SWEET HOME SOURCE

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE



SPRING 2024/BUDGET
ISSUE 02

MUSICALS SHINE

The talent of our Middle and High School students and staff was front and center this year for productions of 'The Little Mermaid, Jr.' and 'The Addams Family - A New Musical'.

MULTICULTURAL NIGHTS

The tradition of sharing food, performance, culture, and fun continues at Sweet Home Multicultural Nights.

DISTRICT BUDGET

Learn about the 2024-25 proposed District budget and Board of Education candidates.

THE 2024-25 BUDGET ISSUE

EVERY STUDENT, ONE COMMUNITY, READY FOR THE FUTURE.



A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT



Dear Sweet Home Community,

The Sweet Home Central School District is proud to present to our community the proposed budget for the 2024-25 school year. When building our school budget, the goals are to place student interests and programming above all else, while remaining fiscally responsible to our school community. This budget accomplishes both of these goals and prepares us for a future where 21st century learning, and developing new skills to compete in a global economy, are more critical than ever.

Our Board of Education guides the work in terms of the budget. Their goals and priorities, in particular to enhance student programming while remaining fiscally responsible, provide the roadmap for District Office to start the process in the Fall. After they set their priorities, we then dive deep into the Sweet Home Strategic Plan to ensure we are positioned to meet the plan's goals and to have the resources necessary so students meet our graduation standards. We then communicate with our stakeholder groups to determine their needs and wants within our financial parameters. We are proud to say that our budget meets the goals and priorities set forth by the Board of Education, addresses the needs of our stakeholder groups, and remains fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of Sweet Home.

This doesn't mean we are free of challenges and concerns. Continual manipulation of the Foundation Aid formula by New York State makes it difficult to plan for our future. The promise by Albany to fully fund Foundation Aid (our general operating aid) lasted for one year (2023-24). That promise is now gone, and nearly $615,000 of aid we would have had if the state kept its promise, is also gone. While we are financially sound as a District, Albany continues to change the playing field making the budget process more and more difficult. Next year, the state is attempting to alter how schools are funded, leaving more questions than answers. Finally, inflation continues to negatively impact our economy. Higher prices on goods and services seem like they are here to stay, yet paychecks are failing to keep up with inflation. We will of course continue to monitor developments in Albany, and advocate strongly for the students of our District.

The budget adopted by the Board of Education and being presented for your approval on May 21 totals $100,410,422, a 3.6% increase from the 2023-24 school year. While this may seem significant, we are pleased to report that additional state aid due to an increase in our enrollment has offset that cost to our taxpayers. Even with a lower than expected foundation aid increase, our tax cap number, or maximum percentage tax increase allowed by law, is 3.90%. However, in keeping with our priorities set forth by the Board of Education, we are not asking our taxpayers to approve that increase, instead we are asking that our taxpayers approve a 1.8% tax increase.

Leading up to our annual district vote on May 21, we invite all members of our school community to our annual budget hearing and meet the candidate night on May 7 at 6:30 PM in the Vergils Community Center at District Office. The Board will also conduct a study session that evening. On May 14 at 6:30 PM the Board will hold a voting session where the public can also provide input and feedback on the budget. If between now and then you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the District Office.

It is critical that we reach our mission of "Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future." We are extremely confident that this budget meets the goals of our Strategic Plan, enhances student programming, and provides a brighter future for all that we are fortunate to serve. We thank the Sweet Home community for your unconditional support of the work of our great District, and we look forward to seeing you on budget vote day, this May 21.

Dr. Michael V. Ginestre

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

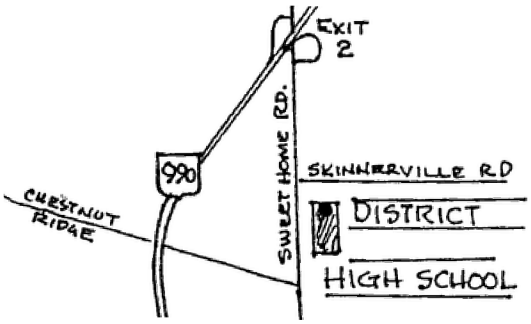
2024-25 BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 21, 2024 7AM-9PM

WHEN & WHERE?

Voting on the 2024-25 budget will take place between the hours of 7 AM - 9 PM on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road in Amherst. The Vergils Center is on the north end of the building located adjacent to the District Offices and on the corner of Sweet Home and Skinnersville Roads.

NORMAN C. VERGILS COMMUNITY CENTER
1901 SWEET HOME ROAD
CORNER OF SWEET HOME & SKINNERSVILLE ROADS
ENTER DOOR #6



WHAT WILL YOU NEED?

TO VOTE, YOU MUST:

- Provide proof of residency
- Be a resident of the district for at least 30 days
- Be at least 18 years old
- Be a U.S. citizen

YOU NEED NOT:

- Be a registered voter
- Be a homeowner

PROOF OF RESIDENCY REQUIRED TO VOTE:

All eligible voters will need to provide proof of residency in order to cast their ballots at the Budget Vote on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. According to Chapter 775 of the Laws of New York, voters must present one form of proof which testifies to their legal address.

- Board of Elections card
- Post-marked mail
- Driver's license
- Rental/lease receipt
- Non-driver Identification card
- Utility bill

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

The Sweet Home Central School District allows for the use of Absentee Ballots at all district votes and elections.

1) Request an absentee ballot application by calling (716) 250-1402 or emailing District Clerk Sherry McNamara at smcnamara@sweethomeschools.org. The ballot will be included with the application.

If returning the application and ballot by mail, make your request no later than 4:00 PM on Tuesday, May 13, 2024. If returning the application and ballot in person, make your request on or before May 20, 2024.

2) Completed applications and absentee ballots will not be accepted after 5:00 PM on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, to the District Clerk's Office.

Any questions regarding voting policy should be directed to the District Clerk's Office at 250-1402 between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM.



A MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD OF EDUCATION

At our April 16 voting meeting, the Sweet Home Board of Education adopted and recommended to the community the proposed 2024-25 school district budget. Our goal with any budget is to meet our mission of "Every Child, One Community, Ready for the Future," while balancing the considerations of the great taxpayers of our District. This budget meets those goals.

The 2024-25 Sweet Home Central School Budget totals $100,410,422, a 3.6 percent increase from the previous year. This increase is supported through additional Foundation Aid (general operating funds) from New York State as a result of increases in our overall enrollment. While our tax cap number is 3.90%, it was a high priority of the Board not to pass that entire burden onto our taxpayers. Through the use of reserves and careful planning in terms of staffing, we are proposing a 1.8% increase in the tax levy for this budget.

When we adopted the Sweet Home Strategic Plan last year, we instructed the District Office to use it as a roadmap for key decision-making. We made it clear that the implementation of the plan is and will remain a priority, and that providing the resources to do just that is critical for us to meet our mission as a District. This budget will continue to meet the needs of our students, help them prepare for an ever-evolving landscape, and develop them into the Sweet Home graduate as described in the Strategic Plan.

While enhancing programming, the Board's commitment to the social and emotional well-being of all students remains strong. This budget enhances support for student services; provides resources at the District and building levels in the areas of Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Leader in Me; and allows for the District to assess areas of student need and address those needs.

Our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives remain strong and will continue to drive change in the District. This year, the DEI committees worked on the theme of belonging to ensure that all students and stakeholders have a voice at Sweet Home. We appreciate the work of the DEI Teaching and Learning committee as they continually monitor the progress of the Strategic Plan. The DEI Workforce Diversity Committee laid out new training and enhanced hiring practices to ensure we are finding the very best candidates to serve the students of our District. Also, the DEI Community Engagement committee continues to partner with the Northwest Amherst Community Center to provide programming for all members of our Sweet Home community.

The budget also provides resources to continue the planning process for our next major capital project. Community input for the project this year was strong and it was clear that the priority of our next capital project must be on our elementary buildings. We know, through your participation in the ThoughtExchange and focus groups, that the project must address spacing issues, as well as enhance our buildings to support 21st century learning. Planning work will continue in 2024-25 as we complete the scope of the project, study our increasing enrollment, and prepare for a late Fall 2025 vote. Next school year will certainly be an exciting time for our District.

Also, it goes without saying that we greatly appreciate the work of our administration, faculty and staff, especially those that are entering the next phase of life. For those that have called Sweet Home home for decades, we sincerely thank you for your service to our students and want you to know that you will be sorely missed. It is the people that make our District great, and your work will never be duplicated or forgotten. We wish you nothing but the best in retirement and we are proud to say that you are Panthers for life.

Finally, we could not do this work without the support of our great community. We believe next year's budget will enhance student programming, provide for the social and emotional needs of our students, and prepare us for our future. We hope to see you on May 21, as voting will take place from 7 AM - 9 PM in the Vergils Community Center next to the District Office. Thank you again for your support as we achieve our mission of "Every Student, One Community, Ready for the Future."

2024-25 BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 21, 2024 7AM-9PM

During its voting meeting on Tuesday, April 16, the Board of Education of the Sweet Home School District approved the adoption of the proposed budget for the 2024-25 school year.

The proposed $100,410,422 budget, includes the spending of $929,278 for three (3) 70-passenger electric buses and three (3) 30 passenger buses. The District has been awarded $661,000 in grant funding to aid in the purchase of the electric buses.

The total budget will see a 3.6% increase over last year. The proposed budget represents a 1.8% tax levy increase which falls within the New York State imposed tax cap for the District of 3.90%. Because the budget stays within the property tax levy limit, it needs only a simple majority to pass.

The Town of Amherst will move to full valuation for the coming year with its equalization rate moving from 62% to 100%. The District used 2023 assessed values from the Town of Tonawanda and projected full value assessments supplied by the Amherst Town Clerk to estimate tax rates. While tax rates and tax bills will be officially established in August, estimated homestead tax rates for the 2024-25 District budget are $9.16 per thousand for the Town of Amherst and $39.20 per thousand for the Town of Tonawanda. On a home in Amherst assessed at $150,000, residents can expect a tax bill of $1,374. On a similar home in the Town of Tonawanda, residents can expect a tax bill of $1,411. Basic STAR savings are not included in the figures. Basic STAR savings for the Town of Amherst is $363 and $353 for the Town of Tonawanda. Once again, please note that these are estimates based on current year assessments for the Town of Tonawanda and projected assessments for the Town of Amherst.

In the school board election, Danyelle Anthon, Bill Kenney, Jonathan Makeley, Alan Plath and Dirk Rabenold will seek election to the Board's two open seats. The top vote-getter will be elected to a five-year term expiring on June 30, 2029 and the runner-up will fill the remainder of the term vacated by the resignation of Kailey McDonald. That term expires June 30, 2025.

There will also be an additional proposition on the ballot seeking authorization to use general funds in the amount of $52,920 over the next two budgetary years to pay for lease expenses in order to maintain the temporary classrooms on the Maplemere campus. Since 2021 those expenses have been funded by federal grants. With the last of federal grants set to expire in September, the District must seek voter approval to use general funds for these expenses.

The Annual District Budget Vote & School Board Election will be held Tuesday, May 21 from 7 AM to 9 PM in the Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road in Amherst.

2024-25 PROPOSED BUDGET

$100,410,422

- **Election of two Board of Education members** - The term of Joshua Feldmann expires on June 30, 2024. Another seat is available following the resignation of Kailey McDonald. That term expires on June 30, 2025. Five candidates seek election to the two open board seats: Danyelle Anthon, Bill Kenney, Jonathan Makeley, Alan Plath and Dirk Rabenold.
- **Under the Property Tax Levy Cap** - The proposed budget seeks an increase in the overall tax levy of 1.8%, falling below the State imposed Tax Cap for the District of 3.9% and well below the rate of inflation.
- **Maintains Current Program and New Buses** - Proposed budget maintains current programming at all levels and authorizes the spending of $929,000 for a total of six (6) new busses.
- **Proposition to expend $52,920 in general funds to maintain temporary classrooms** on the Maplemere Elementary campus for the next two (2) school years.

DOLLARS FOR SCHOLARS CHICKEN BBQ

Tuesday, May 21 from 4-7 PM

- BW's BBQ chicken dinner with two salads, a roll, & butter
- Tickets are $12
- Pre-sale tickets available by calling 250-1406
- Take-out only, walk-ups welcome
- All proceeds will be used for scholarships for graduating seniors
- The Sweet Home Education Foundation (SHEF) will be on-site selling desserts

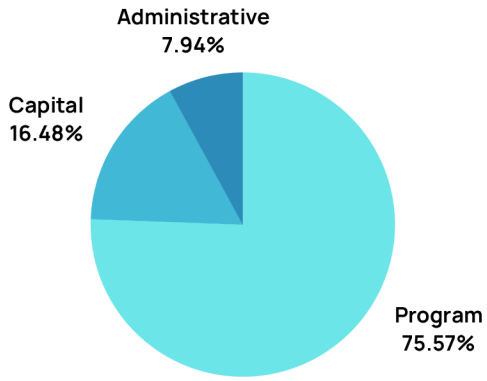


SUMMARY OF REVENUES

Description	Budgeted 2023-24	Budgeted 2024-25
REAL PROPERTY TAXES	$53,321,588	$54,268,072
APPROPRIATED FUND BALANCE	$2,420,000	$2,420,000
USE OF RETIREMENT CONTRIBUTION RESERVE	$50,000	$50,000
USE OF UNEMPLOYMENT RESERVE	$0	$0
USE OF EMPLOYEE BENFITS LIAB. RESERVE	$1,100,000	$220,350
USE OF WORKERS COMP. RESERVE	$75,000	$75,000
USE OF TAX CERTIORARI RESERVE	$0	$0
USE OF DEBT SERVICE RESERVE	$800,000	$515,000
PAYMENT IN LIEU OF TAXES	$558,000	$505,000
NON-PROP TAXES-SALES TAX	$4,500,000	$5,100,000
COMM ED TUITION & FEES	$95,000	$95,000
TUITION-OTH DIST-FOSTER	$100,000	$100,000
TUITION-OTHER DISTRICTS	$300,000	$300,000
INTEREST / POTENTIAL FEMA	$140,000	$165,000
RENT REAL PROPERTY-BOCES	$455,000	$490,000
STATE AID-BASIC FORMULA	$21,675,000	$23,530,000
STATE AID-BUILDING AID	$3,300,000	$3,400,000
ST AID-EXCESS COST	$5,150,000	$5,700,000
BOCES AID	$1,600,000	$1,650,000
STATE AID-CHAPTER STUDENTS	$50,000	$50,000
TEXTBOOK AID	$219,000	$222,000
COMPUTER HARDWARE AID	$51,000	$53,000
COMPUTER SOFTWARE AID	$59,000	$62,000
LIBRARY AID	$22,000	$25,000
STATE AID-OTHER	$0	$540,000
Other Receipts	$846,000	$875,000
DISTRICT TOTALS	**$96,886,588**	**$100,410,422**

2024-25 PROPOSED SCHOOL BUDGET

The following budget information has been modified to comply with the Budget Reform Legislation of 1997. Under this legislation, the budget must be presented in three (3) parts: **ADMINISTRATIVE, PROGRAM, AND CAPITAL.**



PROGRAM

2023-24 Budget: $73,860,212
2024-25 Budget: $75,882,180

The instructional component accounts for the instruction and educational support for the district's 3700 students. Salaries of teachers, guidance counselors, psychologists, social workers, coaches, therapists, teachers aides, computer technicians, and related clerical/support staff are included, as are their fringe benefits. Transportation (including contracted transportation), instructional computers, supplies, and textbooks, special education services, and expenses for summer school are included in this component.

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

Summary of Expenditures	2023-24 Budget	2024-25 Budget
Administrative		
Superintendent & Board of Education	$339,433	$353,356
Business Administration	$572,759	$570,174
Legal Services	$264,970	$307,180
Human Resources	$503,478	$538,280
Education/Community Services	$8,900	$8,900
Central Services & Other	$1,551,735	$1,675,204
Instructional Administration	$2,737,866	$2,912,405
Employee Benefits	$1,507,536	$1,610,263
Total Administrative	**$7,486,677**	**$7,975,762**
Program		
Legal Services	$5,000	$10,000
Teaching-Regular Schools	$32,912,725	$33,161,639
Special Education	$9,945,489	$10,269,131
Occupational Education	$1,025,848	$1,135,581
Teaching Special Schools	$202,820	$202,820
School Library & AV	$30,898	$30,898
Computer Instruction Services	$1,556,838	$1,882,977
Attendance & Support Services	$2,902,187	$3,073,067
Extracurricular Activities	$805,091	$850,252
Transportation	$6,220,087	$6,408,455
Employee Benefits	$18,093,229	$18,697,360
Interfund Transfers	$160,000	$160,000
Total Program	**$73,860,212**	**$75,882,180**
Capital		
Operations & Maintenance	$5,498,643	$6,054,611
Refund of Real Property Tax	$75,000	$75,000
Transportation-Bus Purchase	$738,000	$929,278
Civic Activities	$47,500	$47,500
Employee Benefits	$1,403,304	$1,610,172
Debt Service	$7,677,252	$7,735,918
Interfund Transfers	$100,000	$100,000
Total Capital	**$15,539,699**	**$16,552,479**
TOTAL BUDGET	**$96,886,588**	**$100,410,422**

ADMINISTRATIVE

2023-24 Budget: $7,486,677
2024-25 Budget: $7,975,762

The administrative component of the budget provides for the overall general support and management activities including the Board of Education, superintendent's office, curriculum and staff development, printing and publishing, and supervision and support in each of the six schools. Also included are expenses for legal services, liability and property insurance, and salaries and benefits for the administrative staff.

CAPITAL

2023-24 Budget: $15,539,699
2024-25 Budget: $16,552,479

Includes buildings and grounds salaries, equipment, vehicles, repairs, rentals, contracts, and supplies for all the custodial, grounds, and maintenance of all district buildings. Includes judgments and claims and refund of prior year property taxes due to reassessments and/or town clerical errors. Includes debt service principal and interest and interfund transfers for existing capital projects. Includes all fringe benefits for above employees.

TAX BILLS WITH EQUALIZATION RATES

Based on Average Assessed Value Using 2023-24 Assessed Values for the Town of Tonawanda and;
2024-25 Projected Assessed Values for the Town of Amherst as provided to the District by the Town Clerk's office.

The Sweet Home School District and its residents benefit from a strong commercial and residential tax base. Sweet Home homeowners realize further tax reductions through a lower tax rate called a homestead tax rate. Sweet Home's application of this concept, known as homesteading, serves as the model for successful tax differentiation programs across the state. These factors, combined with strong fiscal management by the Board of Education, allow the district to provide a first rate education for one of the lowest costs in Western New York. The impact on an average home is displayed below.

School Tax on an Average Assessed Value Home				
	Amherst		Tonawanda	
	2023-24	2024-25	2023-24	2024-25
Equalization Rate	62.0%	100.0%	24.0%	24.0%
Assessed Value	$93,000	$150,000	$36,000	$36,000
Tax Rate	$15.47	$9.16	$40.11	$39.20
Calculated Tax Bill	$1,439	$1,374	$1,444	$1,411
Estimated Increase (Decrease)		-($65)		-($33)

Basic STAR savings for the Town of Amherst is $363 and $353 for the Town of Tonawanda.
Equalization rates used for this application: Town of Amherst is 100% and 24% for the Town of Tonawanda.

PROPERTY TAX CAP - HOW IS IT FIGURED?

Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 (Part A - Property Tax Cap) established a tax levy limit ("property tax cap") that affects all local governments, most school districts in New York State, except New York City, and a host of other independent taxing entities such as library, fire, and water districts.

Under this law, the growth in the property tax levy begins at the lesser of 2% or the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI for this year is 4.1%. However, this rate can be increased by several local factors including:

- Local tax base growth factor
- Pension costs above a 2% increase
- Court orders/judgments above 5% of levy in prior year
- Capital expenditures related to construction or local expenses
- Changes in payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT)

The 2024-25 Sweet Home Tax Cap after consideration of all local factors is $55,403,513 or a 3.90% increase from 2023-24.

The proposed tax levy for the 2024-25 budget of $54,268,072 falls within the state imposed property tax cap of 3.90% for Sweet Home Central School District requiring only a simple majority of voters to pass. The 2024-25 tax levy increase in the proposed budget is 1.8%.

2024-25 DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE
SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 21, 2024 7AM-9PM

MEET THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE SWEET HOME BOARD OF EDUCATION

District residents will elect two (2) members to the Board of Education on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at the annual District Budget Vote. The term of Joshua Feldmann expires June 30, 2024. The term previously held by Kailey McDonald is open and will begin immediately post-election. Five (5) candidates seek election to the two (2) open board seats: Danyelle Anthon, Bill Kenney, Jonathan Makeley, Alan Plath, and Dirk Rabenold. The candidate receiving the most votes will be elected to a five-year term beginning July 1, 2024 and expiring on June 30, 2029. The candidate with the second-most votes will be elected to a 1+ year term beginning May 18, 2024 and expiring June 30, 2025. District residents can vote between the hours of 7AM - 9 PM on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School.

DANYELLE ANTHON



Since 2016, I have resided in Tonawanda with my two children, Oliver (16) and Matthew (11). I obtained my BS in Secondary English Education (grades 7-12) from Buffalo State University, and my MAEd in Education and Curriculum Instructional Design from the University of Hawaii at UofP in 2003. Additionally, I hold a Teacher Leadership Certification from Niagara University.

I taught 8th grade English at Mililani Middle School on Oahu before moving to Buffalo in 2009. I then began work as a district-level instructional coach for Buffalo Public Schools, aiding teachers through data and assessment systems. Over the years, I transitioned into instructional design for independent corporations, like Condé Nast, Neiman Marcus, and Amazon, creating learning and development programs to support workforce initiatives. Currently, I am contracted with Brookhaven National Laboratories.

I am a dedicated advocate for special needs individuals, focusing on educating others and fostering understanding and empathy in the disability community. I serve as an employee resource group leader for neurodivergent employees and their children at Brookhaven, with the goal of crafting an improved workplace environment.

This year, I have been involved in raising awareness and support for Sweet Home teachers during contract negotiations, encouraging community engagement.

Beyond my professional pursuits, I am a Bills fan, I love to bake, and I enjoy fostering animals for local rescue agencies.

I am enthusiastic about the opportunity to run for the school board, aiming to bring my commitment to supporting students, families, and teachers to the Sweet Home community.

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BILL KENNEY



My name is Bill Kenney and I am running for the Sweet Home Board of Education because I believe in what this district has to offer.

My wife Jesica and I moved to the Willow Ridge district back in 2009 and instantly knew that this is where we wanted to raise our family. As with any area, we have witnessed the good and bad, the ups and downs. But as I have had conversations with administrators, representatives and citizens of our area, the past is in the past, and now we must move forward together in a manner is befitting of the best district Erie County has to offer.

If elected, I promise to represent and implement the best interests of our community. With children in 7th, 4th and 1st grade, I've seen the effectiveness good educational programming for the Sweet Home students can do with the commitment from all sides and not just be a parrot for one perspective.

We have a massive budget coming up in this term and it is something all members of our area have the right to be a part of. Every student, parent and individual in the community deserves to have pride in what the board delivers to those it serves.

Over the last fifteen years in Sweet Home, I have been a citizen, a father and a coach. On May 21st, I humbly request that you vote to add education board member to that list.

Thank you. Go Panthers.

2024-25 DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE

SWEET HOME HIGH SCHOOL, MAY 21, 2024 7AM-9PM

MEET THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE SWEET HOME BOARD OF EDUCATION

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JONATHAN MAKELEY



Greetings, my name is Jonathan Makeley. It is an honor to run for the Sweet Home School Board.

I have lived in the district for the past 7 years. In this time, I have attended many school board meetings and have seen the work that goes on in our district. I have seen many great things from the people in our community, and I wish to contribute to the future success of our students.

I am a historian, with a focus on American reform movements. In my career, I have experience with researching and gaining an understanding of complex topics, and discussing them with others. As a school board member, I would seek to use these skills to better understand the issues affecting the district, to look for good approaches, and work with other members of the board and the community to help ensure that the children of this district receive a quality education.

As a historian, I have been involved with several different historical organizations, from which I have had experience serving on organizational boards, working with others to plan events, creating publications, designing policies, and planning budgets.

In 2016-2017, I served as a representative on the Curriculum and Teaching Committee of the College for Liberal Arts and Sciences at Alfred University, where I provided perspective and input on decisions regarding curriculum, teaching practices, and the operation of academic programs.

If elected, my goal would be to work with the other board members, staff, parents, and teachers, to navigate the challenges we face, improve the quality of education, support our teachers, and make sure that the children of this district develop the knowledge and skills that will benefit them throughout their lives.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

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ALAN PLATH



My name is Alan Plath, and I am excited to support our students, teachers, and administration by serving on the Sweet Home Board of Education. My sole purpose in taking on this challenge is to enhance the whole student experience. We need to foster our students' ability to become lifelong learners and achieve their academic, athletic, and performing arts goals by creating an environment where they can flourish educationally, socially, and emotionally.

My wife Kristan and I have resided in the Sweet Home District since 2003, where we have been raising our boys, Brayden (9th grade) and Carson (6th grade). Both have spent their entire academic journeys in the Sweet Home District. This has allowed us to personally see the challenges and opportunities that students and parents face from UPK through high school. As an active parent, I have contributed positively to the district, serving on the Glendale Principal Hiring Committee and Sweet Home Workforce Diversity Subcommittee. Additionally, I have held a leadership role as a Vice President for the Parkview Community Board for over 10 years. With confidence, I can provide the appropriate leadership and strategic direction to address critical district matters, leveraging a level-headed approach with the best interests of our residents, students, and teachers in mind.

Professionally, I have managed teams of 100+ and multimillion-dollar budgets for major organizations. Today, I operate a successful resume-writing business. For 15 years, I have been a strategic partner to executives globally, collaborating with them to achieve their professional goals.

I have also coached youth baseball for several years, increasing children's confidence and teaching them the value of teamwork.

I am eager to create a positive impact on our students, in collaboration with current Board members to continue to evolve Sweet Home into a district we can all be proud of.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

FOR THE SWEET HOME BOARD OF EDUCATION

District residents will elect two (2) members to the Board of Education on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 at the annual District Budget Vote. The term of Joshua Feldmann expires June 30, 2024. The term previously held by Kailey McDonald is open and will begin immediately post-election. Five (5) candidates seek election to the two (2) open board seats: Danyelle Anthon, Bill Kenney, Jonathan Makeley, Alan Plath, and Dirk Rabenold. The candidate receiving the most votes will be elected to a five-year term beginning July 1, 2024 and expiring on June 30, 2029. The candidate with the second-most votes will be elected to a 1+ year term beginning May 18, 2024 and expiring June 30, 2025. District residents can vote between the hours of 7AM - 9 PM on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 in the Norman C. Vergils Community Center of Sweet Home High School.

DIRK RABENOLD



The most important institutions today are our Public Schools. An educated populace and community participation help to guide those schools. The role of the School Board should be to ensure resources are used efficiently and effectively to provide a quality education.

Today, School Boards seem to have lost their way. They give more importance to the whims of the Board of Regents, Albany politicians and powerful unions rather than the education of our children.

My wife Robin and I are the proud parents of 3 grown children who were educated in Sweet Home Schools. They have given us 5 beautiful grandchildren. We have lived in this community for over 39 years.

I have previously served on the Sweet Home School board for 20 years. My time on the board included membership in the Erie County, New York State and National School Boards and I actively participated in their respective training, conferences, and committees.

I'm a Certified Financial Planner® professional who owns and operates a Financial Services company. I have a Business Management degree from Canisius College.

I have voluntarily served over the years on the Amherst Recreation Commission, Amherst Senior Citizen Foundation Board and Amherst Bicentennial Master Plan Committee. I have also been part of the WNY Students First group. Today I consider myself an advocate for Senior Citizens, giving them a voice in local policy decisions.

Board members have enormous responsibilities. They feel a moral obligation to support their schools with their knowledge and life experiences.

I will proudly represent your interests on the Sweet Home School Board. I promise to represent you, the Sweet Home community and work diligently to return the focus to the education of our children. I respectfully ask for your vote.







MULTICULTURAL NIGHTS A SUCCESS

MULTICULTURAL NIGHTS GIVE FAMILIES A CHANCE TO SHARE THEIR RECIPES AND TRADITIONS

Multicultural Nights at Sweet Home are one of the many things that make our district a unique and welcoming place for all families.

Planned and organized primarily by our English as a New Language (ENL) departments and PTO/PTAs/PTSAs, these nights are filled with a variety of events, celebrations, activities, and performances. Prior to the event, our schools communicate with families inviting them to sign up to bring a dish or share a tradition connected to their cultural heritage. Multicultural Nights are always well-attended, with hundreds of families coming together.

Attending a Multicultural Night is a great way to share in the sense of community within our district. Adults and children alike prepare and serve meals, participate in fashion shows, and perform traditional and modern dances.

Rachel Campbell, ENL teacher at Maplemere Elementary, says,

"MY FAVORITE THING ABOUT MULTICULTURAL NIGHT IS THAT STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES GET TO TEACH OTHERS ABOUT THEIR CULTURES THROUGH THE FOODS THEY BRING TO SHARE, AND THE PERFORMANCES THAT STUDENTS PUT ON THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT. EVERYONE LEARNS SOMETHING NEW EACH YEAR!" - RACHEL CAMPBELL

Our next Multicultural Night is Tuesday, May 21 from 5:30-7:30 PM at the Middle School. If you would like to contribute, contact the Middle School office. All are welcome to attend!





GLOBAL CONNECTIONS

HERITAGE HEIGHTS PROJECT CONNECTS TEACHERS AND STUDENTS TO SCHOOL IN GHANA

FAMILY CONNECTIONS INSPIRE TRIP

It started with an idea, and it has grown to a district-wide revolution. Six teachers at Heritage Heights Elementary were inspired by one of our Heritage Heights families who has roots in Ghanaian communities and schools.

They have since taken up the charge to plan a trip to Accra, Ghana scheduled for this summer, setting up collection bins throughout Heritage Heights. Their outreach work has become a curricular theme throughout the school, inspiring a performance of song and dance arranged by music teacher Deborah Zehler (pictured right). It is clear when you walk the halls of Heritage Heights that everyone is in the spirit of supporting this exciting opportunity for global connections.

While in Ghana, our Sweet Home teachers will visit the Merton International School and another local government school, collaborating with teachers and delivering donations of essential items like school supplies and toiletries that have been collected for each school.

Heritage Heights teacher Jill Grugnale says, “Our goal is to nurture lasting global connections between students and educators, fostering a deeper understanding of our diverse world through education.”

We look forward to sharing more about this trip in the future. If you would like to support their cause, scan the QR code below or drop off supply donations to the lobby at Heritage Heights Elementary.



Learn more and donate!



HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS TACKLE GAMBLING ADDICTION AWARENESS

Mr. Izydorczyk's Sweet Home High School Statistics class recently organized a Gambling Prevention Awareness Day. Students made custom t-shirts, created flyers, and partnered with local agencies to provide information to students and adults who stopped by their event outside the High School cafeteria.

Students shared vital statistics with their peers about the odds of winning and losing at gambling, and how the act of gambling can affect anyone's life. It was a great way to raise awareness for an addiction that often does not receive as much attention as others.

BUFFALO BANDITS TEACH FUNDAMENTALS

This year, the world champion Buffalo Bandits have visited Glendale Elementary and Sweet Home Middle School as part of their program to teach the fundamentals of lacrosse to local youth. They conducted lacrosse drills, signed autographs, and took photos with students & staff.

The visits were also an opportunity for our High School lacrosse teams to visit and work alongside the Bandits. It was a fantastic hands-on experience to potentially recruit future members of our Sweet Home Lacrosse program.



MAPLEMERE LEADERSHIP DAY BRINGS STUDENTS TOGETHER



In March, our High School Student Government members visited Maplemere Elementary to participate in their annual Leadership Day.

Each year, our High School leaders spend weeks planning activities for our younger students. This year, our Student Government planning was lead by Isabella Klein, Ariana Minhas, and Lily Fisher. It is a unique opportunity for students of all ages to work together on vital leadership skills and to discuss how to increase a sense of belonging in our schools.

Students broke into groups and answered questions about different cultural groups and identities. They collected puzzle pieces and formed the final puzzle to spell out "We Are Sweet Home". It was an exciting opportunity for our young leaders to learn together.









WINTER SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

CONGRATS TO ALL OUR STUDENT-ATHLETES AND COACHES FOR THEIR HARD WORK THIS WINTER SEASON

Girls Basketball
- Finished the season 10-10 in regular season
- Amber Murak scored her 1000 point against Depew
- Team led by Amber Murak scoring 286 points, Morgan Popp scoring 243 and Maria Fumerelle scoring 206
- Erin Clemens-Regan lead the way with 146 rebounds and 31 blocks while Talynn Harris had 144 rebounds

Boys Basketball
- Finished the season 7-15
- Team led by Tyshaun Viverette, scoring 239 points. Landon Haug scored 179 and Shaun McGrath scored 171.
- Jaden Brown led the team with 13 blocks while Elijah Wilks led the way with 108 rebounds

Boys' Swimming
- Finished the season 9-4
- Team was led by Matthew Spence, Derek Woodford and Finn Crowther
- Post season qualifying times reached by Matthew Spence (200 free, 500 free, 100 breast, 100 fly, 200 IM), Derek Woodford (200 free, 500 free, 200 IM), Nathan Mackiewicz (100 free), Finn Crowther (100 breast)

Girls' Indoor Track & Field
- Taylor Nugent qualified for states in Race Walk

Boys' Indoor Track & Field
- Sectional Champions
- Brenton Baker, NYS High Jump Champion
- State Qualifiers
- 4 x 200 relay team qualified for states
- Baker qualified in the 300 meter dash, long jump
- Ilias Day qualified in the Triple Jump
- Camren Stoudemire and Niear Patterson both qualified in the 55 meter

Cheerleading
- 16 athletes participated in cheerleading
- Finished 8th in ECIC's

Boys' Wrestling
- Finished 2-5
- Team was led by Jaylen Hawkins, Jayden Fountain and Jonathan Lopez

Girls' Wrestling
- Inaugural season
- Team was led by Jayden Crouse, Angel Gonzalez, Sofia Guadagna, Ella Hubert, Ava Lockridge, Kaitlyn Mieczkowski, Georgia Zorich and Yaletsy Tamayo
- Yaletsy Tamayo and Georgia Zorich represented Sweet Home at the NYSPHSAA girls wrestling invitational tournament. Yaletsy Tamayo placed 6th.
- Yaletsy Tamayo has committed to wrestle next year at Alfred State College

Boys' Ice Hockey
- Finished the season 4-16
- Team led by Noah Clendenen and Joe Sullivan
- Defeated Amherst 4-2 and 7-4
- Defeated Lockport/NFHS 4-3 and 6-2

Girls Ice Hockey
- Finished the season 2-13
- Team led by Haylie Yourston and Alexandria Reed

Unified Bowling
- Team was made up of 18 student-athletes and helpers

Boys' Bowling
- Team finished the season 3-9 with wins over Williamsville South (x2) and Williamsville North
- Led by Charles Buttery who led section VI with a 221.83 average

Girls Bowling
- Finished with a 9-3 record
- Team was led by Gianna Papero, 182.26 average, Erika Mitsopoulos and Jamie Mitsopoulos

COLLABORATE & CREATE

ART PROJECTS IN THE HIGH SCHOOL AND MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACH STUDENTS TO SHARE THEIR WORK WITH OTHERS AND LEARN FROM FELLOW ARTISTS

Key to the process of making art is the ability to learn from others and share your work. Students at our Middle and High schools worked on several projects this year that encouraged a collaborative process.

At the High School, our students as well as our teachers recently participated in the "5x7 Art Exchange" project by downtown gallery The Crucible on Connecticut Street. The Crucible says the project "is our way of bringing artists together through their work and letting us all share in the creative spirit".



The 5x7 Project takes submitted artwork in a 5x7 format, displays it in their gallery and online, and then randomly sends each piece to another participating artist. The swap is a great way for our students to experience their work being professionally shown in a gallery, and also to network with other artists.

At the Middle School, 7th grade students in Kristen Noltee's class recently completed a graphic novel project. They displayed their designs in the library and held a gallery walk.

The project taught our students to learn the process of art critique, which encourages constructive and respectful conversation around fellow artists' work.

To follow along with more of the work our students are doing, check out @shhs_art_dept and sweethome_ms_art on Instagram.



Pictured right is artwork by students Lily Fisher, Finn Crowther, Madison Rickard, Lauren Silverberg, Rydell Reif, Lee Stanley, Julia Burdette, and Moth Rivers; and instructors Kristen Piurek, Dominique Mediak-Pirigyi, Kate VanVolkenburg, and Carol Kamph.







IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL MUSICALS HIGHLIGHT TALENT ON AND OFF THE STAGE

Hundreds of our students and staff spent the winter months planning for a few bright nights under the spotlight. At the High School, that included 8-15 hours of rehearsals a week, every week, from December through March (including February break). 'The Addams Family - A New Musical' was a hit with everyone involved. Producer and Music Director Kimberly Harrison says,

> "IT WAS SO MUCH FUN TO DO A MORE MODERN SHOW WITH THIS GROUP OF STUDENTS. OUR STUDENTS ARE A WILDLY TALENTED GROUP OF SINGERS AND DANCERS. COUPLED WITH THEIR IMPRESSIVE TALENTS AND THEIR LOVE FOR THIS PROGRAM, THEY WERE ABLE TO CREATE MAGIC ON STAGE." - KIM HARRISON

She also praises the costumes for this year's show.

"Our costuming this year was second to none. Dr. Adams and Mrs. Williams created the most beautiful and imaginative pieces, they were works of art. We could not be more proud of all of the hard work, long hours, and discipline that our cast, crew and pit displayed in this years production."

Set design and pit orchestra rehearsals totaled around 50 hours each. The show even featured student-designed choreography. Students Megan Orgek, Julia Elmedawar, Gracie Fuqua, Genevieve Miceli and Drew McNelis were each responsible for their own numbers. In addition, Gracie Fuqua and Julia Elmedawar teamed up to choreograph the tango. Student directors Derek Woodford and Lily Fisher were responsible for their own scenes as well.

We were also extremely proud to have Sweet Home alumni lend their expertise to this show. Katelyn Bechtel ('23) assisted in set construction and stage crew, while stage managers Ana Stang ('19) and Julia Guppenberger ('20) have worked with Mr. Morrow and his team since their senior years.

In addition to impressing the crowds that packed into our new High School Auditorium, the show also caught the attention of Shea's Performing Arts Center. Our production of 'The Addams Family - A New Musical' is a semi-finalist for the 2024 Shea's High School Musical Theatre Awards. The winners will be announced Saturday, May 25.

LEAD CAST:

Derek Woodford, Julia Elmedawar, Ariana Minhas, Matthew Denman, Mila Aquilina, Rayden Mann, Drew McNelis, Gracie Fuqua, Megan Henel, Alexander Bacon, Ava Leshinskie, Megan Orgek, Cadence Oddy, Gianna Lewis, Sophia Radice, and Madison Rickard

LEAD CREW:

Eli Crowther (Sound Director), Jack Carlino (Lighting Director), Ryan Burke (Keyboard), Ryan Walp (Crew)

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL MUSICALS HIGHLIGHT TALENT ON AND OFF THE STAGE

At the Middle School, the production of 'The Little Mermaid, Jr.' featured a cast and crew of nearly 100 students from Grades 6-8. The show was a colorful, fun display of talent in many areas, teaching students the fundamentals of theater, some for the first time. Director Sarah Petrie says,

"THE MUSICAL PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LASTING FRIENDSHIPS ACROSS ALL THREE GRADE LEVELS AT THE MIDDLE SCHOOL, AND A CLOSE-KNIT AND ENCOURAGING ATMOSPHERE AS WE COME TOGETHER TO FORM ONE BIG "FAMILY" WITH A COMMON GOAL: TO PUT ON A PRODUCTION OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER...WHILE HAVING FUN, OF COURSE!" - SARAH PETRIE

This year in October, over 150 students auditioned for various roles in the musical. Along with acting and singing roles, there are featured dancers, full cast ensemble members, tech/sound light board roles, and backstage crews. All who audition are given the option to work with the musical in some capacity. The fun atmosphere continues through many hours of rehearsals and finally, to the culminating performance.

Primary cast roles this year were played by Charlotte Kern-Potter, Joseph Leshinskie, Caleb Melson, Lovell Sauter, Sarah Aseri, Penelope Perez, Natalie Annesi, Amelia Annesi, Maddie Miller, Liam Brennan, Grace Lysek, Lindsay Andrews, and Carson Ziccardi.

Thank you to everyone involved in both of these impressive productions.











CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING ALL-COUNTY MUSICIANS

Matthew Arrasjid, Delaney O'Brocta, Derek Woodford, Kaitlyn Biddlecombe, Erica Chan, Masarra Faek, Gracie Fuqua, Megan Orgek, Ariana Minhas, Bennett Raponi, Matthew Denman, Ryan Burke, Sebastian Conhiser-Uy, Eli Crowther, Derek Woodford, Lila Steinberg, Caleb Riley, Jayden Ventura, Keagan Brookshire, Adeline Martinez, Bella Beal, Lauren Anable, Brianna Brown, Delanie Fleming, Talbot Perry, Damien McGilveary, Alexander Bacon, Kalel Collymore, James Biddlecombe, Rowan D'Angelo-Haley, Landon Reed, Natalie Annesi, Gianna Mazur, Siena Coughlin, Sarah Aseri, Eliana Amati, Charlotte Kern-Potter, Grace Lysek Penelope Perez, Matthew Rickert, Thomas Hal, Vanessa Busko, Kevin Vandebogart, King Roland, Talia Benning, Kaden Fraser, Freddie Marie Boatman, Amy Nguyen, Matthew Rickert, Carmello Frazier, Olivia Imerese, Cecelia Engel, Briannah Faith, Brandt Martin, Macy Jelonek ,Elizabeth Gefell, Ella Carl, Alessandra Harris, Anisa Maxwell, Hayden Fromm, Sophie Vaughan, Mia Rogers, Molly Russ, David Foster, Emma Hillery, & Sophie Pagliano

CHECK OUT OUR UPCOMING MUSIC EVENTS

Scan the QR code for a schedule!

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DISTRICT PHONE NUMBERS

District Office	(716) 250-1400
Central Registration	(716) 250-1600
Family Support Center	(716) 250-1228
Transportation	(716) 250-1434
Athletic Director	(716) 250-1207
High School	(716) 250-1203
Middle School	(716) 250-1452
Glendale Elementary	(716) 250-1500
Heritage Heights Elementary	(716) 250-1525
Maplemere Elementary	(716) 250-1550
Willow Ridge Elementary	(716) 250-1575

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stopfinder

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