

PATHWAYS

FORT EDWARD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 20

NOON - 8:00 P.M.

Main Entrance Foyer
220 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828

BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

TOTAL BUDGET
\$13,461,559

BUDGET INCREASE
\$75,159 / .56%

TAX LEVY INCREASE
1.99%

2025-2026 BUDGET PRIORITIES

- Avoid the Status Quo
- Sustainable Long Term Leadership
- Long Term Capital Investment
- Programming Blend of Innovative and Time Honored Strategies

FOR MORE BUDGET INFORMATION VISIT:

WWW.FORTEDWARD.ORG

“Fort Vision 2025” Drives Fort Edward’s Proposed School Budget

Dear Fort Edward,

My name is Ben Halsey and I am honored to be the Interim Superintendent at The Fort. On behalf of the Fort Edward School Board, faculty and staff, and most importantly, our students, I am pleased to present our proposed 2025-2026 school budget for your consideration. The budget being presented began development in October with strategic planning to evaluate current programs and with myself, holding a round-table discussion with every employee in the district. Additionally, four monthly budget workshops were held with the school board beginning in January. These meetings were invaluable in establishing some key priorities in presenting this budget.

The priorities in building the spending plan are what I will refer to as Fort Vision 2025. These priorities are what we believe will take Fort Edward to the next level of excellence, and in a way that is fiscally responsible to the taxpayer. They are not complicated, but certainly, when utilized, move an organization forward. The priorities are as follows:

1. Avoid the status quo.
2. Sustain long term leadership.
3. Recruit and retain outstanding faculty and staff.
4. Actively engage community partnerships.
5. Invest in long term capital improvement.
6. Utilize regional support systems.
7. Fully implement human resource management strategies.
8. Blend innovative programming with time honored instruction.
9. Create and maintain impeccable facilities.
10. Provide unwavering customer service.

As an organization, if we can follow the priorities, and do so within a fiscally responsible manner, the results of our '25-'26



Horton Hears a Hit! Students dazzle audiences with their vibrant production of “Seussical the Musical,” bringing the whimsical world of Dr. Seuss to life.

school year should be something in which we all will be proud. The proposed budget of \$13,461,559 represents a budget that is 0.56 percent over the current year’s spending plan. The budget calls for streamlining the administration into more efficient roles, providing staffing in transportation and vehicle purchases that will allow us to move forward with expanding transportation to our youngest students. Most importantly, the budget proposal allows for our current educational programming and extra curricular activities to be maintained so we can continue to provide the best experience for our students.

Please take a moment to review the proposed budget and information included in this year’s edition of PATHWAYS. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me directly at 518-747-4529 and I will be happy to discuss things with you. It is important that our taxpayers are well informed on our proposed budget. Fort Edward is a special place and it is our intention to be fiscally responsible in keeping it that way.

Sincerely,
Ben Halsey
Interim Superintendent

Expenditure Summary

Expenditures	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Percent Change
General Support	\$2,301,719	\$2,524,159	9.66%
Instruction	\$6,826,263	\$7,057,158	3.38%
Transportation	\$375,863	\$366,492	-2.49%
Civic Activities	\$3,000	\$3,000	0%
Employee Benefits	\$2,790,655	\$2,854,000	2.27%
Debt Service	\$968,900	\$536,750	-44.6%
Interfund Transfers	\$120,000	\$120,000	0%
Total Expenditures	\$13,386,400	\$13,461,559	0.56%

Revenue Summary

Revenue	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Difference
Tax Levy	\$3,623,422	\$3,695,528	\$72,106
Misc. Revenue	\$907,950	\$420,000	-\$487,950
State Aid Projection	\$8,353,915	\$7,800,000	-\$553,915
Reserves Appropriated	\$0	\$630,000	\$630,000
Fund Balance Appropriated	\$501,113	\$916,031	\$414,918
Total Revenue	\$13,386,400	\$13,461,559	\$75,158

Three-Part Budget Summary

New York state law requires all school districts to present their budgets divided into three expenditure categories: program, administrative and capital.

	2024-25	2025-26
Program	\$9,910,281	\$10,180,650
Administrative	\$1,349,063	\$1,488,002
Capital	\$2,127,083	\$1,792,907
Total	\$13,386,400	\$13,461,559

Budget Q&A

Q How are school tax bills calculated?

A 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.

Q What is the difference between tax levy and tax rate?

A 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.

Q How can STAR reduce my school taxes?

A 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.

Q What would a contingent budget mean for Fort Edward?

A For Fort Edward, bringing the tax levy increase down to zero means that the 2025-2026 contingent budget would require the district to cut approximately \$97,500 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.

Voting Information

Voter Eligibility

To be eligible to vote, residents must live in the school district for at least 30 days prior to the election date and be at least 18 years of age and be a citizen of the United States.

Voter Registration

Residents may register to vote on the budget vote day, May 20, in the main entrance foyer.

Voting Location

The school budget vote will take place from noon to 8:00 P.M. on Tuesday, May 20, in the main entrance foyer of the Fort Edward UFSD located at 220 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY.

Absentee Ballot Information

- ✓ The district will provide mail-in and absentee ballots if requested.
- ✓ The district will provide absentee ballots for those previously identified on the county list.
- ✓ The New York Early Mail Voter Act allows registered voters to request a mail-in ballot. You can request an early voter ballot in person up to the day of the election.
- ✓ Absentee and Early Mail Voter ballots must be returned to the District Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on May 20.

Top Students Announced

Fort Edward UFSD is pleased to announce the valedictorian and salutatorian for the Class of 2025.



Valedictorian Leigha M. Monroe is the daughter of Tanis and Nathan Monroe. She is an active member of the National Honor Society, Key Club and Yearbook. Leigha is completing her studies in the New Visions Health and Career Exploration program, where she was inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. She plans to attend the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences where she will major in nursing.

Salutatorian Silas M. Monroe is the son of Tanis and Nathan Monroe. He is class of 2025 President and a member of National Honor Society and Tri-M Music Honor Society.



Silas is also an active member of our school choir, Drama Club, and Key Club. He plans to attend an institution of higher learning in the fall to study cinematic arts with a goal of directing his own films.

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for 2024-2025 School Year	Budget Proposed for 2025-2026 School Year	Contingency Budget 2025-26 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$13,386,400.31	\$13,461,558.73	\$13,364,058.73
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$75,158.42	(\$22,341.58)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		0.56%	-0.17%
Change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount, Net of Reserve			
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)	\$3,623,422	\$3,695,528	\$3,623,422
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$21,544	\$26,958	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$3,601,878	\$3,675,925	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$3,601,878	\$3,675,925	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)**	\$0	\$0	
Administrative component	\$1,349,036.13	\$1,488,002	\$1,408,002
Program component	\$9,910,280.83	\$10,180,649.73	\$10,175,149.73
Capital component	\$2,127,083.35	\$1,792,907	\$1,708,907

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2024-25 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law.

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).

**Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budget Amount: (Tax Levy associated with education or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements)

Description	Amount
Using transportation reserve to purchase 1 type C 28-passenger diesel bus with a lift and 3 minivans.	\$367,000

Basic STAR Exemption Impact	
	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-26 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings	\$536

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-26 by the qualified voters of the Fort Edward Union Free School District, Washington County, New York, will be held Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of noon and 8:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Fort Edward School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

1. The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real property Tax Law.

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 \$13,461,558.73 for fiscal year 2025-2026?

PROPOSITION 2

✓ Purchase of School Bus and Vehicles

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education hereby approves the following proposition to be placed before the voters at the May 2025 Budget Vote and Election:

Shall the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District be authorized to expend a maximum of \$367,000 from the District's existing reserve fund known as the "Transportation Reserve Fund" for the purchase of one (1) 28-passenger bus with a lift and three (3) minivans, with all such vehicles to be used in the transportation program of the District, and with the result that such expenditure from the Transportation Reserve Fund shall have no impact on the tax levy of the District for the 2025-2026 school year?

BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

✓ To elect four members of the Board of Education.

Voters will elect candidates to fill four open seats on the Board of Education. Seat terms vary by seat. More information can be found on our website.

FORT EDWARD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT
 220 Broadway, Fort Edward, NY 12828
 www.fortedward.org

Benjamin Halsey, Interim Superintendent of Schools
 Dr. Christopher Rayder, School Business Administrator
 Dr. Nicholas Comproski, Interim Principal

Board of Education
 Tim Clark, Vice President
 Audra Aul
 Chris Boucher
 Sarah Buschynski
 Ken Chester
 Tara Ryther

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

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

Fortify our Future Capital Project Update

In May of 2024, the Fort Edward community supported the long term future of the school district by passing the Fortify our Future Capital Project. This was an exciting time for Fort Edward and solidifies the necessary capital improvements that need to be done around the district facilities. Although a year has passed since the vote, and although no visible work is evident from a construction standpoint, many things have been done to prepare for the construction phase of this project.

Several planning and design sessions had to be conducted to make sure the work being done met the needs of the district and our students, but is also in compliance and up to current codes of the State Education Department. After the design meetings concluded, the architects and engineers drafted the construction blueprints for review. When all parties felt the design was what we desired, and it was

determined they were in compliance with all regulations, the plans were sent off to the State Education Facilities Review Department. They are currently being reviewed by this department and any required modifications will be made. This process takes several months to complete.

It is our intention to create bids for contractor review and bidding in the fall of 2025 with construction starting in the early spring of 2026. This timeline is longer than most capital projects but Fort Edward needed to space out the phases in order to take advantage of a previous project coming off the books so we could fully fund the new project. In the end, everything the community voted to be approved will be built or renovated. We appreciate everyone's patience so we can fund the project appropriately. In the end, it will be well worth the wait.



Fort Edward Elementary students delighted the community with their recent PE show, featuring lively dance and sports routines.

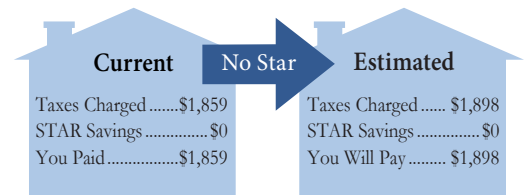


The STAR Program

The STAR program provides property tax relief to residents. Basic STAR is available eligible homeowners and provides Fort Edward residents a \$536 reduction on the full assessed value of the home. The enhanced STAR is available to qualifying homeowners aged 65 and older and provided \$1,072 reduction on the full assessed value of the home.

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 \$18.98 per \$1,000 of assessed value.



Estimated Tax Increase \$59 / Year = \$4.92 Month

