



Northern Adirondack Central **School District**



Budget Newsletter / May 2020

Dear Northern Adirondack Central School District Parents, Guardians, and Community Members,

On May 18, 2020, the Northern Adirondack Central School District Board of Education adopted a revised budget for the 2020 – 2021 school year of \$23,758, 650. This budget was revised from the proposal that was approved on April 20, 2020 in the amount of \$24,287,699, in an effort to absorb the potential State Aid reductions that have been forecasted by Governor Cuomo to be upwards near 20% of the overall Foundation Aid provided by the State of New York. The approved budget is an increase of \$1,186,525 over the budget that was approved for the 2019 – 2020 school year (\$22,572,125). This increase may seem like a lot, however I hope everyone remembers that during the 2019 – 2020 school year that the District and Board of Education borrowed an additional \$1,500,000 to help pay bills and maintain timely payrolls. There were bills that were paid late during the school year, because of a low cash flow position the District has found itself in. This cash flow or reserve position including fund balance drew the attention of the NYS Comptroller's Office, who placed NAC in a category of being in *Significant Fiscal Stress* on their Fiscal Stress Monitoring System. This can be viewed at the following link; <https://www.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/fiscalmonitoring/schools/pdf/2019/stress-list.pdf>. Northern Adirondack Central School District is one of four schools out of the reported 674 school districts in New York State that are categorized as being in *Significant Fiscal Stress*. This report from the New York State Comptroller's Office does not include New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, and Yonkers.

Developing a proposed budget is always a very difficult task, because it should involve long range fiscal planning that maintains educationally sound programming while being fiscally responsible. This year has proven to be extremely difficult in the development of such a budget. One would be safe to assume that an initial challenge would be that I am in my first year as Superintendent of Schools and must obtain the background information, which is true to a certain extent, however I have been a taxpayer by living in the District for nearly 20 years. I have watched from the sidelines like most taxpayers in the past, but now have the inside knowledge to support what I had suspected for many years which is that our tax rates should have incrementally increased over time in an effort to prepare for the unstable years we have had recently and the insecurities we may face going forward. The New York State Comptroller's Office performed an onsite audit that started shortly after I did last summer and concluded in January. The report from this audit has not been finalized and published yet, but will focus on a couple of areas. The major area of focus is related to the first sentence in this paragraph that included fiscal responsibility and long term fiscal planning. The audit report will explain that the practices used by the Board of Education and District over the past number of years were insufficient and not sustainable. The auditors mentioned to me that if the District did not change these practices immediately, then we would soon reach a point of no return and financial insolvency within the next 3 or 4 years. This knowledge helped spearhead an aggressive budget planning schedule, that included public work sessions that were attended regularly by a good number of helpful taxpayers.

Back before the COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic put a halt on the school year as we know it, a collaborative effort was embarked upon by the Board of Education, some members of our community, the District Business Manager, and myself. This effort produced an aggressive budget proposal that would have established a strong foundational base to combat the flaws identified by the NYS Comptroller's Office as well as initiating a multiple year plan to establish a secure fund balance with potential reserve accounts. Unfortunately the Pandemic became a reality and Governor Cuomo's projected budget totals in January ended up in an initial shortfall of over \$300,000 to us here at NAC with the imminent possibility of deeper cuts based on three monitoring phases. We have seen slides presented by Governor Cuomo suggesting a 20% decrease in State Aid, but I have also participated in meetings with Assemblyman Jones and Assemblyman Stec who have mentioned potential decreases of up to 40% and 50%. I can only hope 20% is the ceiling, because I believe we can maintain our educational opportunities and staff with our adopted budget that is reliant on State Aid for 62.97% of our overall budget. Hopefully we will receive Federal support, and the potential reductions to our State Aid could be minimized. To put a number to a 20% cut in State Aid from our State Foundation Aid it would be 20% of \$11,132,418 which is a total of \$2,226,483.60 that would be eliminated from our budget. We thought we were going to be provided with information on May 15, 2020 by the Governor's Office, but instead we received no further information that could help us plan for the 2020 – 2021 school budget and it became apparent that schools are being used as a pawn with health care, and first responders in an effort to persuade the Federal Government to pitch in and help out. This is yet another reason why this year's budget planning process has been such a challenge.

Proposed Budget: \$23,758,650
 Tax Rate per \$1,000 valuation: \$17.38

2019-2020 Concerns

Clinton County School District Tax Rates

District	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21 estimated
District 1	\$16.56	\$16.86	\$17.17	\$16.85	\$17.12	\$17.43	\$17.92
District 2	\$17.22	\$16.99	\$17.05	\$17.29	\$17.52	\$17.72	\$16.?? to \$18.06
District 3	\$19.84	\$20.65	\$20.77	\$21.16	\$21.56	\$21.27	\$21.58
District 4	\$20.09	\$20.10	\$20.33	\$20.50	\$20.68	\$20.63	\$20.86
NAC	\$11.47	\$11.61	\$11.76	\$11.76	\$11.80	\$12.03	\$17.38
District 5	\$19.81	\$19.95	\$19.77	\$20.13	\$19.75	\$20.29	\$16.78 to \$20.77
District 6	\$21.22	\$21.90	\$22.18	\$22.57	\$23.34	\$23.01	?
District 7	\$20.29	\$20.50	\$20.26	\$20.22	\$20.12	\$20.56	\$20.53

- This chart shows that NAC has had the lowest tax rate in Clinton County for many years, which has resulted in losses in programming and an inability to provide the same level of opportunity that our neighboring districts provide to their students.
- The 2020-21 numbers are estimated and become fixed usually in late July, but don't usually change much.

- Northern Adirondack CSD is the 6th largest school district in land area in New York State at 364.04 square miles or 232,985.6 acres.
- We are 62 square miles larger than all of New York City, and our buses travel that twice a day.
- More of our Budget goes in to gas for our buses, not upgrades for our students.

- 2 Uncertified bus lifts in our bus garage, resulting in traveling to Chateaugay CSD with our buses for nearly 3 months to use their lifts, until we fortunately got one certified
- Borrowed a total of \$1,500,000 in two even installments in August and December to pay bills on time and have cash flow to make payrolls
- As a result of low cash on hand amounts the District paid some bills late accruing interest penalties
- Tennis courts have gone another year without overdue resurfacing which may result in completely redoing them in the future
- COVID-19/Coronavirus Pandemic has exposed the District's lack of technology available to students, as well as the need for better Wi-Fi throughout the District
- Governor Cuomo reduced the projected State Aid totals from January by roughly \$300,000, then has the ability to cut the State Aid farther with early projections being 20% or the equivalent to \$2,226,484 to NAC
- NYS Comptroller's Office identified NAC as being in Significant Financial Stress for not having available cash flow, fund balance, or other reserves



Most often wealthier districts in NYS have much lower rates than poorer districts. That's because people who own homes in communities with lower home values and little commercial real estate have to pay at a higher tax rate to generate enough money to cover the same basic services.

The following is a summary of the 2020-2021 proposed budget with comparative data for the 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 budgets:

ESTIMATED APPROPRIATIONS

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
I. Board of Education	\$ 33,001	\$ 33,231	\$ 33,320
II. Central Administration	586,294	582,199	605,434
III. Operation & Maintenance	1,412,851	1,358,771	1,365,254
IV. Special Items	414,366	474,840	489,006
V. Instructional Program	10,155,826	10,178,634	10,685,039
VI. Transportation	878,666	886,175	983,915
VII. Community Services	2,475	1,700	1,700
VIII. Employee Benefits	5,892,600	6,301,825	6,665,200
IX. Debt Service - Buses/BOCES C.P.	296,921	311,650	483,382
X. Debt Service – EXCEL C.P.	2,449,100	2,443,100	2,446,400
XI. Capital Projects Fund Transfer	-	-	-
	<u>\$ 22,122,100</u>	<u>\$ 22,572,125</u>	<u>\$ 23,758,650</u>

ESTIMATED REVENUES

	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
I. State Aid:			
A. Basic Formula	\$ 13,707,360	\$ 14,177,322	\$ 13,235,000
B. EXCEL C.P. Building Aid	1,702,000	1,725,000	1,725,000
II. Other Revenues	1,437,800	1,454,490	1,498,650
III. Fund Balance	550,000	325,000	-
IV. Reserve for Debt Service	-	-	-
Total Revenues and Fund Balance Other than Real Property Taxes	<u>17,397,160</u>	<u>17,681,812</u>	<u>16,458,650</u>
Tax Levy	<u>4,724,940</u>	<u>4,890,313</u>	<u>7,300,000</u>
NACS Budget	\$ 22,122,100	\$ 22,572,125	\$ 23,758,650
NACS Estimated Full Valuation	400,279,810	404,282,608	419,931,050
NACS Estimated Average Tax Rate Per \$1,000 Full Valuation	\$ 11.804	\$ 12.096	\$ 17.384

2020-21 Property Tax Report Card

090901 - No. Airlondack CSD
 Contact Person: James C. Knight
 Telephone Number: 518-594-7060

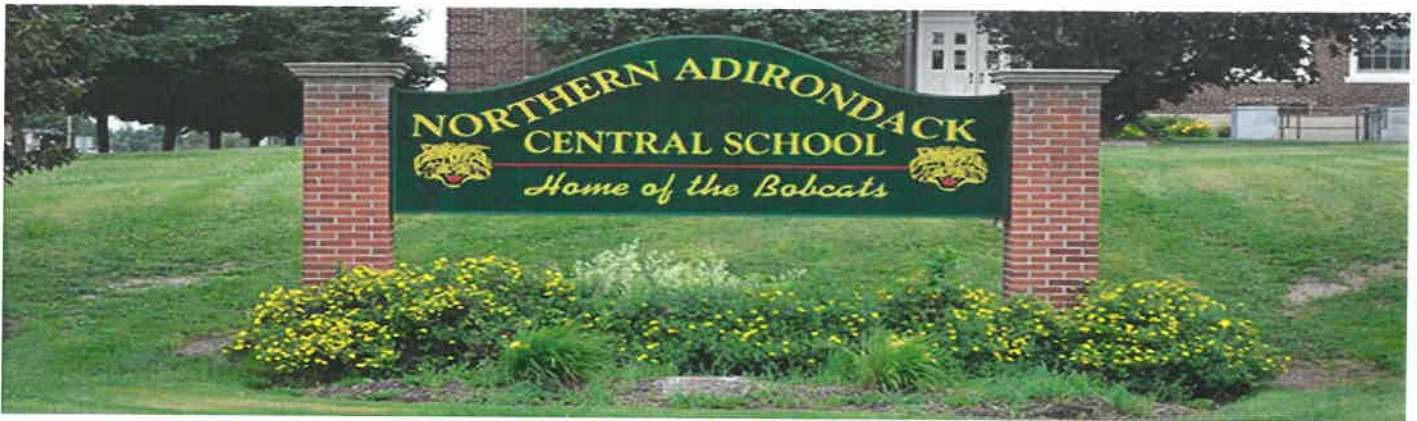
	Budgeted 2019-20 (A)	Proposed Budget 2020-21 (B)
Total Budgeted Amount, not Including Separate Propositions	22,572,125	23,758,650
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount ¹	4,890,313	7,300,000
B. Tax Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	0	0
C. Tax Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable ²	0	0
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy, if Applicable	0	0
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	4,890,313	7,300,000
F. Permissible Exclusions to the School Tax Levy Limit	722,295	778,558
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions ³	4,171,286	4,287,992
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	4,168,018	6,521,442
I. Difference: (G - H); (negative value requires 60.0% voter approval) ²	3,268	-2,233,450
Public School Enrollment	840	845
Consumer Price Index		1.81%

¹ Include any prior year reserve for excess tax levy, including interest.

² Tax levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion under the School Tax Levy Limit and may affect voter approval requirements.

³ For 2020-21, includes any carryover from 2019-20 and excludes any tax levy for library debt or prior year reserve for excess tax levy, including interest.

	Actual 2019-20 (D)	Estimated 2020-21 (E)
Adjusted Restricted Fund Balance	273,389	261,101
Assigned Appropriated Fund Balance	325,000	0
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance	388,331	400,629
Adjusted Unrestricted Fund Balance as a Percent of the Total Budget	1.72%	1.69%



Information for Voters

Qualified Voter

A person shall be entitled to vote at any school meeting for the election of school district officers, and all matters that may be brought before such Meeting who is:

- 1) A citizen of the United States of America
- 2) Eighteen years of age or older, and
- 3) A resident within the school district for a period of thirty (30) days preceding the annual vote and election.

Return of Ballots

- Ballots must be received by the District Office no later than 5:00 PM the day of the vote (June 9, 2020)
- Ballots may be mailed or dropped off at the District Office using the designated mail drop slot on the steel door to the right of the glass doors for the District Office.

Proposition on the Ballot

Resolved, that The Board of Education of Northern Adirondack Central School at Ellenburg be and is hereby authorized to expend the sum of \$23,758,650 total general fund appropriation, and to levy the necessary tax for the school year 2020 - 2021.

Board of Education Seats

Vote for Two 5 year terms.

Present Incumbents: Phalon Miner and Shirley Durnin

Petitions received from:

Jordon McGee
Phalon Miner
Mark Reif
Amanda Smith
Willie Venne

Each candidate provided their own background information, which can be found on the next page.



Information about perspective School Board candidates:

Jordon McGee

Jordan McGee is owner and operator of North Country Bedding in Plattsburgh. Opening in 2012, he's worked the business to be more successful each year – always knowing that without his customers it wouldn't be possible. This endeavor has required self-discipline, time management, attention to detail and an ability to work with and understand numbers.

Jordan has lived in Altona with his wife, Maria and two sons Trey and Luke since 2007. He enjoys watching sports, golfing, and playing chess with his son, Luke. Over the years he has coached t-ball, little league and flag football, demonstrating his natural commitment to the community.

Trey and Luke do well academically and along with sports they enjoy the extracurricular activities offered by the school. Jordan wants to see these continue. He believes in the power of community, honesty, transparency and clear communication. A sound budget in future years is Jordan's main concern, opening the channels for even more opportunities, which the children, parents, and taxpayers of NACS deserve.

Phalon Miner

My name is Phalon Miner and I am running for the Northern Adirondack board of Education. I am a lifelong resident of the district. Not only myself, but my wife and 2 daughters are alumni of NACS and now my granddaughters also attend NAC with one being a graduating senior this year. I have been a member of the Board of Education for the past 5 years.

I am a retired corrections officer, a member of the Knights of Columbus Council 4441 in Ellenburg. I am the Clinton County Youth Board representative for area 2 for the past 22 years, and a proud FFA alumni member.

These are tough times and with the State Education Aid for the school districts getting cut by 20% or more by the Governor due to the Covid-19 pandemic and possibly more cuts later in the year, puts our school at a disadvantage. I would like to continue working with our Board of Education, Superintendent Knight and the community to get the best education and programs possible for our students. There are a lot of issues beyond our control that have not helped our school. Understanding the school tax issue, passing the budget would be a big step forward to continue to provide our students with the education and programs that are needed without having any cuts to our staff and programs.

I would like to continue working on the Board of Education with your support. Together we can make this school stronger and better than ever. Thank you for your support. Stay safe and healthy.

Willie Venne

My name is Willie Venne, I have been a resident of the NAC school district since I was born, having graduated with a degree in 2000. I value the school district. I have a family of 5, wife, 2 sons and a daughter, that reside within the school district. I work full time as a shop manager at Taylor Rental, in Plattsburgh. In my free time, I enjoy being with my family, riding dirt bikes and improving on things around our farm. I am interested in the Board position because I have children that will be attending until 2032 and want to be able to participate along the way.

Amanda Smith

My name is Amanda Smith and I am writing to you today to express my interest in running for a position on the Board of Education.

My family and I live in Ellenburg Depot. I have two daughters, Hayzelle (5) and Ivy (2). My husband, Tyler Smith is employed as a Correctional Officer for the state of New York at the Altona Correctional Facility. My husband and I are both proud graduates from Northern Adirondack Central School District. I was very involved with my school community during my school years; playing sports, as well as challenging myself academically. I was inducted into the National Honor Society and always strived to have high honors during my high school years.

I received an Associate's Degree from Clinton Community College. I earned a Bachelor of Science Degree in Childhood Education and Master's Degree in Special Education from Plattsburgh State. I graduated from SUNY Plattsburgh with a BS/MSED in which I earned four certifications for Regular and Special Education Birth-2 as well as Regular and Special Education Grades 1-6. I have worked at Champlain Valley Physicians Hospital, Adirondack Helping Hands, and currently at Peru Central School District where I have been employed for four years as a fourth grade teacher in a co-teaching classroom.

I firmly believe that my strong commitment to education and our community coupled with my intense drive to effect positive change will make me an invaluable and effective member of our Board of Education.

Mark Reif

I, Mark Reif have lived in the Northern Adirondack School district for the last 21 years. I reside in Chazy Lake with my wife Melissa, daughter Samantha (NAC class of 2019), sons Kyle (NAC Middle school) and Brayden (NAC Elementary school). I was employed by NYDOCS for 26 years and retired as a lieutenant at Clinton Correctional facility. I am a combat veteran, retired from the United States Army Reserve as the Company 1st Sergeant with 25 years of service. Currently, I am employed by the United States Postal Service in Champlain.

I believe the school board needs someone to advocate for the children and employees of the district, while addressing the needs and concerns of the community. I have held multiple management positions, in which I have addressed many difficult situations. With my past experiences, I have developed many leadership skills that will assist the board during these uncertain times. The board needs to have leadership that can address the problems that the NAC school district will face in the near future. By the board working alongside the school management and community, we can overcome the current difficult situation and improve on building a better educational experience for our students.

In conclusion, I will have the integrity to make unbiased decisions that will help the school district out of the current financial situation and into a successful future.



A message from Superintendent Knight,

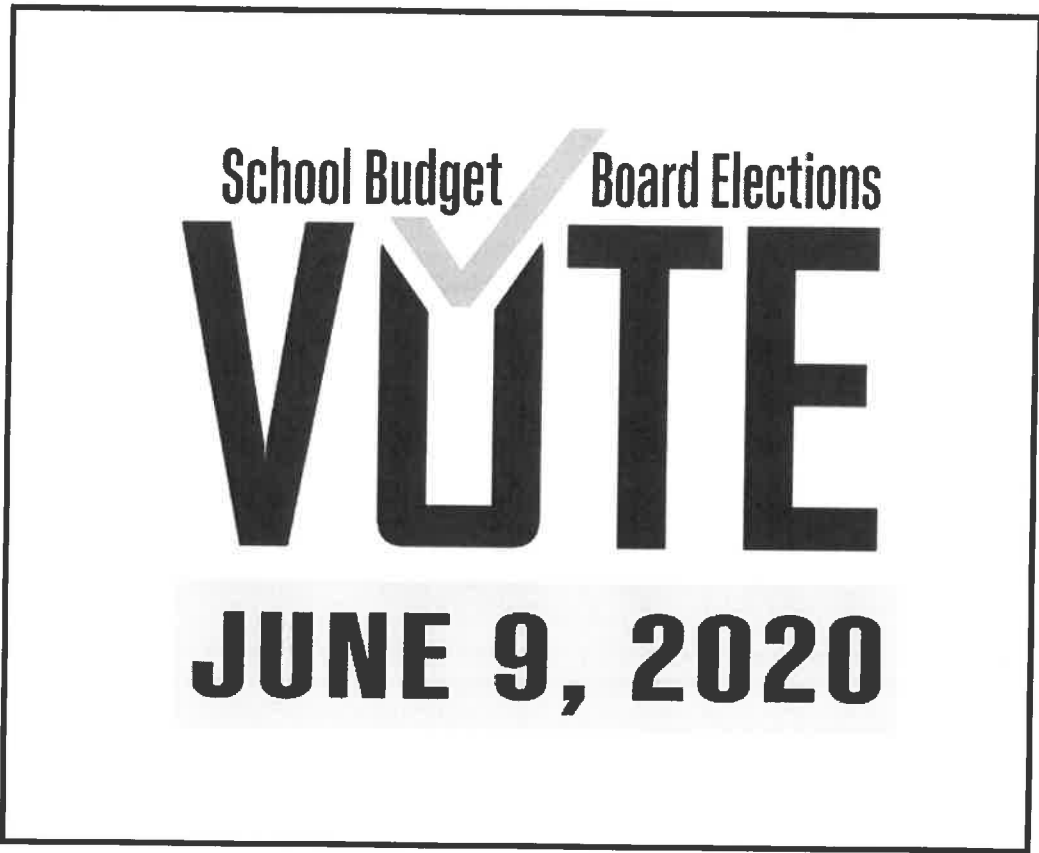
I hope this newsletter finds you healthy during this unprecedented time in history. The pandemic has caused much stress and change to all of our daily lives. This school year has been eye-opening for me as the leader of the Northern Adirondack Central School District. As a resident in the District for nearly 20 years, and a parent of twins who will be seniors next year, I thought I knew a lot about the District and it's situation. Boy, was I wrong! As a school administrator in two neighboring districts for 12 years prior to becoming your superintendent I watched closely at the differences between districts, and wondered why my own children were not afforded the opportunities present in other places. There were a couple of years that my wife and I considered sending our children to other schools, where they could experience more and receive the skill building opportunities required in today's advanced workforce, but we didn't because of the hardworking dedicated staff that continues to provide the best quality education they can with the limited resources and professional development they have been exposed to as well as the abundant sense of security and safety they provide. With that said, I am confident that our proposed budget will help brave the storm coming that includes State Aid Reductions and many unforeseen costs related to reopening after the onslaught of this pandemic. I may not be able to make NAC a whole lot better for my twins, but my goal is to make it better for every student in the future. I need your help and support to make this happen, so please vote yes for this budget. Please don't think that I am not aware that we are asking for a lot, but this one major adjustment will help make NAC become the Pride of the North Country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Superintendent Knight".



Vote **YES** for Schools!



Northern Adirondack Central School District
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Ellenburg Depot, NY 12935
(518) 594-7060

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Brian Tousignant, Business Official
Mike Loughman, High School Principal
Robert Witkiewicz, Middle School Principal
Lisa Silver, Elementary School Principal

Board of Education

Paul Gilmore, President
Mark DeCoste, Vice President
Steve Bartlemus
Shirley Durnin
Trevor Finley
Phalon Miner
Bryan Trombley

Postal Customer