

# Two seats open on the William Floyd Board of Education

### Budget reflects slight increase, just under 1 percent

BY NICOLE FUENTES

The William Floyd School District Board of Education has two seats open, currently held by Angelo Cassarino and Robert Taiani. Both candidates will be running for re-election. Cassarino will run unopposed and Taiani will run against Joseph Barone.

The board also adopted a slight increase of 0.99 percent for the 2026-27 proposed budget on April 21. The overall proposed budget for 2026-27 is \$332,475,894, a 1.83 percent increase from last year's budget. That is a total of \$243 per average household per year.

"This year's proposed budget is less than one percent and maintains essential school programs while strengthening academic opportunities for our students. This slight increase helps ensure that the district continues operating at an optimal level despite any potential future financial downturns," said Kevin Coster, superintendent of schools, William Floyd School District. "This proposal comes on the heels of a zero percent increase last year and large reductions totaling more than \$23 million over the past few years. The Board of Education has adopted another budget that successfully balances the best opportunities for our students while being fiscally responsible to the community."

The district also estimated the transportation budget at \$21 million; however, Transportation Aid is paid the year after the expense is made, so the proposed aid is based on updated estimated 2024-25 expenses.

According to the district, the budget maintains all programs, classes, staff and student opportunities that currently exist. A \$2.9 million transfer to capital would also allow for building upgrades, including masonry renovation, plumbing upgrades, electrical upgrades, mechanical upgrades, technology upgrades, telephone upgrades, roof replacement on district buildings, door replacement, window replacement, turf replacement, fencing, site work, including but not limited to: paving, curbs and sidewalks, renovation/reconstruction of food service spaces, interior and exterior instructional spaces, abatement of hazardous materials and/or the purchase of furnishings/equipment.

The BOE and budget vote will take place on Tuesday, May 19. The annual budget hearing will be held prior to the vote at the high school at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 12.

#### MEET THE CANDIDATES

Angelo Cassarino, unopposed



Angelo Cassarino is seeking his third three-year term on the William Floyd Board of Education. Throughout his tenure, Cassarino and his colleagues on the board have been advocating for William Floyd schools and the community as a whole. He said they have also worked hard to provide the most opportunities for students while keeping budgets fiscally responsible, as evidenced by two large reductions over the past few years, as well as consistently zero or less than one percent budget increases. He said he is proud of the increased graduation rates, as well as the various opportunities that the district offers including the Career and Technical Education programs, STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts & Mathematics), music, robotics, athletics and so much more. He is also proud of the increasing graduation rate and how schools are helping to prepare students for the next chapter in their lives, whether college, a trade school or the military. Cassarino is a William Floyd alumnus, Class of 1994, who resides in Shirley, with his wife, Tracy, a 1993 William Floyd alumna. He has two daughters who are also William Floyd alumnae. Angelo and Tracy chose to live and raise their family in the William Floyd community because of the fond memories they had growing up, as well as to provide their children with the multitude of opportunities that the district offers. Cassarino also serves as a trustee on the Eastern Suffolk BOCES Board of Education.

Robert Taiani



Robert Taiani is seeking his seventh three-year term on the board. He currently serves as vice president, a role that he was first elected to in late 2022. Taiani brings 18 years of volunteer board service experience to the position. In his career, he served for 21 years as an emergency services officer at the World Trade Center with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. His law enforcement experience has been vital to the implementation of various security measures and upgrades in district schools over the years. After various audits by local and federal law enforcement, the district has been complimented as being a flagship example in this capacity. He is proud of his track record, along with his colleagues on the board, of keeping tax rates low including two large reductions over the past few years. He is also proud of the many offerings that are available to students including the district's vast Career and Technical Education offerings, as well as opportunities for students with various interests including our award-winning music program, the arts, sciences, NJROTC, athletics and more. The district's graduation rate has also increased exponentially over the course of his tenure, beginning with 67 percent when he first started, to consistently in the 90 percent range. He said he is proud to serve on a board that continues to put the students first while being fiscally responsible for residents.

"It's about students learning skills and preparing for the future, whether college, a trade or the military," he said,

referring to the vast opportunities available for students who attend William Floyd schools.

Taiani is a William Floyd alumnus, Class of 1991, and resides in Moriches, with his wife and four children, two of whom are still attending William Floyd schools (one in middle school and one in high school). Taiani said he most enjoys seeing the smiles on the faces of graduating seniors each June when he has the privilege of presenting them with their diplomas.

Joseph Barone



Barone has been a financial professional for over 38 years. He was also a member of the WF school board from 2007 through 2016 as well as a lifelong resident of the community. Both he and his wife graduated from the William Floyd schools as did their children.

"In my opinion the choices of the voting public have been very few. The only time there is usually a choice in candidates is when someone voluntarily leaves their seat. This leads to voter apathy. I believe that we as voters should have a choice in candidates no matter the office," he said of the race. "If the incumbent is doing a great job, they vote for them. If the voters believe that the incumbent is not doing a great job they vote for the other person. While William Floyd's budget has been very well prepared for many years, I am aware that there will be some hard choices going forward as the exodus of the affluent leave NY because of the Governor's policies and concern with redistributing wealth towards NYC." ■

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