

PATHWAYS

FORT EDWARD UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 19

NOON - 8:00 P.M.

Main Entrance Foyer
220 Broadway
Fort Edward, NY 12828

BUDGET AT-A-GLANCE

TOTAL BUDGET
\$13,393,492

BUDGET DECREASE
\$68,067 / .51%

TAX LEVY INCREASE
6.03%

2026-2027 BUDGET PRIORITIES

- Maximize Revenue With Minimal Impact on the Taxpayer
- Continue Capital Improvement
- Sustain Programming
- Develop Organizational Efficiencies

FOR MORE BUDGET INFORMATION VISIT:

WWW.FORTEDWARD.ORG

Fort Vision 2026: A More Efficient and Sustainable School District for the Future

The Fort Edward Board of Education and Administration has developed a budget proposal based on the most transparent and dialogue-driven process in recent memory. This proposal successfully addresses four key priorities identified during extensive discussions:

1. Sustaining student programming.
2. Continuing capital improvements.
3. Developing organizational efficiencies.
4. Maximizing district revenues while minimizing the impact on taxpayers.

The district is confident that the budget proposal presented for your consideration achieves these objectives.

The proposed budget includes the continuation of all student programs and extra curricular activities. These include a comprehensive Pre-K through grade 12 curriculum with special education services, remediation services, and college and career programming through our partnership with BOCES. We will continue to provide athletics, drama, music and after school enrichment programs that have always been a cornerstone of our students' experience at Fort Edward.

The proposed budget also supports the continued improvement in our facilities and equipment to run and maintain our facilities for school and community use. With an aging high school building the piping, valves and control systems to regulate our heat and water are outdated and require tremendous maintenance resources. With a small capital outlay project in the budget we can take significant strides to replace the oldest systems on campus.

Our proposed budget reflects a deep commitment to operational efficiency, coming in nearly \$70,000 below the current school year's operating budget. This reduction



The Fort Edward Drama Club delivered a high-energy performance during their recent production of Shrek the Musical. The fairytale showcase drew a packed house to the high school auditorium for a weekend of music and comedy.

was achieved through a comprehensive and thoughtful evaluation of every line item across all categories. Specifically, we have successfully trimmed administrative, program, and capital spending across the board.

To fund the proposed budget, a school district relies on state aid and taxes for revenue. Recognizing the significant tax burden on New Yorkers, the district's goal was to maximize revenue while minimizing the impact on homeowners. By taking advantage of significant growth in corporate assessments, the proposed budget includes a 6.00 percent levy increase that is projected not to affect the individual tax rate for the average homeowner. This strategy allows the district to generate over \$150,000 in revenue to offset the cost to the homeowners of Fort Edward.

Please take your time to review our information provided and if you have any questions, comments or concerns you wish to discuss, please feel free to contact me at your convenience. The support of the Fort Edward community is always greatly appreciated.

Go Forts!

Sincerely,
Benjamin Halsey
Superintendent of Schools

Expenditure Summary

Expenditures	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Proposed	Percent Change
General Support	\$2,524,159	\$2,279,191	-9.7%
Instruction	\$7,057,158	\$7,052,087	-0.07%
Transportation	\$366,492	\$378,065	3.16%
Civic Activities	\$3,000	\$3,000	0%
Employee Benefits	\$2,854,000	\$2,899,149	1.58%
Debt Service	\$536,750	\$662,000	23.33%
Interfund Transfers	\$120,000	\$120,000	0%
Total Expenditures	\$13,461,559	\$13,393,492	-0.51%

Revenue Summary

Revenue	2025-26 Budget	2026-27 Proposed	Dollar Difference
Tax Levy	\$3,695,528	\$3,918,588	\$223,060
Misc. Revenue	\$420,000	\$407,200	-\$12,800
State Aid Projection	\$7,800,000	\$7,797,800	-\$2,200
Reserves Appropriated	\$630,000	\$392,000	-\$238,000
Fund Balance Appropriated	\$916,031	\$877,904	-\$38,127
Total Revenue	\$13,461,559	\$13,393,492	-\$68,067

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.

	2025-26	2026-27
Program	\$10,180,650	\$10,232,301
Administrative	\$1,488,002	\$1,381,962
Capital	\$1,792,907	\$1,779,229
Total	\$13,461,559	\$13,393,492

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 2026-2027 contingent budget would require the district to cut approximately \$66,000 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 19, in the main entrance foyer.

Voting Location

The school budget vote will take place from noon to 8:00 P.M. on Tuesday, May 19, 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 19.

Top Students Announced

Fort Edward UFSD is pleased to announce the valedictorian and salutatorian for the Class of 2026.



Valedictorian Gabrielle Durkee is the daughter of Dan and Christina Durkee. She is the class of 2026 Treasurer and a member of the National Honor Society, Drama Club, Key Club, Tri-M Music Honor Society and Student Council. Gabrielle is a three-sport athlete who played Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Softball, and Cheerleading for the Flying Forts. Gabrielle will be attending SUNY New Paltz in the fall of 2026 where she will be majoring in astronomy.



Salutatorian Ruth Quarters is the daughter of Michael Quarters and Lisa and Joseph Clear. She is class of 2026 Vice-President and a member of National Honor Society, Student Council, and Yearbook Club. Ruth is a four-sport athlete who played Varsity Volleyball, Varsity Basketball, Varsity Softball, and Cheerleading. Ruth plans to attend SUNY Adirondack in the fall of 2026 where she will be majoring in health science.

School District Budget Notice

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for 2025-2026 School Year	Budget Proposed for 2026-2027 School Year	Contingency Budget 2026-27 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$13,461,558.73	\$13,393,491.92	\$13,327,491.92
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		(\$68,066.81)	(\$66,000)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		-0.51%	-1%
Change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI)		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount, Net of Reserve	\$3,695,528	\$3,918,588	
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)	\$3,695,528	\$3,918,588	\$3,695,528
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$26,958	\$0	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$3,702,833	\$4,013,341	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$3,668,570	\$3,918,588	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)**	\$34,463	\$94,753	
Administrative component	\$1,488,002	\$1,381,961.50	\$1,380,461.50
Program component	\$10,180,649.73	\$10,232,301.42	\$10,220,801.42
Capital component	\$1,792,907	\$1,779,229	\$1,726,229

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 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 maintenance equipment reserve to purchase 1 Ford F350 truck, 1 mower, 1 plow	\$120,000

Basic STAR Exemption Impact	
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year \$511

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-27 by the qualified voters of the Fort Edward Union Free School District, Washington County, New York, will be held Tuesday, May 19, 2026 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 \$13,393,491.92 for fiscal year 2026-2027?

PROPOSITION 2

✓ Purchase of School Bus and Vehicles

Shall the Board of Education of the Fort Edward Union Free School District be authorized to: (1) purchase a maintenance equipment consisting of one (1) Ford F350 Truck, one (1) mower and one (1) plow, at a cost not to exceed \$112,000, which is estimated to be the maximum cost thereof; and (2) finance such purchase by expending \$112,000 from the Transportation and Maintenance Equipment Reserves?

BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

✓ To elect two members of the Board of Education.

Voters will elect candidates to fill two open seats on the Board of Education.

Two Board seats are available for five-year terms beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2031:

- Seat 1: To succeed Audra Aul, whose term expires June 30, 2026.
- Seat 2: To succeed Jodie Boucher, whose term expires June 30, 2026.

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

Benjamin Halsey, Superintendent of Schools
 Dr. Christopher Rayder, School Business Administrator
 Christopher Culnan, Secondary School Principal
 Jessica Smatko, Elementary School Principal

Board of Education
 Audra Aul, President
 Tim Clark, Vice President
 Jodie Boucher
 Sarah Buschynski
 Lisa Carpenter
 Ken Chester
 Tara Rytner

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Fortify Our Future Capital Project to Break Ground

The capital project, approved by voters over two years ago, is finally set to break ground this May. Construction was delayed due to financing restrictions but can now commence with the arrival of spring weather. The district is excited to move forward with this long-awaited project, which will benefit our students and the entire community.

The project's key components include the creation of new parking facilities, expansion of the front sidewalk, and modernization of the playground with new equipment. Extensive renovations will be completed on the main gymnasium and the building's HVAC system, which will begin the installation of air conditioning in the elementary school and specific third-floor classrooms of the high school. Furthermore, for enhanced student and staff security, a new main entrance vestibule and visitor greeting area is being constructed. Finally, the health office is being remodeled and updated to provide a modern space for our school nursing staff to manage student well-being.

The project's construction phase was initially planned to span two summers. However, following the awarding of bids and the start of detailed planning, including blueprints and timelines, it was determined that the construction could be expedited and finished within a single construction season. This accelerated timeline would require an aggressive approach, flexibility in some basic operations, and patience from all involved parties. After much deliberation, the district adopted a philosophy of getting the work done swiftly—to "rip the band-aid off once"—and agreed to complete the entire project this construction season.

The Fort will be a very busy and exciting place from May 1st through October 1st. We thank the community for its continued support and patience with any inconvenience that may arise during construction. We are confident the completed project will be worth the wait and will please our students, faculty, and staff.



Families enjoyed a day of free food, bounce houses, and face painting during the Fort Edward PTO's successful Family Fun Day. Thank you to the PTO for providing such a fantastic, well-attended event for our students!

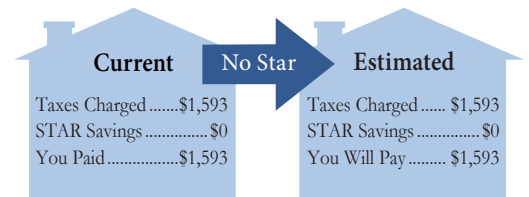


The STAR Program

The STAR program provides property tax relief to residents. Basic STAR is available eligible homeowners and provides Fort Edward residents a \$511 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 \$15.93 per \$1,000 of assessed value.



Estimated Tax Increase \$0 / Year = \$0 Month

