



Tusker Nation

SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS
FOR SCSD FAMILIES

Special School Budget Edition



Students in eighth grade deliver a presentation on Education for Girls for their Social Action project.

Budget, Proposition, and Trustee Vote Tuesday, May 21, 2019

Middle School Gymnasium 7 a.m. – 9 p.m. Use lower parking lot.

2019-2020 Proposed School Budget Overview

On May 21, 2019 the Somers Central School District will ask the community to vote on a proposed \$93.7 million school budget for 2019-2020, calling for a 2.65% increase over the current year's budget.

“Developing the annual school budget is one of the most important tasks for the district and the Board of Education,” says Superintendent Dr. Raymond Blanch. “Administrators and board members review enrollment projections, instructional program and staffing needs, special education placement costs, facility needs, and safety and security measures, with a commitment to safe, cost-effective, and high performing schools”.

The resulting proposed budget for 2019-2020 remains under the New York State tax levy cap for the eighth consecutive year and is estimated to increase the tax rate by 2.65%. This fiscally responsible budget includes a minimal increase in health insurance costs and decreased retirement fund contribution rates. It also maintains class sizes and introduces World Language classes in sixth-grade.

Due to a high-performing year for the New York State Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) pension fund, the mandated employer contribution to the TRS has decreased by \$637,941 for the coming fiscal year. Health care costs are increasing by \$216,963. The largest budget increase comes from mandated special education costs, which are going up by nearly \$900,000.

For the past nine months, the district has been working with a Safety Task Force made up of school officials, community members, and security experts from Altaris Consulting Group to ensure that our students and campuses are safe and secure. Some of the Task Force's recommendations already in place include a uniformed Westchester County Police Officer and patrol car at each of Somers' four schools, as well as hiring a part time Safety and Security Coordinator. The Board of Education is putting forth a bond proposal to finance additional safety and security measures recommended by the Task Force. Please see the separate article in this newsletter for details.

In keeping with the district's commitment to small class sizes, several staffing changes will be made next year. At Primrose Elementary School, a slight increase in enrollment for the first grade necessitates adding another first grade class and teacher. A slight decrease in enrollment at Somers Intermediate School means one less elementary school teacher there. Somers Middle School is introducing World Language instruction in grade six this fall, requiring one more teacher. At Somers High School, the district is hiring an additional math teacher to cover an increase in students electing to take math courses.

In order to give students the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in the 21st century, the district continues to devote resources to the STEM areas of study (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math). There will be continued professional development related to STEM, a new International Baccalaureate math class at the high school, and a new Project Lead The Way science course called Human Systems. The district is also undertaking an in-depth study of its math curriculum from kindergarten through 12th-grade, to ensure that students meet new standards and are benefiting from the latest research and best practices. A math content coach will be added to the faculty to support that initiative.

This June, eight students will be the first group to graduate from the high school with an International Baccalaureate Diploma. There were 181 students enrolled in one or more IB classes this year, and 14 juniors are currently on the path to earn an IB diploma next year. The middle school continues its progress towards authorization as a Middle Years Programme, the middle school extension of the high school IB program, with an expected full transition in 2021-2022. These two programs are a critical component of the district's mission to foster a sense of global citizenship in Somers students while engaging them in rigorous, authentic learning experiences.

A new schedule will be implemented at the high school this fall, including longer class periods for more in-depth learning, and a community lunch hour, during which no classes will be held. Research shows that meaningful connections with peers and adults is critical for social emotional wellness, and the community lunch will provide ample time for students to meet with clubs, get extra help, and engage with other students and teachers. District-wide, a focus on educational equity is a priority to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Community members will vote on the proposed budget, the proposition and the trustee election on May 21, 2019, at the Somers Middle School gymnasium, between the hours of 7 a.m. and 9 p.m. The district urges all Somers residents to vote.



School Resource Officer Brian Pavletich reads to Primrose students.

School Board Trustee Candidates

Chadwick Olsen, Joseph A. Marra, Ifay Chang

All registered voters may vote for two candidates. The candidates are seeking three-year terms.

Voters to Decide on Security Bond

The Board of Education is asking voters to consider a bond in the amount of \$7,566,295 to finance safety and security measures at Somers schools. The safety and well-being of students is always the district's first priority. Knowing that the potential exists for shootings and other dangerous situations, the schools train, drill and coordinate with law enforcement to deter or react to potential threats.

A Safety Task Force made up of school officials, community members, and security experts has met multiple times to review and recommend security measures for the district. Many recommendations are already in place, including School Resource Officers, single point of entry, security vestibules and after school security guards at each school.

The Safety Task Force has also researched and recommended additional measures which would be financed by the proposed bond, including safety film on first-floor exterior doors and windows, and some interior glass, as well as a lock-down panic system, swipe card access to classrooms, exterior door ajar notification alarms, an increased number of security cameras, and permanent walls around six open classrooms at the intermediate school.

The total cost of the project is estimated to be \$10,745,000. The district would use \$3,178,705 in capital reserve funds and finance the remaining cost with a \$7,566,295 bond.

To learn more about the Security Bond Proposition, watch the latest episode of Spotlight on Somers by clicking the image below.



Budget Copies Available

A copy of the written statement of the 2019- 2020 budget may be obtained by any district resident from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the District Clerk's Office at Somers Middle School, 250 Route 202, Somers, NY 10589; the district website (www.somersschools.org); or from the principal's office in

Primrose Elementary School
Route 139, Lincolndale, NY 10540

Somers Intermediate School
Route 202, Somers, NY 10589

Somers Middle School
Route 202, Somers, NY 10589

Somers High School
Route 139, Lincolndale, NY 10540

Voter Registration Dates, Times, Places

WHEN Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. through May 16. Evening hours: Wednesday, May 15 from 4 p.m. – 8 p.m.

WHERE Office of the District Clerk, Somers Middle School, 250 Route 202, Somers, NY 10589

NOTE For information about absentee ballots, call the District Clerk at 914-277-2400. Deadline for requests for absentee ballots to be mailed out is Tuesday, May 14, 2019. Completed ballots are due to the District Clerk by 4 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, 2019. Anyone already registered with the Board of Elections is eligible to vote.



Somers Central School District
250 Route 202
Somers, New York 10589
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