams, tuition, alternative education textbooks</i>					
Programs for Handicapped Children	\$381,000	\$381,000	\$381,000	\$381,000	\$526,000
<i>Physical and Occupational therapy, training, student program tuition, BOCES services</i>					
Programs for Learning Disabled	\$306,944	\$268,933	\$279,335	\$213,595	\$218,942
<i>Salaries apportioned for special education teachers & support staff, equipment, materials & supplies, professional development and training</i>					
Occupational Education Grades 10-12	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$210,000	\$200,000	\$180,000
<i>Expenses associated with Vocational & Occupational Programming</i>					
Special Schools	\$17,750	\$17,500	\$12,250	\$7,250	\$7,750
<i>Summer school program expenses, contractual expense</i>					
Instructional Media Services	\$244,092	\$250,316	\$267,095	\$346,925	\$355,788
<i>Salaries, equipment, maintenance, materials/supplies, library books & periodicals, BOCES library charges, computer technology, instructional technology, software, hardware & contractual services</i>					
Pupil Personnel Services	\$418,627	\$411,603	\$462,153	\$478,914	\$535,222
<i>Salaries for counselors, social worker, psychologist, nurse, doctor, therapists, co-curricular & athletic coaches, support staff expenses, equipment, materials/supplies, and related contractual expenses</i>					
District Transportation	\$601,430	\$690,107	\$615,221	\$645,094	\$627,226
<i>Salaries apportioned for pupil transportation personnel & supervision, fuel, supplies, repairs, maintenance, upkeep of garage facility, contractual expenses; includes a bus purchase</i>					
Debt Service	\$1,227,644	\$1,203,161	\$1,202,201	\$1,144,415	\$1,149,896
<i>Capital Improvement Project Expenses, Bonds related debt service costs</i>					
Employee Benefits	\$3,259,386	\$3,498,997	\$3,436,282	\$3,433,328	\$3,215,817
<i>State employee & teacher retirement, social security, workman's compensation, unemployment & health insurance premium costs</i>					
Interfund Transfers	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600	\$9,600
TOTAL APPROPRIATIONS	\$11,365,683	\$11,566,180	\$11,658,758	\$11,731,428	\$11,957,611

The district's ability to raise revenue is hampered by the tax cap regulation. Future state aid projections show a potential decrease on the horizon due largely to changes in the state aid formula, increases to our district's wealth ratio and a lower school census. WAJ continues to deploy several strategies to deal with rising costs and lower revenue, such as negotiating changes in contracts, sharing services with partners, better utilizing instructional technology, and reducing staffing positions and purchasing when possible.

2017-18 Proposed School Budget: REVENUES

These projected revenues are subject to change, as NYS often modifies future aid payments based on changes during current and future legislative cycles.

Revenue Area	2016-2017 (Adopted NYS Budget)	2017-2018 (Proposed)
Interest & Penalties	\$20,000	\$20,000
Payment in Lieu of Taxes	\$10,000	\$10,000
Admission, Tuition, Miscellaneous	\$13,387	\$28,000
Interest Earnings on Investments	\$10,000	\$10,000
BOCES and E-Rate Refund	\$20,400	\$43,481
Other Miscellaneous Revenue*	\$240,000	\$158,635
Sub-Total Misc. Revenue	\$ 313,787	\$270,116
State Aid: Foundation and Other	\$1,000,905	\$1,034,435
State Aid: BOCES	\$161,268	\$178,480
State Aid: High Cost Aid	\$0	\$9,843
State Aid: Private Excess Co	\$0	\$3,052
State Aid: Textbooks, Library, Software	\$24,750	\$23,336
State Aid: Transportation	\$48,841	\$44,044
State Aid: High Tax Aid	\$200,976	\$200,976
Sub-total Aid	\$ 1,436,740	\$1,494,166
State Aid: Building	\$90,981	\$91,331
Total Revenue (Misc. revenue plus state aid)	\$1,841,508	\$1,855,613
Fund Balance Used to Offset Levy	\$250,000	\$250,000
Total Proposed Budget	\$11,731,428	\$11,957,611
Total Tax Levy	\$9,639,920	\$9,851,998

*Includes use of capital reserve dollars liquidated to the general fund to lower the tax levy, using a multi-year reserve fund utilization plan.

SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY TAX REPORT CARD 2017

The following chart outlines the 2017-2018 proposed budget property tax report card information submitted to the New York State Education Department and describes differences between this year's adopted budget, the proposed budget and the contingency budget, if necessary. The proposed 2017-2018 tax levy increases 2.20%, which conforms to the state's "tax cap". WAJ is compliant with the 2014 "tax freeze" legislation as well.

	Adopted Budget 2016-2017	Proposed Budget 2017-2018	Contingency Budget 2017-2018
Total Budgeted Amount	\$11,731,428	\$11,957,611	\$11,696,446
Increase/decrease for the 2017-18 school year		\$226,183	-\$34,982
Percentage proposed budget change		1.93%	-0.30%
Percentage change in the consumer price index		1.26%	
Proposed School Year Tax Levy, including exclusions	\$9,639,920	\$9,851,998	\$9,532,994
Total Permissible Exclusions to the Tax Levy	\$1,215,741	\$1,263,711	
A. School Tax Levy Limit, Not Including Levy for Permissible Exclusions Proposed School Year Tax	\$8,424,179	\$8,731,995	
B. Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Not Including Levy for Permissible Exclusions or Levy to Support Library Debt	\$8,424,179	\$8,588,287	
Difference: A-B (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)	\$0	\$143,708	
Is the Proposed Levy Below the "Tax Cap"	Yes	Yes	Yes
Administrative Component	\$2,226,382	\$2,152,296	\$2,121,609
Program Component	\$6,616,671	\$6,878,023	\$6,839,978
Capital Component	\$2,888,375	\$2,927,291	\$2,734,859
Component Totals	\$11,731,428	\$11,957,611	\$11,696,446

*Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2017-2018 school year: Should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law, a contingency budget may be adopted by the Board of Education without another vote. The contingency budget model above reflects the removal of all statutory expenses from the original budget as required by statute. The proposed budget tax levy falls below the permissible tax levy threshold.

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: BUDGET & TAX LEVY

The table below outlines historical budget information since 2012-2013. The proposed budget maintains existing programming and addresses mandated and discretionary budgetary increases.

School Year	Total Budget (\$)	Increase from Previous Year	Tax Levy (\$)	Tax Levy Increase (%)
2017-2018	\$11,957,611	\$226,183	\$9,851,998	2.20% <i>Tax Cap is 3.69%</i>
2016-2017	\$11,731,428	\$72,670	\$9,639,920	0.623% Tax Cap was 0.65%
2015-2016	\$11,658,758	\$92,578	\$9,577,963	0.824% Tax Cap was 1.03%
2014-2015	\$11,566,180	\$209,497	\$9,499,706	1.95%; Tax Cap was 1.98%
2013-2014	\$11,365,683	\$391,673	\$9,318,288	3.22%; Tax Cap was 3.29%
2012-2013	\$10,974,010	\$397,644	\$9,027,627	1.79%; Tax Cap was 4.74%

Assessed Valuation, Proposed Budget and School Taxes 2017

The average projected tax rate increase is \$ 0.19 per \$1,000 assessed value of your home property.

Due to the significant fluctuation in home valuations, uncertainty in the estimates on expected assessment data and probable changes in New York State Equalization Rates for each town, the estimates on tax rate changes are somewhat fluid, subject to correction once all data points are finalized by an individual town and New York State. While the average projected tax rate information provided assumes all values and assessments, along with the equalization rates to be only slightly modified as compared to last year's levels, additional increases in the total assessed property valuation within the district have been typical and would further lower the overall tax rates for residents, depending on how your town's equalization rate is impacted during 2017-2018. WAJ does NOT conduct property valuations and assessments. Please see your town's assessor for detailed information on your property's valuation assessment and town's equalization rate.

Board of Education Member Election

Voters will be selecting one Board of Education member to a term this election. This is a five-year seat term (currently held by Susan Simpfinderfer), beginning July 1, 2017 and ending June 30, 2022. The candidate for this seat is:

Mrs. Susan Simpfinderfer – Lexington, New York

Public Vote on May 16, 2017
1:00 PM to 9:00 PM
School Cafetorium



Dated Material: Important for District Residents

To:

**Friend of
Windham-Ashland-Jewett
Central School District**

Non-Profit Organization

U.S. POSTAGE PAID

Kingston, NY
Permit # 49602