

Clarence Bee Article – April 2019

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2019-2020 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 takes on. 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 2019-20 school year with two goals, protect or enhance the core district programs and create a budget at the level of the tax cap. The \$85.7 million budget adopted on April 15th met both of those goals.

The proposed budget will fully fund all core programs. 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.

The school board also approved adding a behavioral specialist position. The specialist will work in all the schools, supporting classroom teachers with behavior management strategies and working with staff and challenging students.

There are two major sources of school funding on the revenue side of the budget, property taxes and state school aid. The recommended tax levy increase for 2019-20 is 3.2 percent, which is just below the cap level. Tax levy increases in Clarence have been traditionally very low and the estimated increase for 2019-20 on a home valued at \$200,000 is \$62. As part of our budget presentations, we projected estimated spending and tax levy increases for five years beyond 2019-20. 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 21, 2019. The traditional proposition to finance purchasing nine replacement buses is on the ballot as are two seats for the Board of Education. Please look for our Annual Report to the Community, that will be mailed in a couple of weeks.