



Pathways

BUDGET EDITION • MAY 2024

FORT EDWARD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

Noon to 8:00 PM
Main Entrance Foyer
220 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828

BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

2024-2025 Proposed Budget
\$13,386,400

Spending Increase
\$936,744

Tax Cap
2.36%

CAPITAL PROJECT VOTE

Project Budget
\$14,700,000

Tax Levy Impact
TAX NEUTRAL

Project Summary

- Safety and Security Enhancements
- Playground Improvements
- Facilities Improvements
- Roofing Repair
- Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning

www.fortedward.org

Fortify the Fort!

This year we have built the budget with the mindset of “Fortification”. It is now time to place behind us and remove the word “merger” from our minds. We now have to take steps to ensure the future of the District for our students and community. This budget will allow us to add programs and add staff in hopes of “Fortifying” not only our physical plant, but gives us the ability to “Fortify” academic standards for our students.

The proposed 24-25 budget of \$13,386,400.31 with a 2.42 % tax increase will allow us to add a special education program, add staff to our building and grounds department, support staff unit, and administration.

The special education program will not only meet the needs of our students, but allow the District to help our neighboring schools as Fort Edward can not fill all of the spots in the program. By opening the program up to our neighbors, it creates a small revenue stream for us, which helps pay for the program. The only other option would be to send our students to other Districts or outside programs. This would outweigh the costs of creating this program internally.

The addition of a cleaner to our building and grounds crew will bring us close to where that department was pre-pandemic. This cleaner will enhance our current cleaning procedures.

The addition of support staff will allow us to meet State regulations in the area of special education and provide more student supervision. It will also allow us to secure our In-School Suspension (ISS) room and use that room consistently and effectively.

The additional administrator will allow us to continue character education programs, as well as allow administration to be proactive in educational areas, such as the science of reading in the elementary, and professional development opportunities at the secondary level where New York State Standards have changed. It will also allow us to address low performing areas of our District such as student achievement and participation on State exams, and graduation rate. We are consistently not meeting the State standards in these areas. Lastly, this will help us meet the social emotional needs of our economically disadvantaged students, which is 58% of our student population, and our special education students, which is 19% of the student population.

The 2024-25 Budget increases school spending from last year \$936,774.15, or 7.53%. We are able to sustain this type of increase, make staff additions, and not exceed our 2.36% tax cap because over the last three years we have wisely utilized the federal COVID monies, invested properly, and effectively utilized our BOCES and State aid. We are also using \$501,113.31 of our fund balance to balance the budget. As a reminder, a house in Fort Edward with an assessed value of \$200,000 will see an increase of \$88 for the year, or \$7.33 per month without STAR.

In summary, we have increased spending to add staff to meet State standards, expanded special education programming, and improved our physical plant. The four budget workshops leading up to our budget hearing are on our website. If you have questions, do not hesitate to contact me, or our business office at 518-747-4529. My cell number is 518-866-9722. It is my hope that on May 21st you will continue to support the Fort Edward Union Free School District by voting.

Absentee Ballots

Absentee ballots are available for registered voters who are unable to vote in person. You must request an application for an absentee ballot at least seven (7) days before the election. Call Keaysie Ferguson, School District Clerk, at 518-747-4529 x 3113 for assistance.

Early Ballots

Early ballots applications must be requested (7) days before the election.

Voter Qualifications

A person shall be entitled to vote at the Annual School Election who is:

- A citizen of the United States
- 18 years of age
- A resident within the district for a period of 30 days preceding the vote

Tax Rate Calculations

The final tax rate is set in August when the town assessment and equalization rates are established. The only portion of the tax rate that the school district controls is the tax levy, which is the amount the district asks residents to pay to maintain programs and services for students.

School Board Election

To elect five (5) members of the Board of Education;

One Board member is to succeed Christina Durkee, who resigned effective June 1, 2023, for the remainder of her term, commencing immediately after the election or as close thereto upon taking an oath of office, and expires on June 30, 2025;

One Board member is to succeed Amanda Durkee, who resigned effective August 31, 2023, for the remainder of her term, commencing immediately after the election or as close thereto upon taking an oath of office, and expires on June 30, 2026;

One Board member is to succeed Ella Collins, who resigned effective June 30, 2024, for the remainder of her term, commencing immediately after or as close thereto upon taking an oath of office, and expires on June 30, 2026; and

Two Board members for each a five (5) year term, commencing on July 1, 2024 and expiring on June 30, 2029 to succeed Thomas Roche and Timothy Clark, whose terms expire on June 30, 2024.

Estimated Expenditures

Administrative	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Proposed	Dollar Difference
Board of Education	\$ 7,315.00	\$ 19,265.00	\$ 11,950.00
Superintendent's Office	\$ 224,610.00	\$ 214,203.13	\$ (10,406.87)
Finance	\$ 659,809.00	\$ 356,560.00	\$ (303,249.00)
District Staffing	\$ 17,360.00	\$ 20,750.00	\$ 3,390.00
Central Services	\$ 118,200.00	\$ 142,300.00	\$ 24,100.00
Special Items	\$ 119,278.00	\$ 129,882.00	\$ 10,604.00
Administration and Improvement	\$ 278,001.83	\$ 319,726.00	\$ 41,724.17
Inservice Training-Instruction	\$ 31,000.00	\$ 40,850.00	\$ 9,850.00
Employee Benefits	\$ 93,199.00	\$ 105,500.00	\$ 12,301.00
Total Administrative	\$ 1,548,772.83	\$ 1,349,036.13	\$ (199,736.70)
Capital			
Operation of Plant	\$ 510,744.15	\$ 858,713.85	\$ 347,969.70
Maintenance of Plant	\$ 120,900.00	\$ 187,469.50	\$ 66,569.50
Judgements & Claims + Property Tax Refund	\$ 7,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	\$ 5,000.00
Employee Benefits	\$ 115,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ (15,000.00)
Debt Service	\$ 968,900.00	\$ 968,900.00	\$ 0
Total Capital	\$ 1,722,544.15	\$ 2,127,083.35	\$ 404,539.20
Instructional Program			
Instructional	\$ 2,903,225.79	\$ 3,170,318.68	\$ 267,092.89
Special Instruction	\$ 2,454,431.34	\$ 2,411,985.49	\$ (42,445.85)
Career and Technical Education	\$ 499,857.00	\$ 558,315.73	\$ 58,458.73
Pupil Services	\$ 186,983.60	\$ 418,861.24	\$ 231,877.64
Extra Curricular	\$ 186,368.02	\$ 266,781.76	\$ 80,413.74
Transportation	\$ 324,012.40	\$ 375,863.00	\$ 51,850.60
Civic Activities	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 0
Census	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0
Employee Benefits	\$ 2,500,431.03	\$ 2,585,154.93	\$ 84,723.90
Interfund	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 0
Total Program	\$ 9,178,309.18	\$ 9,910,280.83	\$ 731,971.65
Total Expenditures	\$12,449,626.16	\$13,386,400.31	\$936,774.15

NOTES

By New York State law, school budgets are broken into three categories: Administrative, Program, and Capital. The State Education Department recommends these categories represent ALL expenses related to their function. Most school districts in the state follow these recommendations.



Estimated Revenues

	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Proposed	Dollar Difference
Tax Levy	\$ 3,537,731.00	\$ 3,623,422.00	\$ 85,691.00
Other Income	\$ 246,530.00	\$ 907,950.00	\$ 661,420.00
State Aid Projection	\$ 8,439,164.00	\$ 8,353,915.00	\$ (85,249.00)
Community School Setaside	\$0	\$0	\$0
NYS-STVP	\$0	\$0	\$0
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	\$0	\$0	\$0
Reserves Appropriated	\$0	\$0	\$0
Fund Balance Appropriated	\$ 226,201.00	\$ 501,113.31	\$ 274,912.31
Total Revenue	\$12,449,626.00	\$13,386,400.31	\$936,774.31

Property Tax Report Card

	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget	Percent Change
Total Budgeted Amount, not including Separate Propositions	\$12,449,626	\$13,386,400	7.52%
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$3,537,731	\$3,623,422	
B. Tax Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Tax Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$3,537,731	\$3,623,422	2.42%
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit	\$8,601	\$21,544	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$3,529,130	3,601,878	
H. Total Proposed Tax Levy for School Purposes, <u>Excluding</u> Permissible Exclusions and Levy for Library Debt, Plus Prior Year Tax Cap Reserve (E - B - F + D)	\$3,529,130	\$3,601,878	
I. Difference (G - H); (negative value requires 60% voter approval)	\$0	\$0	
Public School Enrollment	366	375	2.46%
Consumer Price Index			4.12%
	2023-24 Actual	2024-25 Estimated	
Adjusted Restricted Fund Balance	\$1,964,563	\$2,609,989	
Assigned Appropriated Fund Balance	\$226,201	\$501,113	
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance	\$2,509,989	\$588,876	
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance as a Percent of the Total Budget	20.16%	4.40%	

*Please note that this Property Tax Report Card presentation is in accordance with NYS Education Law sections 1608, 1716(7) and 2601-a(3).

*To learn more about how real property affects overall school taxes, please visit: www.orps.state.ny.us. The Fort Edward Union Free School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, handicap, or age. Inquiries concerning this policy of equal opportunity should be made to the Title IX and Section 504 Coordinator: 518-747-4529.

2024-2025 BUDGET



The STAR Program

The STAR program provides property tax relief to residents. Basic STAR is available to eligible homeowners and provides Fort Edward residents a \$536 reduction on the full assessed value of the home.

The Enhanced STAR is available to homeowners aged 65 and over with an annual income under \$93,200 and provides a \$1,072 reduction on the full assessed value of the home.

Applications for STAR are available at the Office of the Assessor and online at tax.ny.gov/star.

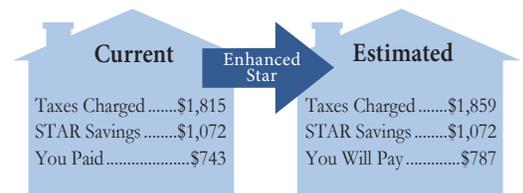
Maximum STAR tax savings can't exceed more than 2% of the prior year maximum savings.

Property Tax and STAR Program Example

Based on tentative figures of a house with an assessed value of \$100,000 and the **estimated tax** of \$18.59 per \$1,000 of assessed value.



Estimated Tax Increase \$44 / Year = \$3.67 Month



2024-25 Ballot Items



PROPOSITION 1 Adopt Annual Budget

Shall the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District, Town of Fort Edward, in the County of Washington, be authorized to expend \$13,386,400.31 for fiscal year 2024-2025?



PROPOSITION 2 Capital Project

SHALL the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District be authorized to: (1) reconstruct, renovate and improve various District buildings, facilities and sites, acquire original furnishings, equipment, machinery or apparatus required for the purpose for which such buildings, facilities and sites are to be used and pay costs incidental thereto, at a maximum aggregate cost of \$14,700,000; (2) expend such sum for such purpose; (3) levy the necessary tax therefore, to be levied and collected in annual installments in such years and in such amounts as may be determined by the Board of Education in accordance with Section 416 of the Education Law, taking into account state aid; and (4) in anticipation of the collection of such tax, issue bonds and notes of the School District at one time or from time to time in the principal amount not to exceed \$14,700,000, and levy a tax to pay the interest on said obligations when due?



PROPOSITION 3 Bus Purchase

SHALL the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District be authorized to purchase one (1) 66-passenger school bus at a maximum aggregate cost not to exceed \$178,863.50 and (2) expend an amount not to exceed \$178,863.50, less state aid received, from the District's Transportation Reserve Fund for such purpose with the expenditure of such funds from the Transportation Reserve having no impact on the tax levy of the District for the 2024-2025 school year?

PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING

Monday, May 13, 2023

5:30 PM
Fort Edward Auditorium

Budget Q&A



How are school tax bills calculated?



School tax bills are calculated using a property's assessed value, as determined by the local town assessor, and the property tax rate. STAR exemptions or other exclusions can reduce school tax bills for eligible residents.



What is the difference between tax levy and tax rate?



The tax levy is the total amount of money a school district raises in taxes each year from property owners in the district.

Tax rates are calculated by dividing the total amount of the levy by the total taxable assessed value in a community. Tax rates are affected by changes in municipal assessments and state equalization rates. The tax rate is used to calculate each property tax bill.



How can STAR reduce my school taxes?



New York State's School Tax Relief Program, or STAR, provides partial school property tax savings to eligible homeowners. Most New Yorkers who own and live in their homes are eligible for STAR savings on their primary residence. These are two STAR programs, basic and enhanced, with different eligibility requirements.



Are taxpayers' STAR savings factored into the budget?



No. The STAR program is tax relief for homeowners paid for by New York State through state taxes. This tax relief for homeowners does not affect the school district budget.



What is a "fund balance" and how does it help offset what I pay in school taxes?



Fund balance is created when there is money left over at the end of the fiscal year, either by the district spending less than budgeted or receiving more revenue than anticipated. An "unassigned" fund balance provides monies that can be used for a variety of needs. Unlike reserve funds which are targeted for specific purposes.

As part of the 2024-2025 budget, Fort Edward plants to allocate \$1.2 million from its fund balance to fund our proposed capital project.



What would a contingent budget mean for Fort Edward?



For Fort Edward, bringing the tax levy increase down to zero means that the 2024-2025 contingent budget would require the district to cut approximately \$273,902 from the current spending plan.

After eliminating money from non-contingent expenses as required, The school board would have to discuss and prioritize items to be eliminated from the budget. Items on the priority list could include but not be limited to, staffing, extracurricular activities, field trips and athletics.

Top Students Announced

Fort Edward UFSD is pleased to announce the valedictorian and salutatorian for the Class of 2024.



Valedictorian Preston Gulick is the son of Stephanie and Mark Gulick. Preston has competed in bowling and tennis. He is an active member of the National Honor Society. Preston is completing his studies in the Advanced Manufacturing Program through SUNY Adirondack, where he was inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. Upon graduation, Preston plans to enter the workforce.



Salutatorian Gabriel Glass is the son of Joy and Michael Glass. Gabriel has competed in basketball, bowling, and football. He is class of 2024 vice-president and a member of our school band and the National Honor Society. Gabriel is completing his studies in the Business and Entrepreneurship Program through SUNY Adirondack. He plans to complete this program next year where he will earn his associates degree.

Positivity Project

To empower America's youth to build positive relationships and become their best selves.

The Positivity Project (P2) at Fort Edward is a nationally utilized character education program that emphasizes strength building vocabulary and turns them into cultural building blocks for school communities, through classroom lessons and assemblies. This program is not only used nationally but in our neighboring schools as well, such as South Glens Falls Middle School, Corinth and Mechanicville.

Since September, we have been incorporating The Positivity Project (P2) to foster positive character-based relationships among our students. By consistently integrating P2 into our curriculum, we have observed significant growth in students' self-awareness, empathy, and ability to form meaningful connections with others.

Our daily announcements now include P2 scripts to reinforce the character strength of the week, while teachers allocate time each day to teach P2 lessons. We are also infusing character strengths vocabulary, which

we consider as "academic vocabulary," into various aspects of the school day, especially in English Language Arts classes.

"P2 has inspired our classmates to dream BIG and become better people."

*Everleigh Donahue
Third Grade Student*

To support our school-wide focus on character strengths and positive relationships, students in grades PK-5 participate in monthly P2 Assemblies. During these assemblies, classes showcase skits, songs, and video testimonials that highlight character strengths such as RESPECT, KINDNESS, LOVE, and OPTIMISM.

In the high school, we hold quarterly assemblies that celebrate academic achievements and emphasize the P2 qualities of our students. We have even had the privilege of hosting guest speakers like national speaker Jacy Good, who shared valuable insights on the impact of distracted driving

during one of our P2 assemblies.

The positive impact of the P2 program on our school community and culture has been remarkable. It has created a shared vocabulary across all grade levels, allowing students to connect through a common language of character strengths.

Each week we share with families the strength we're working and connect families to additional resources to support the P2 lessons being taught at school.

We are thrilled to witness the positive growth and enthusiasm among our students as they embrace the values of The Positivity Project. The Fort Edward UFSD has implemented P2 so well that our efforts have been recognized by high ranking members of the P2 organization, and we have been asked to present in Atlanta this summer at the P2 conference which will be attended by schools from all over the U.S!



Fortify Our Future - Capital Project

PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Safety & Security Enhancements:
\$3,134,187

Facilities Improvements
\$2,169,848

Roofing Repair
\$4,774,129

Heating Ventilation
and Air Conditioning
\$3,526,874

NO ADDITIONAL TAX IMPACT



Digital Rendering of New Playground

OUR PLAN

On May 21, 2024, Fort Edward Union Free School District voters will vote on a \$14,700,000 capital project titled, "Fortify our Future". The proposed project will focus on 4 key areas: safety and security, facilities improvements, roofing repair, and HVAC. The Capital Project is 90% funded through state aid and is a tax-neutral project for the Fort Edward community. This project will have no additional impact on your taxes.

Questions and Answers

Q How does this project benefit the community?

A The Fort Edward School District is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

- Improves building safety and security.
- Maintains a quality school environment that is a critical part of a vibrant community.
- Constructs a playground that is accessible to all students and community members.

Q Where can I learn more about the project?

A For more information about the project please visit our website at www.fortedward.org/capitalproject. Alternatively, you can contact our business office at (518) 747-4529 Ext. 3105

Q How much is it going to cost?

A The total cost of the project is \$1,700,000. For district residents owning a home or property, there is NO estimated tax increase per year for the proposed project. The district will receive 90% state aid on the project. The community portion of the project (10%) will be paid using the district current fund balance.

Q Why does the district require so much infrastructure work?

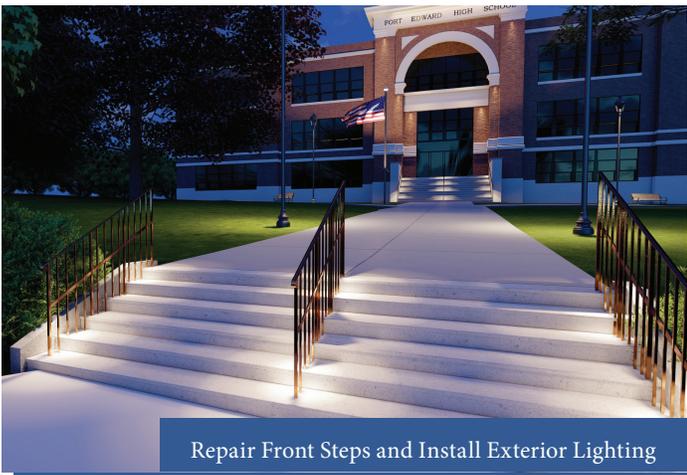
A The last large-scale infrastructure project occurred in 2018. The bulk of this project includes large scale infrastructure repairs and upgrades that have not been included in previous smaller projects, such as repairing of the leaking roofs at all schools.



Roofing Repairs and Replacements



Replace Original Sidewalks



Repair Front Steps and Install Exterior Lighting



Refinish Gym Floor and Install Air Conditioning

Project Highlights



Safety and Security Enhancements

- Repaving of student drop-off area and parking lots
- Replacement of aging sidewalk in front of the school buildings.
- Additional Exterior Lighting
- Refinish the high school front stair and replace front entry doors.
- Reconfigure the main office to add a secure visitor waiting area.
- Redesign the front office and nurses office to provide additional office space.
- Install a backup generator



Facilities Improvements

- Resurfacing of the elementary playground.
- Installation of ADA compliant playground equipment.
- Refinishing of the large gymnasium floor.
- Replacing gymnasium wall padding.
- Repair exterior brick work.
- Cleaning of high school exterior masonry.



Roofing Repair

- Replace failed roofing areas in select areas.
- Repair or replace damaged roof flashing.



HVAC

- Install air conditioning units in the large gymnasium.
- Repair / replace broken heating units.
- Install air conditioning in the second floor of the elementary school.
- Place air condition units in select third floor high school classrooms.
- Replace exhaust units in the art and technology classrooms.
- Increase direct digital building controls for better energy efficiencies.

PLANNING

Jan 2023 - May 2024



BIDDING

Oct. 2025 - Dec. 2025



COMPLETION

Spring 2027



DESIGN

May 2024 - Jan. 2025



CONSTRUCTION

Jan. 2026 - Dec. 2027



Fort Edward Union Free School District
 220 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY 12828
 www.fortedward.org

Richard DeMallie Ed. D., Superintendent of Schools
 Erin Russo, PK-12 Principal
 Mallory Lansley, Director of Pupil Services

Board of Education
 Thomas Roche, President
 Ella Collins, Vice President
 Tim Clark
 John Guglielmo
 Taylor Boucher
 Audra Aul
 Sarah Buschynski

NON-PROFIT
 U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Fort Edward, NY 12828
 Permit #5

*****ECRWSS***
 POSTAL CUSTOMER**

2024-25 BUDGET

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for 2023-2024 School Year	Budget Proposed for 2024-2025 School Year	Contingency Budget 2024-25 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$12,449,626.16	\$13,386,400.31	\$13,112,498.31
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$936,774.15	\$662,872.15
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		7.53 %	5.32%
Change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)		4.12%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount, Net of Reserve	\$3,537,731.00	\$3,623,422.00	
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)	\$3,537,731.00	\$3,623,422.00	\$3,537,731.00
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$8,601.00	\$21,544.00	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$3,529,130.00	\$3,601,878.00	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$3,529,130.00	\$3,601,878.00	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)**	\$0	\$0	
Administrative component	\$1,548,772.83	\$1,349,036.13	\$1,323,276.13
Program component	\$9,178,309.18	\$9,910,280.83	\$9,786,888.83
Capital component	\$1,722,544.15	\$2,127,083.35	\$2,002,333.35

* Pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law, should the proposed budget be defeated, certain program components would be reduced including equipment and non-ordinary expenses such as supplies and contractual agreements and certain extra wage supplements.

Contingency budget figures contained herein are estimates. Final decisions regarding contingency budget appropriations will be made by the Board of Education, if necessary, pursuant to section 2023 of the Education law. This is an estimate of the reductions in each component. Since the Contingency Budget may not include a levy higher than the prior year's levy (0% levy growth), any difference would have to be made up using fund balance or ordinary contingent expenses may have to be reduced to ensure there is no tax levy increase. Schools must also adhere to the contingent budget administrative cap which is the lesser of the % of the administrative component in the prior year budget (exclusive of capital) or the % of the administrative component in the last defeated budget proposal for the current school year (exclusive of capital).

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2024-25 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings	\$536

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2024-25 by the qualified voters of the Fort Edward Union Free School District, Washington County, New York, will be held Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between the hours of noon and 8:00pm, prevailing time in the Fort Edward School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.