

Clarence Bee Article – April 2017

2107-2018 Proposed Clarence School Budget

Each April the Clarence School Board adopts the proposed budget for the next school year, which is then voted on by the community one month later. School budget adoption is one of the most demanding jobs a board faces. The choices are difficult, and in the end, it boils down to maintaining a balance between protecting the core programs of a school district and respecting the impact of local property tax increases on the community. The balance is a delicate one, requiring the Board and administration to see the big picture and to have a focused vision for the future.

The Board of Education started the budget construction process for the 2017-18 school year with two goals, protect or enhance the core district programs and create a budget at the level of the tax cap. The \$80.2 million budget adopted on April 17th met both of those goals.

The proposed budget will fully fund all core programs, despite the fact that New York State School Aid to Clarence was much less than expected. The District will utilize reserves and fund balance to close the gap between expenses and revenues. The strategy of utilizing reserves and fund balance to make up shortfalls in the budget is a short-term fix. We risk the rapid depletion of those resources if we repeat the strategy for multiple years in the future. Our conservative budgeting practices in previous years provided us with a hedge this year against the uncertainty of State School Aid. In the future, we will need to count on larger increases in state aid to balance our budget.

The tax levy for the 2017-18 budget will be 1.74%, which is at the level of the tax cap for Clarence. The estimated tax rate is \$14.67 per thousand dollars of assessed value, remaining the second lowest rate in Western New York. In the proposed budget, the tax increase on a home assessed at \$200,000 in Clarence would be \$28. As part of our budget presentations, we projected estimated spending and tax levy increases for five years beyond 2017-18. Given some conservative assumptions, the District is committed to budget at the tax cap level in those years.

There will be two other items decided by voters on Tuesday, May 16, 2017. The traditional proposition to finance purchasing nine replacement buses is on the ballot as are three seats for the Board of Education.