

Proposed 2019–20 School Budget

Board’s plan maintains programs & class sizes; proposed tax levy increase is below NYS cap

After extensive public discussion and input, the Board of Education has adopted the proposed 2019–20 school budget in the amount of \$234,418,944. This amount is a 1.99% increase over last year’s budget. The proposed tax levy increase is 1.94%, which is below the tax cap limit of 4.09%.

The proposed budget will:

- Maintain all current programs at the elementary and secondary levels;
- Add elementary teaching positions to safeguard elementary class sizes, in accordance with Board guidelines, due to increased enrollment;
- Add secondary teaching positions to meet student needs for course offerings and electives at the high schools and middle schools;
- Add English as a new language (ENL) and special education teaching positions to support delivery of required services;
- Add one nurse to the health staff;
- Add two guards to the security staff;
- Expand the Universal Pre-Kindergarten program to include classes at the John F. Kennedy School;
- Initiate a drama program and a robotics program at the elementary level;
- Increase funding for student participation in local, regional, and national competitions;
- Provide ongoing professional development training for faculty and staff.

“With this proposed budget, our students will continue to receive the innovative instruction that has established the Great Neck Public Schools as a premier school district on Long Island, in the state, and in the country,” explains Superintendent of Schools Dr. Teresa Prendergast. “I am grateful for the support of the Board in presenting this fiscally-responsible budget, which preserves our high-quality academic and extra-curricular programs.”

A Budget Based on Need

Each year, the budget development process includes input from stakeholders across the district, including the United Parent Teachers Council (UPTC), building principals, teacher representatives, and district administrators. The Board of Education encourages input from residents during public budget meetings, held from March through May.

“We value the transparency of our budget process,” explains Board President Barbara Berkowitz, noting that the Board has reviewed the proposed budget, line by line, during public budget meetings. “The Administration and the Board have to balance the needs of our students with our fiscal responsibility to taxpayers. We are especially mindful of the pressures on our taxpaying community.”

Proposed increases in instructional staff for the 2019–20 school year reflect Great Neck’s growing student enrollment. While other school districts across Long Island are experiencing a declining enrollment trend, the outstanding quality of the academic programs offered by the Great Neck Public Schools continues to attract families and new students to the district.

“The Great Neck Public Schools provide a myriad of academic programs for students of all interests and abilities. In addition, the STEAM, music, theater, sports, publications, and club programs provide opportunities for every student to find a niche in which to succeed,” says

Board Trustee Donna Peirez. “We are very proud to be able to offer these differentiated academic and extracurricular choices.”

New York State’s Property Tax Cap

The 2019–20 school year is the eighth in which school districts must abide by New York State’s tax-cap legislation. Multiple factors affect the actual limit, and our school district’s tax-levy limit for 2019–20 is 4.09%. This tax-levy limit incorporates changes to the tax base, the rate of inflation, payments in lieu of taxes, debt payments, capital project expenditures, transportation equipment purchases, and pension increases above a certain percentage. The proposed tax levy increase of 1.94% is well below the state-mandated tax cap.

“We must be sensitive to the tax impact of our school district budget on our community members, who are also facing federal tax changes and Nassau County reassessments,” explains Assistant Superintendent for Business John Powell. “We have to keep our outstanding educational program as affordable as possible.”

Residents may refer to the “tax calculator” tool on the district website (www.greatneck.k12.ny.us) to estimate their 2019–20 school tax liability (click on School Tax Estimator).

Revenues in 2019–20

To balance the 2019–20 budget, the district will appropriate \$2.3 million in fund balance and reserves, which are unspent funds from prior years. These funds will help to cover contractual salary increases, hikes in health-insurance premiums, and other planned expenditures. The district also allocates approximately \$4 million annually for ongoing health and safety capital projects to maintain our facilities.

Anticipated increases in revenue will also offset expenses. For example, Great Neck collects tuition from other school districts that enroll their students in programs offered here. These enrollments continue to be a significant revenue source and it is anticipated that they will yield nearly \$2.3 million in revenue in 2019–20.

Validation of Fiscal Practices

Great Neck is among a select few school districts in New York State to earn an “Aaa” rating from Moody’s Investors Service. This rating means that the district’s financial obligations are judged by Moody’s to be of the highest quality and, therefore, subject to the lowest level of credit risk. In the annual, New York State-required external audit of the school district, the certified public accounting firm of Cullen & Danowski, LLP, reports favorably on Great Neck’s management of finances, emphasizing a strong financial position, wise investments, an internal control system of checks and balances, and procedures that are supported by Board policies.

Fifth-Lowest Class I Property Tax Rates

Great Neck’s 2018–19 school tax rate for single-family homes, or Class I properties, was the fifth-lowest of all the school districts in Nassau County.

Substantial Services for Nonpublic School Students

The district, in accordance with State law, allocates more than \$5 million to provide services to private and nonpublic school students, including bus transportation, textbooks, health services, special education services, school library materials, and computer software loan programs.

For More Information

The 2019–20 proposed budget may be viewed on the district website at www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/budget. Printed copies of the budget are available at the Phipps Administration Building, 345 Lakeville Road. Reference copies can be found in the schools and

public libraries. For details about the budget, voter registration, absentee ballots, and voting, please call (516) 441-4020.

Vote Information

The annual school budget vote will take place on Tuesday, May 21, 2019. Polls will be open from 7:00 a.m.–10:00 p.m.

There are four polling locations for school district elections: E.M. Baker School, Lakeville School, Saddle Rock School, and South High School. Registered voters will only be permitted to cast a ballot at their assigned polling location.

Residents can check their assigned voting location using the Poll Place Finder on the district website at www.greatneck.k12.ny.us/budget. This information is also available by calling the District Clerk on school days between 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. at (516) 441-4020.