



Westhill hill & vale

A Publication of the Westhill Central School District

MAY 2024

PROPOSED 2024-2025 SCHOOL BUDGET

Dear District Residents:

Westhill Central School District residents will vote on May 21st on a proposed \$49.9 million 2024-2025 budget that maintains all current programs and staffing while moving forward with the district's strategic plan. The proposed tax levy increase is 4.03%, which is equal to the tax cap. Over the last 7 years our average tax levy increase has been 2.43% with an average tax rate increase of 1.46%. The slightly higher than average tax levy increase this year is in part related to adjustments that we have made in staffing and programming to address the increase in the mental health needs of our students, an increase in special education costs, taxpayer approved debt tied to the renovation of the High School and purchase of the St. Ann's property, and the overall increase in costs as a result of inflation. Actual tax rate increases are not available until August, but we are hopeful that it will be less than 4.03%.

The 2024-25 budget proposal would authorize expenditures up to \$49,991,824 which is a 6.3% increase from the current year budget of \$47,010,551. The proposed tax levy would account for 4.0% of the budget increase with the additional 2.3% coming from appropriated fund balance. In summary, the 2024-25 budget can be broken down as follows:

Component	2024-25	% of budget	2023-24	% of budget
Administrative	\$ 4,094,328	8.2%	\$ 4,026,115	8.6%
Program	35,236,470	70.5%	32,715,965	69.6%
Capital	<u>10,661,117</u>	21.3%	<u>10,268,471</u>	21.8%
	\$49,991,824		\$47,010,551	

Because the legislature didn't adopt the New York State budget prior to April 17th, the district estimated state aid at \$22,142,983 in anticipation that Westhill's foundation aid will be fully funded. The 2024-25 budget maintains four school patrol officers, three English as a new language teachers, two instructional coaches, six teaching assistants and iReady adaptive software that were previously funded from the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Last year the voters approved the acquisition of St. Ann's Church for \$2,750,000. The property consists of 18.28 +/- acres of land and four structures. Looking to the future, the Board of Education has directed the formation of a facilities committee to create a long-range plan for all of our school buildings, the St. Ann's property and transportation center. We will be soliciting participation from various stakeholders to ensure input from our school community as we move forward with that facilities study.

Thank you once again for your continued support of the Westhill Central School District's budget development process, our staff and students. We do not take your support for granted and we appreciate the investment that each of you make in the education and future of each individual Westhill student.

Your Board of Education

PUBLIC HEARING

**Tuesday, May 7, 2024
7:00 PM**

Westhill High School
Library

BUDGET VOTE

**Tuesday, May 21, 2024
7:00 AM - 9:00 PM**

Westhill High School
Auditorium Foyer
(Grand Avenue Entrance)

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2024-2025 School Budget Overview

SUMMARY OF EXPENDITURES

The total appropriation amount of the proposed 2024-2025 school budget is \$49,991,824.

		<u>Percentage of Budget</u>				
	2024-25	2024-25	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Administrative	\$ 4,094,238	8.2%	8.6%	8.9%	8.9%	8.9%
Program	35,236,470	70.5%	69.6%	71.3%	71.5%	71.7%
Capital	<u>10,661,116</u>	21.3%	21.8%	19.8%	19.6%	19.3%
	\$49,991,824					

SUMMARY OF REVENUES

The total estimated revenue amount of the proposed 2024-2025 school budget is \$49,991,824.

		<u>Percentage of Budget</u>				
	2024-25	2024-2025	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
State Operating Aid	\$17,703,462	35.4%	34.8%	31.6%	29.6%	29.3%
State Building Aid	<u>4,439,521</u>	8.9%	10.0%	8.5%	8.4%	8.3%
Total State Aid	\$22,142,983	44.3%	44.7%	40.1%	38.0%	37.6%
Tax Levy	24,641,690	49.3%	50.4%	52.4%	54.4%	55.0%
Miscellaneous	1,350,139	2.7%	2.5%	2.4%	2.0%	2.5%
Appropriated Fund	<u>1,857,012</u>	3.7%	2.3%	5.2%	5.6%	5.0%
Balance	\$49,991,824					

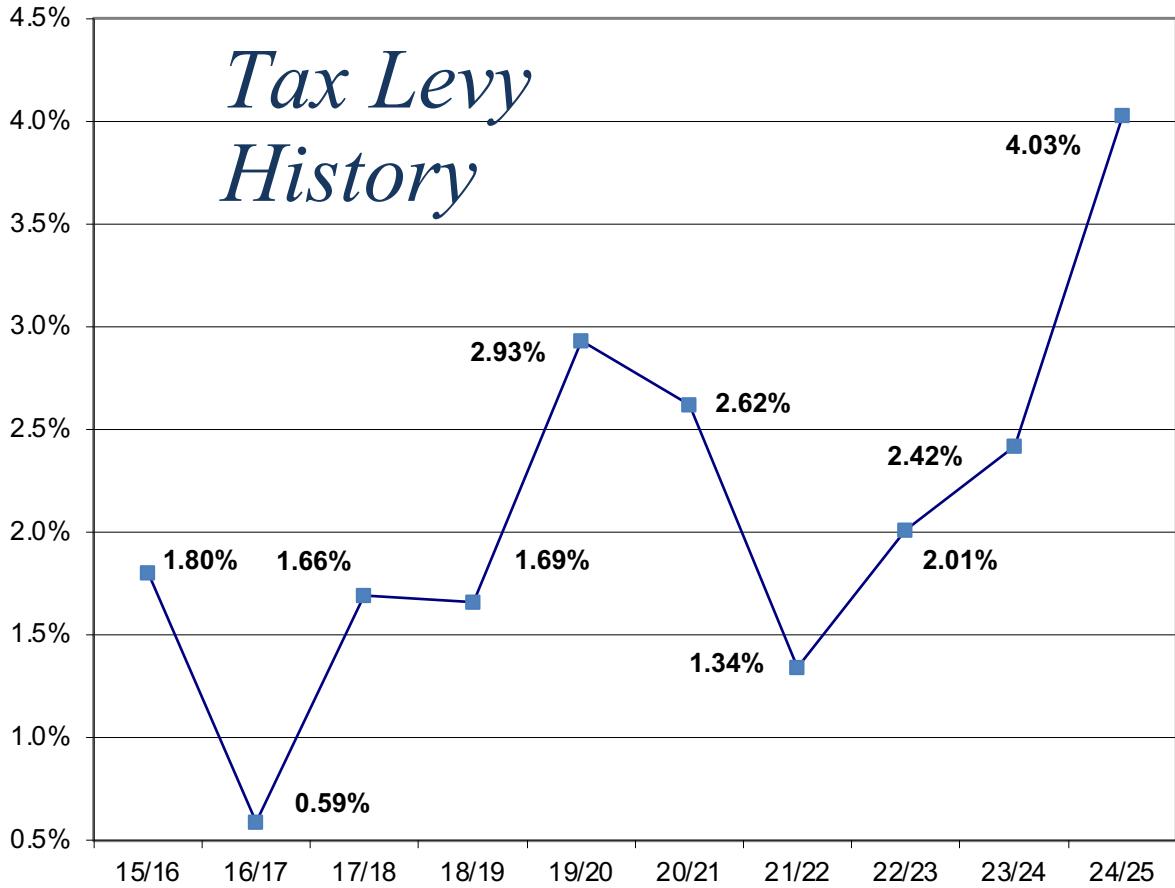
SUMMARY OF FUND BALANCE/RESERVES

The total estimated fund balance/reserves appropriated in the proposed 2024-2025 school budget is \$1,857,824. It includes \$100,000 to fund HVAC software upgrade and drinking fountain upgrades at Walberta Park.

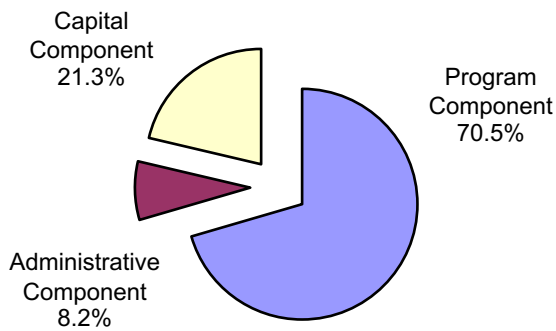
RESTRICTED FUND BALANCE

2022-23	3,223,671	
2021-22	3,220,495	(\$500,000 to the liability/cyber reserve fund)
2020-21	2,720,416	(\$68,000 from unemployment and \$350,000 to the capital reserve fund)
2019-20	2,438,207	(\$1,111,902 appropriation from the capital and liability reserve funds)
2018-19	3,548,702	(\$150,000 appropriation to the capital reserve fund)

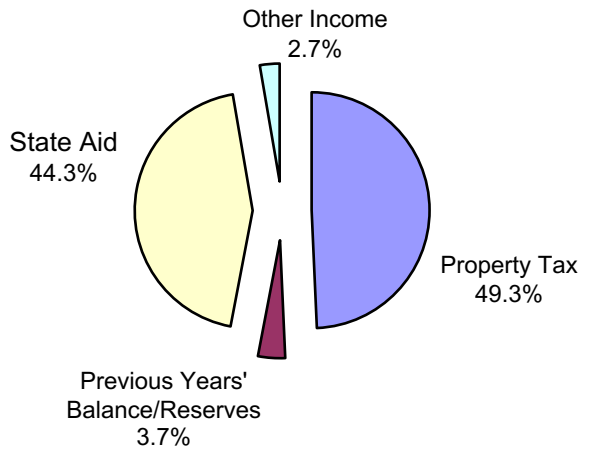
Tax Levy Changes



Expenditures by Component Category



Revenues by Funding Source



A detailed budget which includes the latest School District Report Card has been posted on the district's website. Copies may be obtained in either the District Office or in any school main office.

Budget Components

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENT

As defined by the New York State Education Department, the administrative component provides funding for the support services of the District. This component is comprised of those expenses which are associated with the Board of Education, Central Administration, Central Services and Supervision of Regular School.

	Budget 2024-2025	Budget 2023-2024	Description
Board of Education	\$ 16,088	\$ 16,075	Costs associated with legal notices, clerk's salary, supplies, dues, appraisals and district meetings.
Central and Business Administration	\$ 803,340	\$ 784,180	Salaries for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent for Business Administration, clerical staff, district treasurer, payroll, accounts payable, expenses for tax collection, fiscal, audit and personnel services.
Central Services	\$ 503,168	\$ 506,149	Expenses associated with legal services, public information, data processing, insurance and BOCES administrative/rental charges.
Supervision-Regular School	\$ 1,534,367	\$1,510,794	Salaries for the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, principals, assistant principals, Superintendent for Buildings & Grounds, Transportation Supervisor and office support staff in all buildings. Expenses for office supplies, postage and contractual services.
Fringe Benefits	\$ 1,237,275	\$ 1,208,917	Benefit costs to include retirement, FICA, health, dental, vision and unemployment insurances for active employees.
Total	\$ 4,094,238	\$ 4,026,115	

CAPITAL COMPONENT

As defined by the New York State Education Department, the capital component is comprised of those expenses which are associated with the operation and maintenance portions of the budget. Also included in this component is debt service.

	Budget 2024-2025	Budget 2023-2024	Description
Operations/Maintenance	\$ 3,401,237	\$ 3,027,742	Salaries for custodial staff, maintenance/grounds staff, building supplies, utilities, alarm and security services, plant maintenance and contracted services.
Assessments and Tax Refunds	\$ 25,000	\$ 25,500	Assessments for water and sewers; tax refunds.
Debt Service	\$ 6,492,610	\$ 6,485,047	Principal and interest payments; cash flow borrowing.
Capital Outlay	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000	Upgrade HVAC software and drinking fountains at Walberta Park.
Fringe Benefits	\$ 642,270	\$ 630,182	Benefit costs to include retirement, FICA, health, dental, vision and unemployment insurances for active employees.
Total	\$ 10,661,117	\$10,268,471	

Budget Components

PROGRAM COMPONENT

As defined by the New York State Education Department, the program component is generally the largest portion of the district budget. The items contained in this component represent the expenses for general instruction, special education, BOCES instructional programs, curriculum and staff development. In addition, pupil support services such as guidance, library, health, co-curricular, interscholastic and transportation are included in this component.

	Budget 2024-2025	Budget 2023-2024	Description
Teaching - Regular School	\$ 12,116,387	\$ 11,233,598	Salaries for teachers, teaching assistants, aides, and substitutes as well as allocations for supplies, equipment, teacher inservice, contractual, legal and BOCES services, including high school summer school.
Special Education	\$ 5,870,308	\$ 5,606,527	Salaries for special education teachers, teaching assistants, supplies, special tuitions, contractual and BOCES services.
Instructional Support Programs	\$ 3,924,855	\$ 3,597,295	Library-Media, Technology, Guidance, Health, Psychologist, Co-Curricular/Interscholastic, BOCES services and Community Census.
Transportation Services	\$ 2,484,968	\$ 2,290,600	Salaries for dispatcher, drivers, mechanics, equipment, supplies, fuel, contracted repair/maintenance and BOCES services.
Fringe Benefits	\$ 10,839,951	\$ 9,987,945	Benefit costs to include retirement, FICA, health, dental, vision and unemployment insurances for active and retired employees.

Total Program Component \$35,236,469 \$32,715,965

TOTAL BUDGET \$49,991,824 \$47,010,551

REVENUE SUMMARY FOR 2024-2025

Category	2024-2025	2023-2024	Difference
Basic State Aid (Foundation Aid)	\$ 12,735,713	\$ 11,882,071	\$ 853,642
State Aid - High Cost Aid	460,484	732,292	-271,808
State Aid - Building Aid	4,439,521	4,685,125	-245,604
State Aid - BOCES Aid/Transportation Aid	4,507,265	3,735,482	771,783
County Sales Tax Distribution	70,000	70,000	0
Other Income	1,280,139	1,118,047	162,092
Appropriated Fund Balance	1,857,012	1,099,221	757,791
Property Tax Levy & Local Library	24,641,690	23,688,313	953,377
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 49,991,824	\$ 47,010,551	\$ 2,981,273

Profile of Nominees

CHRISTIAN SISACK

Christian Sisack has been a Westhill district resident since 2007, when he, his wife (Kathleen) and their six-week old daughter (Emlyn) relocated to the Syracuse area. Emmie is now in 11th grade at WHS, and her younger sister, Brynna, is currently a 7th grader at OHMS. Both girls are active in the Westhill music and athletic programs.



The family moved to Onondaga Hill for a job opportunity at Onondaga Community College; Christian is now a tenured professor of English there, and Kathleen is a professional tutor and adjunct instructor. In addition to his primary instructional responsibilities at OCC, Christian coordinates the college's dual enrollment English classes offered at area high schools, including Westhill. He regularly visits these classes and collaborates with high school instructors on writing and literature pedagogy. In 2016, he was awarded the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

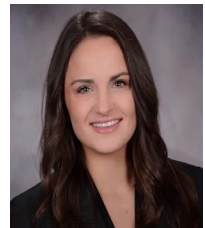
Christian holds a B.A. in Philosophy and English from King's College and an M.A. in English from Seton Hall University; he also did advanced graduate work in Writing and American Literature at Lehigh University. Including his time at OCC, he has 27 years of college teaching experience.

Christian hopes to serve on the Board of Education in order to maintain the district's tradition of academic excellence. He has been very impressed with and is grateful for his daughters' curricular and extra-curricular experiences at Westhill and wants to help ensure that current and future students are afforded similar opportunities. In addition, his work in post-secondary education provides him with valuable perspectives on the skills and experiences that benefit students after high school.

A hip replacement in Summer 2023 forced Christian to step away from his favorite hobby, running (he ran in dozens of 5Ks, 10Ks, 15Ks and half marathons between 2010 and 2022), but he still enjoys outdoor activities like hiking, camping, and swimming.

KELLY RISTOFF

Kelly Ristoff is a 2012 graduate of Westhill High School who is passionate about community engagement and advocacy for the Westhill Schools. She has spent the last three years as the Westhill girls' JV soccer coach, which has allowed her to get to know many of the high school students and youth, as well as through various camps and youth events. She is involved with the community as an EMT as well. She and her husband moved to the Westvale area in 2022. She would be honored to transition into a role that would allow her to advocate for best outcomes for the students and be involved in the governance of the district. Her role as a full-time in-house counsel for a Syracuse based non-profit dedicated to improving health outcomes for individuals with mental health and substance use disorders, in combination with her training as an attorney, has greatly increased her desire to become involved in her community. She hopes to use her knowledge and passion to advocate for youth that are so greatly impacted by decisions that are outside of their control. The Westhill community is incredibly special to Kelly, from her time as a student, her time coaching and her hope to one day have children who will attend the Westhill schools. She enjoys hiking, running, spending time with friends, family and her dogs. She believes that her desire to serve the community will make her a positive addition to the Board of Education.



CHRISTOPHER HAIGNEY

A 2002 graduate of Westhill High School, Chris Haigney resides on Onondaga Hill with his wife Caitlin and two adorable kids, aged 5 and 3. Professionally, Chris is a dedicated software manager at Baxter (formerly Welch Allyn) where he's worked for over 15 years. Beyond his career, he is deeply committed to education and has served as a board member of the Westhill Educational Foundation for the past 5 years, advocating for the betterment of his alma mater. In his free time, Chris cherishes moments with his wife and children, relishing their growth and experiences. He's also an avid golfer, traveler and a passionate Syracuse basketball fan, boasting season tickets for over a decade.



Propositions

General Budget

Yes

No

Shall the Board of Education of the Westhill Central School District in the Towns of Geddes and Onondaga be authorized to expend the sum of \$49,991,824 as general fund appropriations for the 2024-25 school year and to levy the necessary tax?

Vehicle Purchase Proposition

Yes

No

Shall the Board of Education of the Westhill Central School District be authorized to purchase and finance four (4) 66-passenger diesel school buses, including necessary furnishings, fixtures and equipment and all other costs incidental thereto, and expend a total sum not to exceed \$660,000, which is estimated to be the total maximum cost thereof, and said amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall be raised by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District and collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of said School District, in the principal amount not to exceed \$660,000, shall be issued.

Onondaga Free Library Proposition

Yes

No

Shall the Westhill Central School District levy and collect a tax, pursuant to Section 259 of the Education Law of the State of New York, in the sum of \$183,578 (which is an increase of \$8,742 from the levy currently in effect from 2023-24 in the sum of \$174,836) for the continuing support and maintenance of the free library services offered to district residents by the Onondaga Free Library historically supported by the Westhill Central School District?

Board of Election Seat

This year, there are two Board of Education seats, one five-year term and one three-year term, on the ballot. Christian Sisack, Kelly Ristoff and Christopher Haigney have filed the necessary petitions to be placed on the ballot. As of the date of this publication, no other petitions have been filed. Deadline to file a petition is April 22, 2024.

Capital Project

Yes

No

Shall the Board of Education undertake a capital project consisting of renovations and improvements to the Cherry Road Elementary School and Westhill High School, including, but not limited to, partial roof replacements, exterior door hardening, HVAC upgrades, sewer drain reconstruction, and batting cage, tennis courts and track reconstruction, all to include site improvements, electrical and mechanical systems, original furnishings, fixtures and equipment, architectural fees, and all other costs incidental to such work, original furnishings, fixtures and equipment, architectural fees, and all other costs incidental to such work (the "Project") at a total estimated cost not to exceed \$2,250,000, and, subject to available State Aid, obtain the necessary funds by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of the School District to be collected in annual installments in the years and in the amounts as the Board of Education shall determine and in anticipation of such tax, shall the School District be authorized to issue up to \$2,250,000 of obligations of the School District and levy a tax to pay the interest thereon when due.

Board of Education Eligibility Requirements

Generally, school board candidates must be a U.S. citizen, at least 18 years old, a qualified voter in the school district and able to read and write. They must be a resident of the district continuously for one year before the election. They cannot be employed by the board on which they will serve or live in the same household with a family member who is also a member of the same school board.

Absentee Ballots

If a qualified voter needs to have an absentee ballot mailed to them, a completed application form must be submitted to the District Clerk prior to 5:00 pm on Tuesday, May 14, 2024. If a resident does not need the ballot mailed to them, the completed application form must be submitted to the District Clerk by 5:00 pm on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. Any questions should be directed to Laurie Lowe, District Clerk, at 315-426-3272.

Voter Qualifications

As stipulated by New York State Law, the following qualifications must be met in order to vote:

1. You must be a citizen of the United States;
2. You must be at least eighteen years of age; and
3. You must be a resident of the district for at least thirty (30) days prior to May 21, 2024.

BOARD OF EDUCATION
 Westhill Central School District
 400 Walberta Road
 Syracuse, New York 13219-2214

Non-profit Organization
 U.S. Postage PAID
 Permit No. 3523
 Syracuse, New York

BOARD OF EDUCATION
 Lisa M. O'Reilly, President
 Roseanne Scrimale, Vice President
 Andrew Starowicz
 Andrew Hunter
 Christopher Haigney

The Westhill Central School District does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, sex or race in its employment practices or educational programs.

The total tax levy (the amount raised by the taxpayers of the district) for the proposed 2024-25 school budget is \$24,641,690. This amount increased by \$953,377, or 4.03% over last year. This increase is equal to the district's "tax levy limit". For the past ten years, the average annual tax levy increase has been less than 2.25%. The tax levy is one of the factors in determining the tax rate.

Estimated Tax Rate

In addition to the tax levy, final town assessments and the state equalization rates are required to finalize the tax rate. This information is not received by the school district until after the budget vote. Therefore, the tax rate information shown below is estimated based on the assumptions listed. The final tax rates are set by the Board of Education in August. The tax rate is the individual rate per thousand of assessed value that appears on the tax bill.

Estimated Total Annual Dollar Change for a Home Assessed at \$100,000			
Town of Geddes		Town of Onondaga	
Total Annual \$ Change	Tax Rate % Change	Total Annual \$ Change	Tax Rate % Change
* \$218.38	4.06%	\$200.48	4.03%
** \$133.38		\$121.48	

* Basic STAR exemption - \$689 Geddes & \$721 Onondaga¹ ** Enhanced STAR exemption - \$1,796¹

Above chart uses equalization rates similar to 2023-2024 and assumes no increase in total assessed value. Actual tax rates will vary after equalization rates and assessments are finalized in August.

¹Please be advised that the maximum STAR savings is calculated by the NYS Department of Taxation and Finance, <http://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/max-savings/school-district/sd31>.