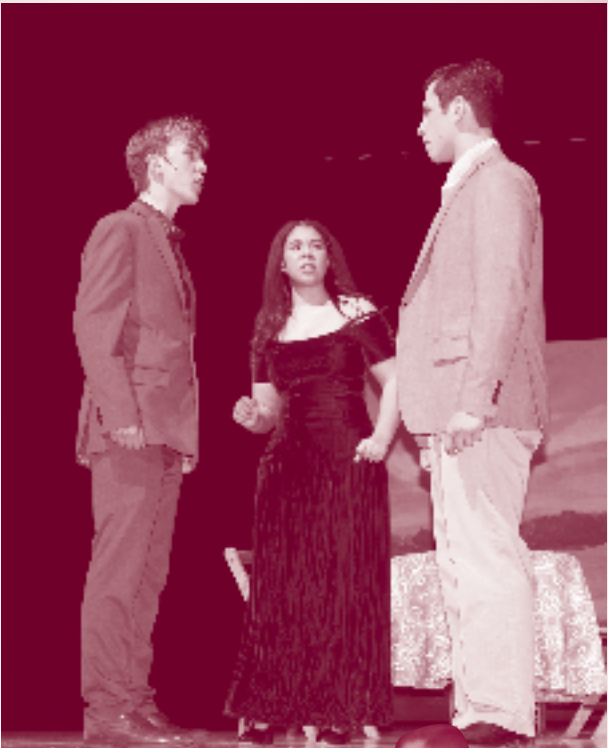




High School's Production of *Big Fish* Makes a Big Splash



The High School's Music Department and Drama Club recently transported audiences into the whimsical and heartfelt world of *Big Fish*, a musical brimming with larger-than-life stories, family bonds, and the pursuit of truth. Under the direction of Nancy Owen and Music teacher Nicole Foti, students from the High School, along with younger performers from Duzine and Lenape Elementary Schools, came together to bring this moving tale to life.

Based on the novel by Daniel Wallace and the Tim Burton film adaptation, *Big Fish* follows Edward Bloom, a traveling salesman known for his fantastical storytelling, as his son Will seeks to uncover the reality behind his father's tall tales.

Continued on page 8



Special Budget Issue 2025-2026

Greetings Everyone,

This newsletter includes information about the proposed 2025-2026 school budget. You will have a chance to vote on this budget on May 20, 2025.

The total budget of \$76,095,330 represents a 3.5% increase in spending over the current school year. The school board has worked hard to develop a budget that is fiscally responsible and preserves programs for all students. Board members have listened to the public about what the priorities of the community are and as a result, they have added to the budget a full-time athletic trainer and a full-time unarmed security guard who will work mostly in the High School.

Developing this budget was not easy. Once again this year, the anticipated expenses exceeded the anticipated revenues. The size of the budget gap was minimized because our calculation of the allowable tax cap, as defined by the State of New York, is 4.35%. This means that the District can increase the tax levy, the amount of money the taxpayers pay to the District, by 4.35%. We recognize that a 4.35% tax increase is significant, especially after the taxpayers approved a \$17 million capital project in January that will make necessary repairs and improvements to the District.


Even with a significant increase in the tax levy, reductions had to be made and a substantial amount of savings (fund balance) will need to be used to balance the budget. Here are some key points related to the balancing of the budget:

- The tax levy will increase from \$49,346,699 to \$51,490,831
- Our State Aid will increase from \$19,970,896 to \$20,061,299
- The budget includes the purchase of 3 new diesel/gas buses and a Suburban
- We will use \$2,354,000 in fund balance and reserves
- We will eliminate the equivalent of 4.4 positions for an estimated savings of \$813,551
- Only 3 current employees will lose their jobs

We do regret the loss of a High School English Language Arts (ELA) position, a Middle School Social Studies position, an integrated technology position, and vacant special education positions at the elementary level. However, the declining enrollment of our District over the last few years has made these and other reductions possible and necessary to create a balanced and responsible budget.

We hope this budget document will answer all of your questions about the proposed budget so that you can make the best decision possible for your family when you head to the polls on May 20. If you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Best wishes,


Matthew Williams – School Board President


Stephen Gratto – Superintendent

Want to stay informed? To receive Community Updates from Superintendent Stephen Gratto, including important news and announcements, email sgratto@newpaltz.k12.ny.us to join the distribution list.

2025-2026 Proposed Budget Includes Staffing and Purchasing Adjustments Together with Fund Balance Monies to Meet NYS Tax Cap and Protect Student Programs

The New Paltz Central School District Board of Education invites eligible voters to cast their ballots on the proposed 2025-2026 budget of \$76,095,330, carrying a projected tax rate increase of 4.35%. The proposed budget protects all academic, extra- and co-curricular activities with the exception of one summer program previously covered by COVID funds.

Because the projected tax rate increase falls within the New York State Tax Cap Formula criteria, the proposed budget will pass with a simple majority vote of 50% plus one.

In addition to voting on the proposed budget, voters may also cast their ballots for School Board elections. Three seats are up for election on the School Board this year. Two are for three-year terms, commencing July 1, 2025 and expiring June 30, 2028, and one is to fill the unexpired term resulting from the resignation of Glenn LaPolt, commencing on or about May 21, 2025 and expiring June 30, 2027. One candidate, Jason Clark, has filed to run. Voters will have the option to cast their vote for Mr. Clark

or not, as well as to write in the names of additional candidates. Winners will be determined based upon their eligibility and willingness to serve, with the two receiving the highest and second highest number of votes being appointed to the two three-year terms and the candidate with the third highest number of votes being appointed to the unexpired term. Voting will take place on Tuesday, May 20, at New Paltz High School. The polls will be open from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. Absentee Ballots and Early Mail Ballots are available to those unable to vote in person. (See details on Page 5.)

Proposed Budget Includes Staffing Adjustments

Staff salaries and benefit expenses consistently comprise the largest portion of typical school budgets. Closely monitoring the hiring, retention, and assignment of staff relative to what students need both now and in the future is a key component of school budget development. Student enrollment, class size, and student-teacher ratios are all considerations.

From 2008-2009 to 2024-2025, student enrollment at NPCSD decreased by over 35%. The District anticipates this trend in declining student enrollment to continue into 2025-2026, moving from the current 1,678 students to 1,642. Closer analysis reveals that graduating classes have more students than incoming Kindergarten classes. This trend is anticipated to continue into 2029-2030.

In response to the declining enrollment, together with increased expenses and anticipated revenue, the

Continued on page 3

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Olivia Treubig

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This newsletter was printed on recycled paper stock.

VOTE TUESDAY
MAY 20, 2025
7 AM - 9 PM at
New Paltz High School

Duzine Artists Channel Eric Carle in Colorful Collage Creations

Young artists at Duzine Elementary School are diving into a vibrant new project inspired by beloved children’s book author and illustrator Eric Carle. Known for his iconic collage-style illustrations, Carle perfected a creative process that involved painting his own paper to cut and arrange into colorful images—a technique that Duzine students are now joyfully exploring, thanks to Art teacher Jen Cone.

In Cone’s classes, students have been painting paper using a variety of colors and textures, and then cutting and assembling the pieces into imaginative collage artworks.

Each grade level has embraced a unique theme for their creations: Grade 2 students are crafting detailed collage insects, Grade 1 students are bringing magical gardens to life, and Kindergarten students are constructing cozy collage houses.

This engaging project is the latest in a year full of artistic exploration. Duzine artists have worked with pastels, crayons, watercolors, and tempera paints, gaining hands-on experience with a wide range of materials and techniques.

Duzine students are bursting with creativity, and their work is a testament to their enthusiasm, imagination, and developing artistic skills.



Duzine Elementary School Celebrates 100 Days of Positivity

Duzine Elementary School recently celebrated the 100th day of school by continuing a heartwarming tradition focused on kindness and self-love. What started as a way to support students’ emotional well-being during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic has become a beloved annual event.

The tradition began during the 2020-2021 school year, when School Nurse Joy VanVlack—affectionately known in the building as “Nurse Joy”—noticed how much students needed a positive boost after their return to in-person schooling. In response, she created the “100 Days of Positivity” initiative.

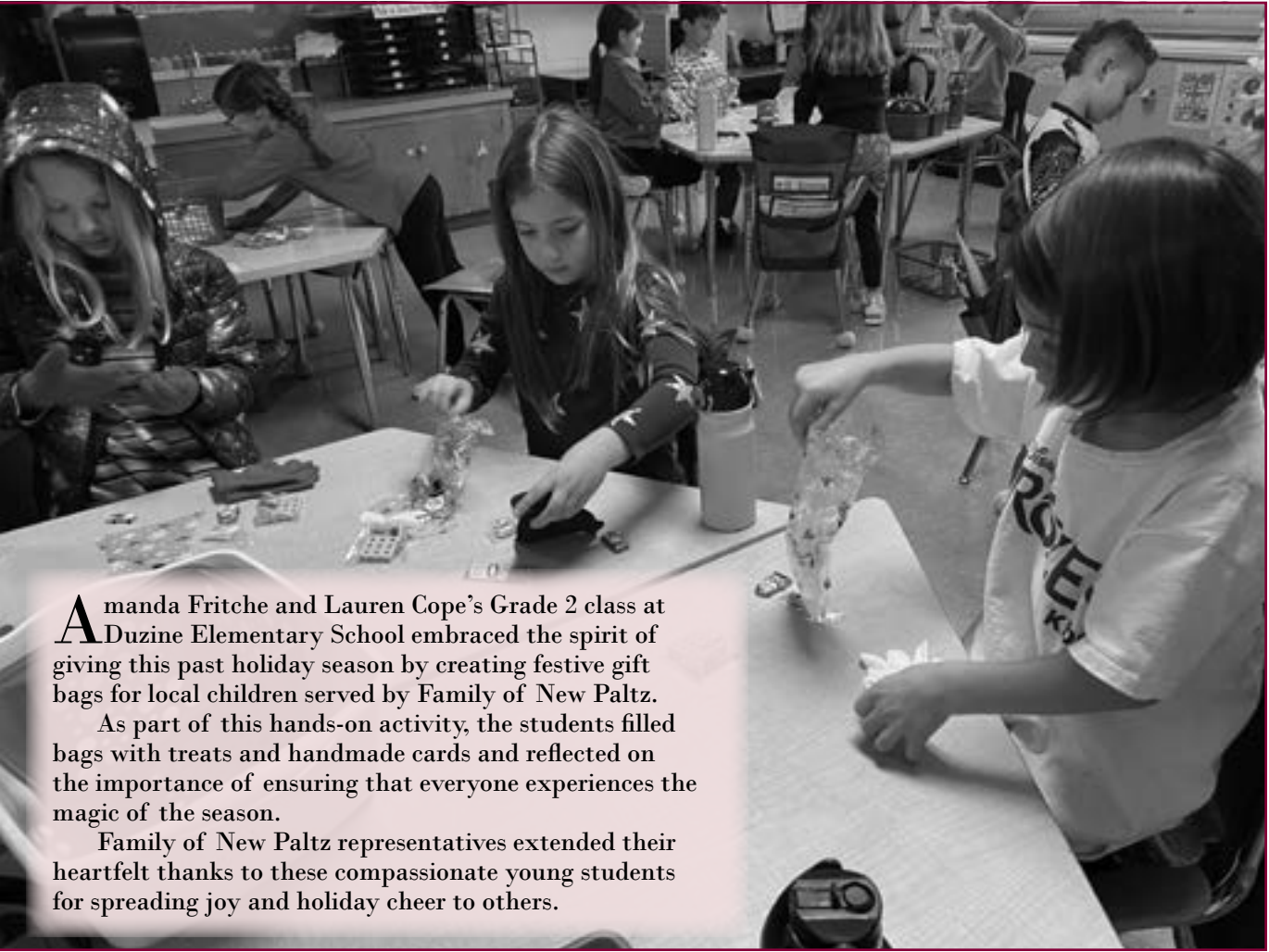
Since then, Nurse Joy has thoughtfully adjusted the theme each year to best support the students. This year’s theme, “Positive things you can say to yourself, or to others/ friends,” was chosen to encourage self-compassion and kindness. “I realized how harsh we can be on ourselves, and I wanted to remind students of the power of positive words, both to themselves and to others,” she explained.

As part of the celebration, students added their favorite uplifting phrases to a chalkboard in the nurse’s office. Their messages, which were filled with encouragement and inspiration, included ones like “Live life 100%!” and “Be your own kind of beautiful!”

This meaningful activity not only marks a milestone in the school year but also serves as a reminder of the importance of positive thinking and the supportive, caring community at Duzine. Through this tradition, students reinforced the power of kindness and affirmations, making the 100th day of school a celebration of both their personal growth and the bonds they share with one another.



Duzine Students Spread Holiday Cheer



Amanda Fritche and Lauren Cope’s Grade 2 class at Duzine Elementary School embraced the spirit of giving this past holiday season by creating festive gift bags for local children served by Family of New Paltz. As part of this hands-on activity, the students filled bags with treats and handmade cards and reflected on the importance of ensuring that everyone experiences the magic of the season. Family of New Paltz representatives extended their heartfelt thanks to these compassionate young students for spreading joy and holiday cheer to others.

Grade 2 Students Share Their Stories with Kindergarten Class

Students in Amanda Fritche and Lauren Cope’s Grade 2 class at Duzine Elementary School had a wonderful opportunity to enhance their reading fluency while building connections across grade levels. The Grade 2 students wrote their own books and then shared them with Elayne Zinn and Patsy Kosinetz’s Kindergarten class. This exciting activity allowed the young writers to read their stories aloud, increasing their fluency while fostering a sense of community between the two classes.

This collaboration not only gave the Grade 2 students a chance to showcase their hard work but also allowed the Kindergartners to enjoy the creativity and imagination of their older peers. The event was a great success, with both groups of students engaging in a meaningful cross-grade experience that promoted learning and friendship within the school community.



Continued from page 1

2025-2026 Proposed Budget

proposed budget includes a total net reduction of 3.4 positions (1.0 being the equivalent of one full-time position). To minimize the impact to staff, 4.0 of the reductions are through attrition of positions currently vacant or from which staff are retiring. Three additional positions—one Social Studies teacher at New Paltz Middle School, one districtwide Business teacher, and one English teacher at New Paltz High School—are being eliminated. A total of 3.6 positions are being added, including a full-time athletic trainer, two full-time monitors, and one part-time Technology teacher.

“Our preliminary budget proposal did not include funding for an athletic trainer,” explains Assistant Superintendent for Business Debra Kosinski. “After receiving input from students and families at our community budget forum, the Board opted to include the athletic trainer, and to make reductions in other areas so as to contain the projected tax rate increase.”

Other Spending Adjustments Also Proposed

In addition to staffing adjustments, the proposed budget also includes adjustments for equipment, supplies and services. One significant cost is the purchase of four new vehicles to the District’s transportation fleet: two 65-passenger school buses, one 28/29-passenger bus, and one Suburban. Funding is also included to contract for unarmed security guard services at New Paltz High School. The planned purchase of a new scoreboard for the High School athletic field was removed from the original proposed budget; however, the Board plans to seek alternative funding sources instead. Summer guidance and nurse services previously paid for through COVID funds, which have now expired, are included in the proposed budget, although a summer enrichment program at Lenape Elementary School, also previously covered by COVID funds, is being eliminated. The \$3,000 stipend for running the District’s Continuing Education program is a new expense, as the program had previously been coordinated by a volunteer.

Fund Balance Helps Balance the Budget

When all cost increases, reductions, and adjustments are accounted for, the year-to-year increase in the proposed budget’s spending over this year’s current budget is 3.5%. On the revenue side, the District is projecting increases of \$90,403 in State Aid and \$70,000 in other revenue streams including tuition, rentals, and others. An additional \$100,000 in revenue is also projected from new federal Medicaid funding. Despite the extra income and cost reductions, the overall revenue is not sufficient to cover the anticipated expenses for the school year. Therefore, a significant amount of fund balance (savings) will be used to balance the budget.

If Budget Vote Fails, \$2.1 Million in Additional Program Cuts Needed for Contingency Budget

When budget votes fail, NYS districts have the option to hold a second vote for the same or a modified version. If the vote fails a second time, or if a district opts not to hold a second vote, NYS law requires adoption of a contingency budget where spending is set at a predetermined level. For the 2025-2026 school year, a contingency budget would result in the reduction of an additional \$2.1 million in spending including eliminating the purchasing of school buses and any new equipment, funding for the athletic trainer position, and facility use by the public unless the cost to the district is reimbursed. Teacher-to-student ratios will increase, some course offerings will be limited, and expenses for student and technology supplies and resources will need to be reduced.

Voter Eligibility

All qualified voters may vote on the school budget. A qualified voter is any U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older on the day of the vote, who has resided in the District for 30 days or more prior to the day of the vote. If you are registered with the Ulster County Board of Elections, you are automatically registered to vote in school elections. If you are not, you may still register with the school district to participate on the day of the vote. Polls are located at New Paltz High School and are open from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. on May 20.

District Launches Inaugural Season of Community Continuing Education Program

This year marked the launch of the New Paltz Community Continuing Education Program, which is offering residents of all ages a vibrant mix of learning and recreational opportunities. With 26 classes spanning fitness, the arts, personal growth, and more, this District-supported program has already begun fostering connections and enriching lives through shared experiences.

From games and arts and crafts to STEAM-based learning (referring to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math activities), the program offers something for everyone. Its diverse lineup reflects a commitment to inclusivity, creativity, and lifelong learning.

Board of Education member Heather Kort shared her excitement about the program’s successful debut, highlighting the strong turnout and community enthusiasm. Superintendent Stephen Gratto echoed her sentiments, stating, “This program has been a fantastic way to bring our community together, offering engaging opportunities for lifelong learning and recreation. We are thrilled to see such enthusiasm and look forward to expanding these offerings in the future.”

With a strong foundation and a warm reception from the community, the New Paltz Community Continuing Education Program is off to a promising start, bringing new opportunities for learning and connection to the area.



STATEMENT OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The District condemns and prohibits all forms of discrimination and harassment in educational programs, activities and services based on actual or perceived race (including traits historically associated with race such as hair texture and protective hairstyles) color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including identity and expression) or sex. If you believe that you have been discriminated against, you may make a claim that your rights have been denied. A claim or grievance may be filed with the Deputy Superintendent/Civil Rights Compliance Officer (Title VI, Title IX, Section 504), New Paltz Central School District, 196 Main Street, New Paltz, NY, 12561, 845-256-4030.

Budget Summary				
Expenditure Budget	2024-2025 Adopted Budget	2025-2026 Proposed Budget	\$\$ Change from 2024-2025	Proposed Budget Comments
Board of Education	\$65,547	\$66,006	\$459	
Superintendent's Office	\$302,357	\$311,175	\$8,818	
Business Office	\$579,558	\$591,037	\$11,479	
Personnel, Legal, Printing, Postage	\$367,703	\$347,533	-\$20,170	
Insurance, BOCES Admin Fees	\$2,011,117	\$2,260,133	\$249,016	Increase due to Ulster BOCES iPark
Curriculum & Staff Development	\$559,378	\$721,821	\$162,443	
Principals' Offices & Program Supervision	\$1,703,304	\$1,709,164	\$5,860	
Special Education	\$160,770	\$149,451	-\$11,319	
Employee Benefits	\$1,966,503	\$2,066,988	\$100,486	
TOTAL - Administration	\$7,716,237	\$8,223,308	\$507,072	6.6%
Regular Instruction, AIS & ESL	\$16,288,105	\$16,310,782	\$22,677	
Occ. Ed., Summer School	\$1,449,953	\$1,583,916	\$133,963	
Special Education	\$9,537,928	\$10,325,746	\$787,818	Based on Student IEPs & Out-of-District Placements
Libraries	\$491,746	\$412,175	-\$79,571	
Computer-Assisted Instruction	\$1,376,711	\$1,330,658	-\$46,053	
Guidance, Health, Psychologists	\$2,085,084	\$2,293,059	\$207,975	
Extracurricular & Sports	\$615,613	\$685,999	\$70,386	
Transportation	\$4,902,081	\$4,960,081	\$58,000	
Employee Benefits	\$18,843,945	\$19,722,737	\$878,791	
Interfund Transfers	\$346,000	\$325,000	-\$21,000	
TOTAL - Program	\$55,937,166	\$57,950,153	\$2,012,986	3.6%
Facilities & Operations	\$3,840,948	\$3,895,550	\$54,602	
Judgments & Claims	\$70,200	\$0	-\$70,200	
School Buses	\$480,000	\$480,000	\$0	
Employee Benefits	\$1,359,520	\$1,430,219	\$70,699	
Debt Service	\$4,016,600	\$4,016,100	-\$500	
Interfund Transfers	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0	
TOTAL - Capital	\$9,867,268	\$9,921,869	\$54,601	0.6%
TOTAL BUDGET	\$73,520,671	\$76,095,330	\$2,574,659	
% BUDGET INCREASE ===>				3.50%
Revenue Budget	2024-2025	2025-2026	\$\$ Change	Comments
Tax Levy including STAR	\$49,346,699	\$51,490,831	\$2,144,132	4.35% Levy Increase
Other Revenue: Includes BOCES Refund, Interest, Charges to Other Districts, Rentals, Donations, Admissions	\$2,019,200	\$2,089,200	\$70,000	
State Aid	\$19,970,896	\$20,061,299	\$90,403	
Federal Aid-Medicaid	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	
Total Revenues	\$71,336,795	\$73,741,330	\$2,404,535	
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$1,500,000	\$1,500,000	\$0	"Regular" Appropriated Fund Balance
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$0	To fund Ulster BOCES Capital Project expense
Appropriated Fund Balance-Reserve for TRS	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000	To fund retirement expenses
Appropriated Fund Balance-Debt Service	\$0	\$154,000	\$154,000	To use up remaining Capital Project money
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$283,876	\$0	-\$283,876	
Revenues and Fund Balance	\$73,520,671	\$76,095,330	\$2,574,659	
% TAX LEVY INCREASE ===>				4.35%

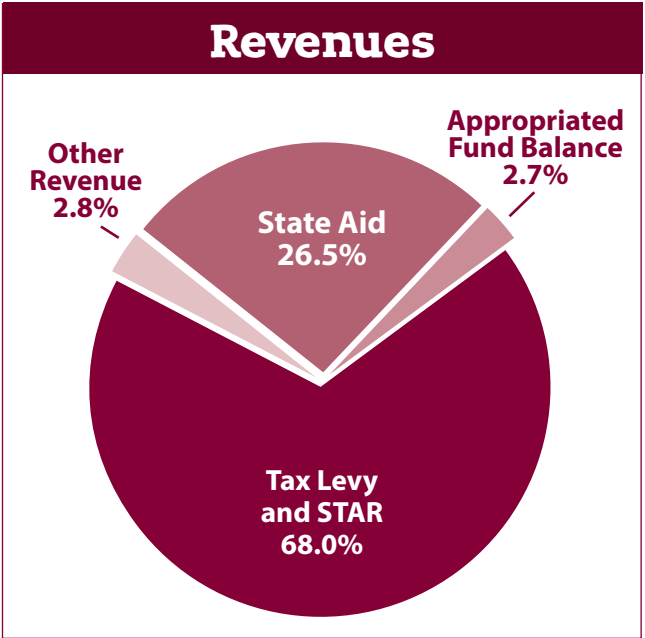
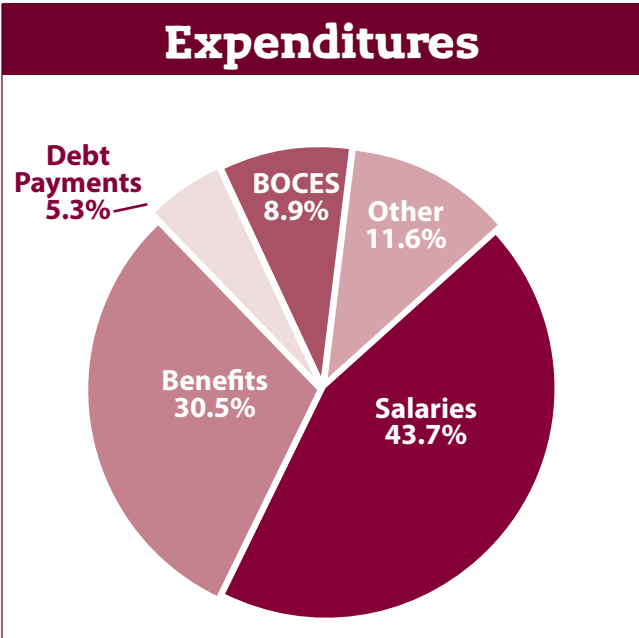
The Three-Part Budget

Category	Percentage
Program	76.2%
Capital	13.0%
Administration	10.8%

Administration Budget: This includes school building offices and central administration, along with clerical support, salaries and benefits of all school administrators, Board of Education expenses for planning, and other administrative activities.

Capital Budget: This refers to all facilities costs such as custodial salaries and benefits, maintenance salaries and benefits, service contracts, custodial and maintenance supplies, utility costs for heating, electricity, water, and annual capital project debt service.

Program Budget: This covers classroom supplies and equipment, teacher salaries and benefits, all related educational costs, and costs for student transportation services. This program area makes up the largest portion of the budget.



VOTE

TUESDAY
MAY 20, 2025
7 AM - 9 PM at New Paltz High School

To be added to the email list for Community Updates from the Superintendent, please email sgratto@newpaltz.k12.ny.us

School District Budget Notice

OVERALL BUDGET PROPOSAL	Budget Adopted for the 2024-2025 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-2026 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2025-2026 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$73,520,671	\$76,095,330	\$73,951,198
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-2026 School Year		\$2,574,659	\$430,527
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.5%	0.6%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$49,346,699	\$51,490,831	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	\$0	\$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	\$49,346,699	\$51,490,831	\$49,349,699
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$3,031,320	\$3,733,641	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$46,315,379	\$47,757,190	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$46,315,379	\$47,757,190	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$	\$	
Administrative Component	\$7,716,237	\$8,223,308	\$7,803,647
Program Component	\$55,937,166	\$57,950,153	\$57,033,533
Capital Component	\$9,867,268	\$9,921,869	\$9,114,018

* A contingency budget would result in the reduction of about \$2.1 million in budgetary appropriations including eliminating all bus purchases, new equipment, transfer to capital, athletic trainer, and facility use by the public unless the cost to the district is reimbursed. Teacher-to-student ratios will increase, limitation in course availability, and decreases in student and technology supplies and resources.

**Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements):

Description	Amount
There are no separate propositions.	\$0

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2025-2026 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$591

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by Section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-2026 by the qualified voters of the New Paltz Central School District, Ulster County, New York, will be held at New Paltz High School in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, prevailing time in the New Paltz High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

Sample Ballot

Proposition #1 Vote YES or NO

Shall the Board of Education of the New Paltz Central School District be authorized to expend \$76,095,330.00 which will be required for school district purposes for the year July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026 (The Budget) and to levy the necessary tax therefor?

Election of School Board Members

You may vote for any three (3) of the candidates listed by making a single cross (X) or a single check (✓) mark in the voting square next to the candidates' names or write in the name of another person(s) in the spaces provided.

Jason Clark ☐

Write-In _____

Write-In _____

Write-In _____

IF YOU VOTE FOR MORE THAN THREE (3) YOUR VOTE WILL NOT BE COUNTED

NOTE: Three seats are up for election—two for three-year terms, July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2028, and one to fill an unexpired term on or about May 21, 2025 to June 30, 2027. One candidate has filed to run, and three write-in lines will be listed on the ballot. Voters may vote for no more than three candidates. Winners will be determined based upon their eligibility and willingness to serve, with the two receiving the highest and second highest number of votes being appointed to the two three-year terms, and the candidate with the third highest number of votes being appointed to the unexpired term.

Criteria to serve on the School Board:

1. U.S. citizen
2. 18 years of age or older
3. Qualified voter in the District
4. Able to read and write
5. District resident continuously for one year before the election
6. Not employed by the District or living in the same household as a school board member

HOW TO VOTE

★Voter Eligibility

All qualified voters may vote on the school budget. A qualified voter is any U.S. citizen, 18 years of age or older on the day of the vote, who has resided in the District for 30 or more days immediately prior to the day of the vote.

★Voting Location

Polls will be open for in-person voting on Tuesday, May 20, from 7 AM to 9 PM at the New Paltz High School gymnasium.

★Absentee Ballots and Early Mail Ballots

Absentee Ballots are available for any qualified voter who is unable to make it to the polls on the day of the vote. Voters also have the option to vote via Early Mail Ballot.

Applying for an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot

To obtain either an Absentee Ballot or an Early Mail Ballot, an eligible voter must first fill out an application. Absentee Ballot and Early Mail Ballot applications can be:

- printed from the District’s website
- picked up in person at the District Office (located at 1 Eugene L. Brown Drive, New Paltz) during regular school hours
- requested by sending an email to the District Clerk at sermo@newpaltz.k12.ny.us

By law, the voter’s original signature is required on the application, so it must be either delivered to the District Clerk by mail or in person (applications cannot be accepted electronically). Please note, the “Application for Absentee Ballot” requires an applicant to indicate a qualifying reason.

Casting an Absentee or Early Mail Ballot

Upon receipt of a completed application, a ballot will be issued. Absentee Ballots and Early Mail Ballots issued by the District Clerk in person may only be given to the voter.

If the voter is requesting to have a ballot sent to them by mail, completed applications must reach the District Clerk by May 13. If the voter is picking up their ballot in person, applications must be received by May 19.

To be counted, a completed ballot must be received by the District Clerk by the deadline of 5 PM on Tuesday, May 20.

★Learn More

For questions about voting, contact the District Clerk Sandra Ermo at 845-256-4020 or sermo@newpaltz.k12.ny.us.

NPHS Faces



Members of the Students of Color Alliance (SOCA) celebrating Black History Month



Members of the High School Outdoor Club at the Mohonk Preserve



High School students enjoying a visit to the school library

Lenape’s Annual Hoedown Brings Fun for All

Lenape Elementary School was alive with music and excitement this fall as students and caregivers gathered for the school’s beloved Annual Hoedown. The event, led by Music teacher Laura Faure, was a celebration of community, tradition, and good old-fashioned fun.

Grade 3 students took center stage, eager to show off their well-practiced dance moves in front of family and friends. With toe-tapping tunes and plenty of laughter, the evening was filled with joy as students and caregivers joined in the festivities.

From lively music to impressive performances, the hoedown was a rootin’-tootin’ good time for all. As always, it was a night to remember, bringing smiles, twirls, and a whole lot of fun to the Lenape Elementary School community.



Lenape Students Create Inspiring Mural with Local Artist

Visitors to Lenape Elementary School are now greeted by a stunning new mural, designed and painted by the school’s Grade 5 students. Thanks to the District’s Arts in Education program, students had the opportunity to collaborate with muralist Joe Pimentel to bring their vision to reality.

Last fall, students submitted drawings, which Pimentel incorporated into the final design. All Grade 5 students had the chance to pick up a brush and contribute to the artwork. The finished mural is more than just a colorful display—it also carries a powerful message, with the words “kindness,” “diversity,” and “unity” prominently featured.

Lenape Elementary Principal Sean Inglee said, “This mural, created by our talented 5th graders in collaboration with Joe, is a vibrant reflection of our school’s spirit, creativity, and community. Each color and design tells a story of teamwork, inclusiveness, and the values we share, bringing our school’s identity to life through art.”



Lenape Elementary School Students Explore Indigenous Cultures

Grade 4 students at Lenape Elementary School have been on an exciting journey through history, immersing themselves in the rich traditions of the Algonquian and Iroquois peoples. Trina Naclerio’s Grade 4 class showcased their knowledge and creativity through hands-on projects that brought these Indigenous cultures to life.

The students crafted detailed models of traditional houses, prepared displays on native foods, and recreated games that have been played for generations. Artistic interpretations of Indigenous symbols and storytelling traditions were also part of the project, allowing students to express their appreciation for these vibrant cultures.

The engaging showcase highlighted the students’ hard work and enthusiasm, inspiring discussions on history, cultural preservation, and the importance of learning from the past. Parents and teachers alike praised the initiative for fostering a deeper connection to the region’s Indigenous roots.

Through this immersive exploration, students are gaining a greater appreciation for the diverse cultures that have shaped their community.



Lenape Students Celebrate Learning During Puppy Adoption Day

Grade 4 students in Meredith Oppenheimer and Erin Bulson’s class at Lenape Elementary School enjoyed a fun day of learning and creativity with a special surprise—Puppy Adoption Day!

Each student selected their very own stuffed puppy, giving it a name, crafting an adoption certificate, and even making a homemade collar. The excitement didn’t stop there, though, as the entire day’s lessons were inspired by their new furry friends.

During English Language Arts (ELA), for example, students listened to *Once I Ate a Pie* (a collection of poems written in the “voices” of various dogs), and then used their “puppy journals” and pencils to craft their own original poems and stories. During their Math lessons, students calculated the cost of caring for a puppy for an entire year.

The afternoon was filled with creativity and Valentine’s Day fun, as students built special dog houses using cardboard, stickers, and cutouts—just in time for their class party!

This engaging and interactive experience blended academics with hands-on activities, making for a day these students won’t soon forget. Through Puppy Adoption Day, students not only learned valuable lessons (including ones about responsibility) but also got to experience the joy of using their imaginations!

Local Author Inspires Middle School Students with Historical Fantasy Workshop

Grade 6 students at the Middle School had the opportunity to engage with local historical fantasy author Alysa Wishingrad during an event that left them inspired and eager to explore their own creativity. Wishingrad, known for weaving history into her captivating fantasy novels, kicked off the day with a dynamic presentation, sharing the story of her journey as a writer and discussing the process of incorporating historical elements into fantastical worlds.

The event, organized by Library Media Specialist Emily Perez and Grade 6 teacher Eric Savelson, continued with an interactive “world-building” workshop. Students worked together in small groups, collaborating with their Middle School Essentials classmates to design imaginative worlds, complete with unique characters and compelling narratives. The hands-on session provided a unique opportunity for students to explore their creative potential, while also learning about the art of storytelling and the importance of historical context in fiction.

“This event was not only about fostering a love of writing but also about showing students how they can bring their imagination to life through collaboration and creativity,” said Perez.

The day was a resounding success, sparking a deeper appreciation for literature and storytelling among the students. Wishingrad’s visit was a memorable experience that highlighted the importance of local authors and the impact they can have on young minds.

The Middle School community extends its gratitude to Alysa Wishingrad for her time and insights, as well as to the organizers who helped bring this exciting event to fruition. It was a day that will surely resonate with students for years to come.



Staying Heart-Smart: Physical Education Classes Learn Hands-Only CPR

In honor of Heart Healthy Month, Middle School students recently gained invaluable life-saving skills through Hands-Only CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) instruction. Thanks to the dedication of teachers Sam Phelps, Erin O’Sullivan, and Melissa Gruver-LaPolt, students participated in hands-on training to build confidence and readiness in emergency situations.

They learned how to perform chest compressions, how to use an automated external defibrillator (AED), and what to do exactly if they need to call 911. Each student also received a laminated step-by-step CPR card to keep in a safe and easily accessible place, such as on the fridge.

This vital instruction helps to ensure that students have the knowledge and skills they need to respond appropriately to heart-related emergencies, while reinforcing the importance of heart health and preparedness in our community.



Building a Culture of Character at New Paltz Middle School

Character development is a key component of a New Paltz Central School District education. At New Paltz Middle School, Principal Ross Hogan and Vice Principal Lljaira Dessereau have led an initiative to emphasize the core values that shape students’ character both during their time at the Middle School and beyond.

Early in the school year, Principal Hogan and Vice Principal Dessereau engaged staff in a discussion about the principles they hope to instill in students. From these conversations, they identified key themes, each assigned to a different month of the school year.

In November, they introduced the first value—integrity—during a student assembly. Principal Hogan spoke about what integrity means and how students can demonstrate it in their daily lives. Each month, this tradition continues with the introduction of a new core value through assemblies or Middle School Television (MSTV) segments, ensuring students receive thought-provoking examples of—and participate in meaningful discussions about—each principle.

To celebrate students who embody these values, staff members nominate individuals who demonstrate the highlighted trait. Those recognized receive an award from Principal Hogan and Vice Principal Dessereau, along with a personal explanation of their nomination. Their families are informed, and students are invited to pose for a picture, which is proudly displayed (with their permission) on the bulletin board outside the Main Office.

According to Principal Hogan, students are often surprised and delighted to be acknowledged for their positive actions—especially when they least expect it. This initiative serves as a reminder that character matters, and that every student has the potential to make a difference through their everyday choices.

By reinforcing these values throughout the year, New Paltz Middle School is building a culture that recognizes and rewards kindness, responsibility, and integrity—one student at a time.



Middle School's Aladdin JR Soars to Success!

The Middle School recently presented an unforgettable production of *Aladdin JR!* With 85 talented students involved, the show brought magic, excitement, and incredible performances to the stage.

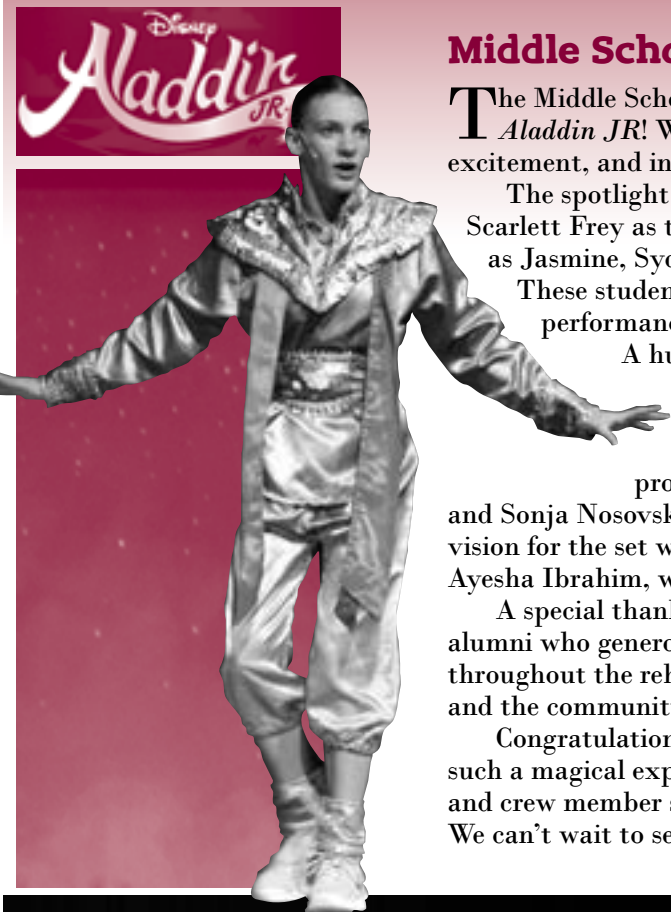
The spotlight shined brightly on the student leads, including Scarlett Frey as the Genie, Edward Cheevers as Aladdin, Corinne DePoala as Jasmine, Sydney Diamond as Jafar, and Siena Sheehan as Iago.

These students brought their characters to life, delivering powerful performances that had the audience cheering throughout the show.

A huge round of applause also goes out to the behind-the-scenes heroes who made it all possible. A heartfelt thank-you to the directorial team—Mary Guirma, MacKenzie Ryan, and Jessica Vargas—who worked tirelessly to bring the production together, as well as Will Halpern, the music director, and Sonja Nosovsky, who handled the sound production like a pro. The creative vision for the set was expertly executed by MacKenzie Ryan and Ayesha Ibrahim, whose design transported everyone straight to Agrabah.

A special thank-you goes to the New Paltz High School students and alumni who generously volunteered their time, experience, and energy throughout the rehearsals and performances. Their support was invaluable, and the community is beyond grateful for their contributions.

Congratulations to everyone involved for making this year’s *Aladdin JR* such a magical experience! The hard work and dedication from every performer and crew member shone through and created a memorable show for all to enjoy. We can’t wait to see what next year’s production has in store!

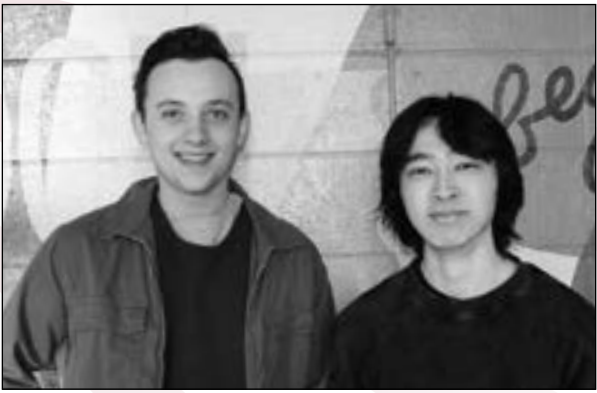


#MaroonPride

High School Names Class of 2025 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

New Paltz High School is proud to announce the top academic honors for the Class of 2025. Charlie DePoala has been named valedictorian, and Brian Koji Oyama Tierney is this year's salutatorian.

Charlie earned the highest grade point average (GPA) in his class—101.686—while completing 13 Advanced Placement (AP) courses and self-studying for an additional one. He has also accumulated the equivalent of 75 college credits by taking numerous college-level classes. A well-rounded student, Charlie has also been recognized for his achievements in music and mathematics, and has held leadership roles in multiple school organizations. He will attend Princeton University to study Chemical and Biological Engineering, with



Valedictorian Charlie DePoala and Salutatorian Brian Koji Oyama Tierney

plans to become a patent attorney.

Brian, who earned a GPA of 101.560, completed seven AP courses and received the New York State Seal of Biliteracy in Spanish. He has contributed to the school community through tutoring, service projects, and leadership roles in cultural clubs. He will attend Johns Hopkins University to major in Biochemistry.

Principal Samuelle Simms commended both students as “passionate learners” who have dedicated themselves fully to their interests. Superintendent Stephen Gratto added, “Their accomplishments inspire not just their classmates, but all of us in the District.”

High School Athletics Shine: A SEASON OF CHAMPIONS



New Paltz High School Athletics has had an outstanding season, with student-athletes demonstrating talent, determination, and teamwork across multiple sports. From the soccer field to the ski trails, the track to the basketball court, their dedication and hard work have led to an impressive series of accomplishments.

A special congratulations to the following Section IX Champions:

- Varsity Girls Soccer**
Coach: Keith Walker
- Varsity Boys & Girls Nordic Ski**
Coach: Ann Gregory, Asst. Coach: Mark Ruoff
- Varsity Girls Indoor Track**
Coach: Kathy Rogers-Carroll
- Varsity Boys Basketball**
Coach: Dan Diklich

These teams, along with many other dedicated student-athletes, have made both the school and the community proud. Their perseverance and sportsmanship have been inspiring to watch throughout the season.

We also extend our sincere appreciation to the coaches for their unwavering commitment and leadership. Their dedication to mentoring and developing these student-athletes has been essential in achieving such success and fostering a positive, team-oriented environment.



For a complete list of accomplishments, scan the QR code and celebrate the success of all our teams!

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The production, filled with humor, heart, and soaring melodies, captivated audiences with its message of love, legacy, and imagination.

Leading the cast were Sam DePoala and Finn Locard as the older and younger versions of Edward Bloom, who both brought charm and charisma to the roles of the spirited storyteller. Opposite him,

JP Fabella delivered a touching performance as Will Bloom, the son yearning for truth. Nafi Diedhiou and Lily Nocito shone as the older and younger Sandra Bloom, capturing the unwavering devotion of Edward's wife. The supporting cast, including Abbie Adams as Young Will, Audrey Shannon as the Mermaid, Savannah Trinkle as the Witch, Michael Giraldi as Karl the Giant, Emily Bishop as Josephine, Amelia Crisafi as Jenny Hill, and Marco Todaro as Amos Calloway, added depth and magic to the production.

The show's success was made possible not only by its talented cast but also by a dedicated student production crew. Julia Fetherolf served as the stage manager, with Bentley McNulty assisting, ensuring seamless scene transitions. The lighting and sound teams, led by Calvin Maher, Zoe Gelber, Lizzie Mitais, CJ Newell, and David Rodriguez, created an immersive theatrical experience.

The production was a testament to the dedication and creativity of the school's Drama Club, proving once again that student-led performances can rival professional productions in heart and artistry. With stunning performances, intricate choreography, and compelling storytelling, *Big Fish* was a theatrical triumph that left audiences both entertained and deeply moved.



High School Band Hosts Unforgettable Music Night

On the evening of March 2, the High School Music Department hosted a lively and heartwarming Music Night that brought together students, families, and members of the community. The event offered an informal, café-style setting where guests were treated to an impressive lineup of live performances from soloists, the Chamber Winds ensemble, and the ever-popular Jazz Band.

A special highlight of the night was a guest appearance by renowned musician Vito Petrocitto, known for his work with Orleans, The Doobie Brothers, and Professor Louie & The Crowmatix. Petrocitto joined the Jazz Band for a thrilling set that had audience members on their feet, marking a memorable moment for both performers and attendees.

The evening celebrated not only musical talent but also the

strong sense of community and support that surrounds the High School Band program. Congratulations to all the talented students, dedicated parents, and passionate Music teachers who made the night a success. A special thank-you goes to Band Director Sam Newsome for his leadership and continued commitment to excellence in Music education.