

HORSEHEADS

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

Budget Edition | Spring 2025



ON THE BALLOT

PROPOSITION 1

2025-26 School Budget

Budget: **\$105,800,502**

Budget Year-Over-Year
Increase: **3.03%**

Est. Full-Value
Tax Rate Increase: **3.03%**

Est. Annual Tax Rate Increase
of **\$0.48 per \$1,000** or
\$48 on a \$100,000 home.

PROPOSITION 2

Purchase of Buses

Purchase of school buses at a
cost not to exceed \$1,900,000.

BOARD ELECTION

There are three available seats
with seven candidates running
for election. Learn more on
pages 12-14.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

Budget Vote
May 20

7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Horseheads High School
North Gym

Please note this is a new location

Keeping Horseheads Strong

A Community Commitment to Excellence

Dear Horseheads Community,

Since early February, the Board of Education has been working to develop a budget for the 2025-2026 school year. In developing the proposed budget, our priority was to maintain high-quality academic, art, and athletic programs without having to implement programmatic and staff cuts.

We recognize that our work with students and staff has financial impact on our community. Last year, our community strongly supported a budget that challenged New York State's tax levy cap to ensure we remained program and staff strong. **We appreciate your trust and support.**

This year, the district is continuing cost-saving measures from last year while rebuilding essential programmatic and operational needs. Even with a sensible year-over-year **budget increase of 3.03%**, the district is still facing a **revenue gap of \$1.29 million** to maintain our programs. This gap is due to:

- State aid that has not kept up with rising costs,
- Ongoing inflationary pressures, and
- Continuation of rising health care expenses.

This Board-approved budget includes:

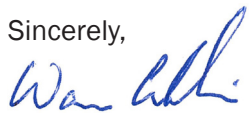
- Preservation of current staff, academic programs, and extracurricular activities;
- Continued support for the district's Summer Learning Academy, and a minor restoration of funds to support the district's curriculum work;
- Enhancement of services to align with our Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), including the return of three primary-level teaching assistants, the addition of one shared elementary assistant principal, and the restructuring of academic and social emotional intervention services to best support the needs of our elementary students.

This proposed budget requires a 60% supermajority vote to pass. If this Board-approved budget does not pass with a supermajority vote, the Board will work to develop a revised budget proposal. This revised budget proposal would result in the reduction to staff and programs. If a second proposed budget is rejected by the voters, the district would be required by law to immediately adopt a contingency budget with \$3.5 million in staff and programmatic reductions. This would greatly impact our programs, students, and staff across the entire district.

We urge all residents to be informed on this years proposed 2025-2026 budget. Full budget details are available in this newsletter and online at horseheadsdistrict.com. **Please vote on Tuesday, May 20, from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the High School North Gym.** Please enter through the high school pool doors.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our students, staff, and schools.

Sincerely,



Warren Conklin,
Board of Education President

Board of Education

Warren Conklin, *President*

Liz O'Dell Wehling, *Vice President*

Daniel Christmas

MaryAnne Corbett

Kristine Dale

Julie Monahan

Erin Schiavone

Katrina Ungvarsky

Susan Ungvarsky

Mia Sophia, *Student Representative*

Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Thomas J. Douglas



Vote

Tuesday, May 20 | 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Horseheads High School North Gym

PROPOSITION 1: 2025-2026 BUDGET

The Horseheads Central School District Board of Education has approved a proposed budget for the 2025-2026 school year in the amount of \$105,800,502.

- The proposed budget results in an estimated increase of 3.03% in the full value tax rate, from \$15.94 in the current year to \$16.42 per \$1,000 of assessed full value based on **preliminary** assessments. On a home with a full-value assessment of \$100,000, the estimated change is an increase of \$48.00 for the year.
- The proposed budget requires a \$1.29 million challenge to the tax levy limit calculation. This requires a 60% supermajority approval vote by the community and will allow the district to continue to provide all academic supports, social-emotional services and extracurricular activities for our students. Assessment values and equalization rates are finalized by each municipality in the summer, with final tax rates calculated in August.

Visit www.horseheadsdistrict.com for more information.



High School Recognized as Unified Champion Banner School

Horseheads High School has received national recognition as a Unified Champion Banner School from Special Olympics New York. The award honors schools that meet national standards in the areas of inclusion, youth leadership, and Unified Sports programming for students with and without intellectual disabilities.

COMPARATIVE EXPENDITURES

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Change	Percent Change
Program	\$67,993,121	\$69,904,976	\$1,911,855	2.81%
Capital	\$20,714,556	\$22,009,614	\$1,295,058	6.25%
Administrative	\$13,978,603	\$13,885,912	- \$92,691	- 0.66%
Total	\$102,686,280	\$105,800,502	\$3,114,222	3.03%

COMPARATIVE REVENUE

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Change	Percent Change
Property Taxes/STAR/Payments in Lieu of Taxes/Interest and Penalties	\$48,057,843	\$51,927,058	\$3,869,215	8.05%
State Aid	\$48,157,904	\$47,965,694	- \$192,210	- 0.40%
Other*	\$2,600,533	\$2,662,750	\$62,217	2.39%
Interfund Transfer	\$170,000	\$145,000	- \$25,000	- 14.71%
Appropriated Reserves	\$700,000	\$800,000	\$100,000	14.29%
Debt Service Fund	\$2,000,000	\$1,300,000	- \$700,000	- 35.00%
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000	\$0	0.00%
Total	\$102,686,280	\$105,800,502	\$3,114,222	3.03%

*Other revenue includes items such as Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, BOCES refund, interest, rental income, donations and gifts, and gate receipts.

PROGRAM BUDGET COMPONENT

This budget component includes all expenditures necessary for all PK-12 educational programs, instruction, and transportation of our students, including teacher and support staff salaries and benefits, BOCES special education and instructional services, interscholastic athletics, and transportation. The Employee Benefits line is a pro-rated calculation of this component's share of costs as required by the state for self-insured health/dental claims, district retirement contributions, workers' compensation and disability insurance, and social security. This component also includes materials, supplies, and contractual items such as conferences, repairs, and service contracts. Program expenditures make up 66.1% of the budget.

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Change	% Change
Legal	\$44,625	\$44,625	\$0	0.00%
In-service Training, Instruction	\$91,315	\$90,654	- \$661	- 0.72%
Teaching, Regular School	\$21,534,423	\$22,115,689	\$581,266	2.70%
Students with Disabilities	\$10,150,775	\$10,507,854	\$357,079	3.52%
English as a New Language	\$199,681	\$208,432	\$8,751	4.38%
Occupational Education (Grades 9-12)	\$3,201,987	\$3,374,675	\$172,688	5.39%
Teaching, Special Schools	\$3,150	\$3,150	\$0	0.00%
School Library	\$853,517	\$804,403	- \$49,114	- 5.75%
Computer Assisted Instruction	\$544,533	\$648,650	\$104,117	19.12%
Attendance	\$224,674	\$219,065	- \$5,609	- 2.50%
Counseling	\$1,145,083	\$1,199,155	\$54,072	4.72%
Health Services	\$855,656	\$802,671	- \$52,985	- 6.19%
Psychological Services	\$674,444	\$687,651	\$13,207	1.96%
Social Work Services	\$778,168	\$797,603	\$19,435	2.50%
Co-Curricular Activities	\$239,936	\$264,433	\$24,497	10.21%
Interscholastic Athletics	\$863,612	\$966,274	\$102,662	11.89%
Transportation Services	\$4,606,821	\$4,710,917	\$104,096	2.26%
Garage	\$74,550	\$74,550	\$0	0.00%
Employee Benefits	\$21,547,171	\$21,964,525	\$417,354	1.94%
Transfer to Other Funds	\$359,000	\$420,000	\$61,000	16.99%
Program Total	\$67,993,121	\$69,904,976	\$1,911,855	2.81%

- **Students with Disabilities** increased by the transition of an employee from the Administrative budget component (Curriculum Development/Supervision line). However, it was offset by the reduction of an administrative position that went unfulfilled this school year, resulting in additional duties to central office administrators.
- **Occupational Education** increased due to the rising costs of this GST BOCES service.
- **Computer Aided Instruction** increased due to the addition of funds to continue our replacement cycle of laptops used by students in the classroom. This particular item experienced a large decrease last year to balance the budget. The district is slowly rebuilding those funds so students continue to have the proper, well-functioning hardware available to them for instructional purposes.
- **Co-Curricular Activities** increased due the addition of funds for the stipend of the fourth grade play so all elementary buildings will now provide that same experience for all students. These codes were furthered increased to include contractual stipend increases for other student programs.
- **Interscholastic Athletics** increased due to the increased participation of students in our athletic programs.
- **Transfer to Other Funds** represents the school lunch fund's portion of BOCES aid as well as the general fund's obligation toward certain grant programs.
- **Reductions continue to be made in the areas of supplies, contractual expenditures, and equipment.** As mentioned in Computed Aided Instruction, the district will gradually increase budget allocations in subsequent years as funding allows.

CAPITAL BUDGET COMPONENT

The capital component includes all costs related to the operations and maintenance of the district's buildings and the financing of our annual bus purchases and capital improvement projects. This component includes all expenditures associated with custodial salaries, service contracts, supplies, utilities, and maintenance and repair of school facilities. The Employee Benefits line is a pro-rated calculation of this component's share of costs as required by the state for self-insured health/dental claims, district retirement contributions, workers' compensation and disability insurance, and social security. Capital expenditures make up 20.8% of the budget.

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Change	% Change
Operation of Plant	\$2,814,991	\$3,068,344	\$253,353	9.00%
Maintenance of Plant	\$1,700,246	\$2,044,391	\$344,145	20.24%
School Construction Financing	\$12,805,925	\$13,227,000	\$421,075	3.29%
Bus Purchase Financing	\$1,470,550	\$1,576,550	\$106,000	7.21%
Employee Benefits	\$1,922,844	\$2,093,329	\$170,485	8.87%
Capital Total	\$20,714,556	\$22,009,614	\$1,295,058	6.25%

- **Operation of Plant** increased due to the many contractual obligations held within these budget codes, such as the district's significant increase in utility and sewer bills. Through the course of capital improvements, energy efficient systems have been implemented, easing the impact of rising utility costs.
- **Maintenance of Plant** increased to fund additional summer labor for relocating furniture and equipment from Ridge Road Elementary to Center Street during construction. It also covers similar moves from the High School to other district sites for displaced staff. The increase also reflects the replacement of two vehicles for the facilities department.
- **School Construction Financing and Bus Purchase Financing** represents the annual payments due on the debt liabilities for the short- and long-term borrowings for the capital construction projects and bus purchases.



High School Students Perform at Area All-State Festival

Forty-five Horseheads High School music students participated in the Senior High Area All-State Festival at Bath-Haverling High School. Students were selected based on solo evaluations conducted last spring. They performed in the Modern Band, Orchestra, Mixed Chorus, and Concert Band, working with guest conductors over two days before presenting a final concert.

The Horseheads Central School District offers educational programs without regard to race, color, national origin, creed, religion, marital status, military status, sex, sexual orientation, age, gender identity, predisposing genetic characteristic, or disability, and provides equal access to applicable groups under the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act. Inquiries regarding this policy may be made to Caitlin DeFilippo and Anthony Gill, Co-Title IX/DASA Coordinators, and Co-Civil Rights Compliance Officers; or Kelly Squires, Section 504 Coordinator, Horseheads Central School District, One Raider Lane, Horseheads, NY 14845, (607) 739-5601. This policy of non-discrimination includes access by students to educational programs, counseling services, course offerings, and activities, as well as recruitment and appointment of employees and employment pay, benefits, advancement and/or termination.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUDGET COMPONENT

Administrative costs include all expenditures related to the administrative operations of the district: materials, supplies, and contractual obligations for school offices, the board of education, and district offices including the superintendent's office, business office, and human resources; legal fees; the district's portion of the BOCES administrative budget; and salaries of all school administrators, supervisors, and their support staffs. The Employee Benefits line is a pro-rated calculation of this component's share of costs as required by the state for self-insured health/dental claims, district retirement contributions, workers' compensation and disability insurance, and social security. Administrative expenditures make up 13.1% of the budget.

	2024-25 Budget	2025-26 Proposed	Dollar Change	% Change
Board of Education	\$12,020	\$12,220	\$200	1.66%
District Meeting	\$32,126	\$33,319	\$1,193	3.71%
Chief School Administrator	\$376,561	\$393,992	\$17,431	4.63%
Business Administration	\$849,249	\$866,581	\$17,332	2.04%
Auditing	\$43,000	\$45,000	\$2,000	4.65%
Tax Collection	\$3,760	\$3,900	\$140	3.72%
Fiscal Agent Fees	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	0.00%
Legal	\$44,625	\$44,625	\$0	0.00%
Human Resources	\$632,919	\$646,025	\$13,106	2.07%
Public Information and Services	\$100,403	\$105,822	\$5,419	5.40%
Central Printing and Mailing	\$379,079	\$410,777	\$31,698	8.36%
Central Data Processing	\$2,531,615	\$2,714,043	\$182,428	7.21%
Insurance	\$285,000	\$305,000	\$20,000	7.02%
School Association Dues	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$0	0.00%
BOCES Administrative Costs	\$1,849,879	\$1,936,514	\$86,635	4.68%
Curriculum Development/Supervision	\$1,377,360	\$1,178,207	- \$199,153	- 14.46%
Supervision, Regular School	\$2,194,549	\$2,074,151	- \$120,398	- 5.49%
Research, Planning, and Evaluation	\$101,846	\$105,837	\$3,991	3.92%
Employee Benefits	\$3,158,412	\$3,003,699	- \$154,713	- 4.90%
Administrative Total	\$13,978,603	\$13,885,912	- \$92,691	- 0.66%

- **Business Administration** includes the reduction of a business office position due to a retirement that is being filled with the replacement of a lower starting salary.
- **Central Printing and Mailing** increased due to rising costs in the service provided by the GST BOCES print shop for the printing of various student instructional materials such as workbooks, handouts, etc.
- **Central Data Processing** increased primarily due to a mandatory systems upgrade required to ensure the proper functionality of the district's security cameras.
- **Curriculum Development/Supervision** decreased due to the movement of an employee to the Program Budget (Students with Disabilities) and an administrative position reduction. This was further decreased by positions vacated through retirements and replaced by lower starting salaries. Funds were added to this code to continue to provide support to the district's MTSS initiative and curriculum work.
- **Supervision – Regular School** includes the addition of one shared assistant elementary principal, offset by the reduction of two building administrators (high school vice principal and an elementary principal) that became vacant and were not replaced.

The Science of Reading

Helping Every Child Become a Strong Reader

If you walk through the halls of our elementary schools, you will see students in classrooms using sound walls to decode words, talking about characters like “Heggerty Hero,” and practicing new reading skills with excitement. These moments are all part of our work with the Science of Reading, a proven approach to reading instruction that has shaped how we help students become confident readers.

The Science of Reading is based on years of research about how the brain learns to read. It is not just one program or method, it is a collection of best practices that show us what works for most students, and how to support those who need extra help.

We began this journey back in 2019, and now, with the New York State Education Department’s new Literacy Initiative, we are proud to share that our district is already ahead. Professional learning continues throughout the district on the Science of Reading as we build our curriculum and deliver instruction on research-based best practices.

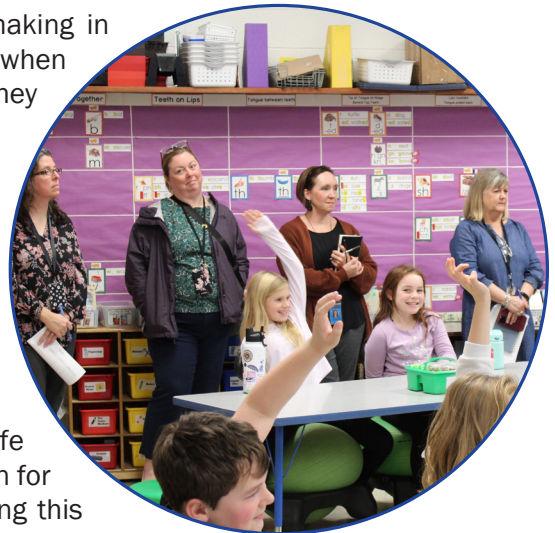


This school year, our classrooms are focused on helping students in the following areas:

- Phonemic awareness: hearing and playing with the sounds in words
- Phonics: matching letters to sounds and learning to sound out words
- Fluency: reading smoothly and with expression
- Vocabulary: learning new words and their meanings
- Comprehension: understanding what they read

Throughout the year, we assess the progress our students are making in a variety of ways, providing early intervention and extra support when needed. Our goal is to make sure every child receives the supports they need to be successful.

This past fall, we welcomed teachers and leaders from nearby districts into our schools to see the Science of Reading in action. They visited our classrooms to learn from our teachers and see how these strategies work for our students and staff. It was an exciting opportunity to share the purposeful work we continue to engage in and to learn from others.



At Horseheads, we believe that reading is not a school skill, but a life skill. We are proud to be helping every child build a strong foundation for the future, and we thank our families and community for supporting this important work.



Vote

Tuesday, May 20 | 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Horseheads High School North Gym

REVENUE

PROPERTY TAX

The proposed 2025-26 budget challenges the state's tax levy limit law, resulting in an increase in the tax levy of 7.40% over the current year. The tax levy refers to the total amount collected in revenue across the entire district. This is not the same as the full-value tax rate, which indicates the cost to individual property owners based on their property's assessment by their municipality when assessed at 100% or full market value.

The district's current 2024-25 full-value tax rate is **\$15.94 per \$1,000** of assessed value. **For 2025-2026 school year, the full value tax rate is estimated to increase by \$0.48 to a potential rate of \$16.42 per \$1,000, or 3.03%.** The estimated annual change is an **increase of \$48.00 per \$100,000 home value** and will be finalized in August.

Because assessments and equalization rates are finalized after the budget process, the district must estimate the effect on the full value tax rate at this time. In the past, the final tax rate has trended lower than the district's estimate, as seen in the budget presentations. The district calculates the final tax rate in August upon receipt of final assessments and equalization rates. The Horseheads Central School District is made up of seven municipalities: Horseheads, Big Flats, Catlin, Erin, Veteran, Cayuta, and Baldwin. Each municipality assesses its properties separately and submits final assessments in late summer. **The district does not participate in developing these assessments.**

State law requires that all property within a municipality be assessed at a uniform percentage of market value. In the summer, the state sets equalization rates, which are meant to equalize the assessments from one municipality to the other. Equalization rates are determined by the state using a calculation comparing assessed values to market values.

STATE EDUCATION AID

As of this newsletter's publication, the New York State budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year has not yet been finalized. After multiple deadline extensions, the most recent being April 29, state leaders have still not reached a final decision.

The district received the minimum required increase in foundation aid of 2.02%, which amounts to \$549,591. However, this increase is not sustainable for a district the size of Horseheads, especially as expenses continue to rise. In addition, the district is experiencing reductions in expense-driven aids, such as BOCES and transportation. These decreases are the result of 2024-2025 budget reductions in these areas, which decreases aid for 2025-2026.

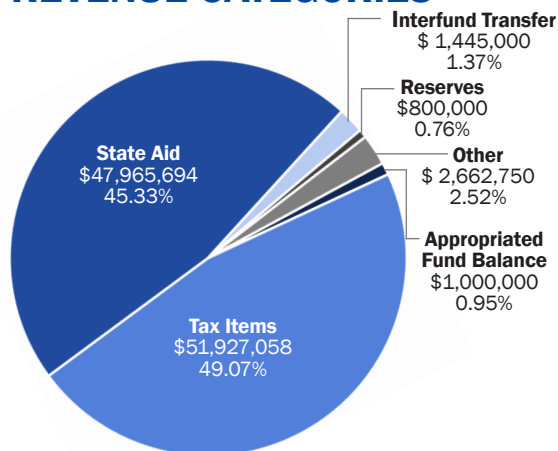
OTHER REVENUE SOURCES

The proposed budget includes \$1.3 million of debt service funds, \$1 million of fund balance, \$800,000 of appropriated reserves, and \$145,000 of interfund transfers. Other revenue of \$2.6 million includes Medicaid and Medicare reimbursements, BOCES refund, interest, admissions, rental income, and donations and gifts.

FOUNDATION AID HISTORY

Fiscal Year	Foundation Aid	\$ Change from Prior Year	% Change from Prior Year
2021-2022	\$22,661,905	\$696,571	3.17%
2022-2023	\$23,426,435	\$765,530	3.38%
2023-2024	\$25,954,239	\$2,527,805	10.79%
2024-2025	\$27,225,149	\$1,207,910	4.65%
2025-2026	\$27,774,740	\$549,591	2.02%

REVENUE CATEGORIES



Award-Winning Farm-to-School Menu Brings Local Flavor to Horseheads Cafeterias



We are excited to share that the BOCES Healthy Kids Lunchroom program, which provides meals for Horseheads students, has received a statewide award from the New York School Nutrition Association for its outstanding Farm-to-School work.

For the past several years, this program has been on a mission to bring more fresh, local food into school cafeterias across our region. While schools have always supported local farms in some way, the big change came in the 2019–2020 school year when BOCES began officially tracking these purchases through the state’s NY30 program. This program encourages schools to buy at least 30% of their food from New York State farms, and we are proud to share that they have exceeded that goal.

Since then, more than \$6.5 million in local food has been purchased for schools in our region, with over \$812,000 of that benefiting students right here in Horseheads. That means when your child eats lunch at school, chances are good they are enjoying food grown or produced right here in New York.

You will often see these local items featured on our monthly menus, and especially during special NY Menu Days, when every item served is sourced from within the state. We are proud to partner with a program that not only feeds our students but also supports local farmers and strengthens our community. Please visit the cafeteria page on our district website to view this month’s menu and learn more about our Farm-to-School efforts.

Horseheads Musicals Shine on Stage

This school year, students across Horseheads Central School District took center stage and impressed audiences with their musical talents.

The High School Greenroom Players performed *Into the Woods*, a magical and moving production filled with music, humor, and heart. Their dedication to months of rehearsal showed in every scene.

Our Middle School students brought *Matilda Jr.* to life. With energetic performances and creative storytelling, they captured the spirit of Roald Dahl’s beloved tale and entertained families with an inspiring message.

Meanwhile, the Intermediate School Drama Club launched this fall, encouraging younger students to explore the stage with a radio adaptation of Charles Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*.

In 2025-2026, each elementary school will have a fourth-grade play, offering even more students the chance to shine on and off the stage.

These productions reflect the strong performing arts programs that build creativity, confidence, and collaboration in our students.



Celebrating New and Renovated Educational Spaces Across the District

This school year marked a major milestone for the Horseheads Central School District, as construction was completed at Gardner Road and Big Flats Elementary Schools. These exciting updates welcomed students into newly designed climate-controlled spaces that support learning, wellness, and creativity.

At Gardner Road Elementary, students began the year enjoying lunch in their brand-new cafeteria and learning in bright, modern classrooms. Throughout the year, additional spaces opened, including a renovated gymnasium, updated related services classrooms, and an inviting new playground.



Big Flats Elementary saw a series of transformative upgrades. Second-grade students, along with OT/PT and music classes, began the year in new classrooms. By fall, the gymnasium opened, followed by a contemporary cafeteria and, most recently, a completely reimagined library. Formerly the cafeteria, the new library that now features vibrant book displays, cozy reading areas, and endless opportunities for discovery.

These projects reflect the community's continued commitment to providing students with safe, welcoming, and innovative spaces to learn and grow. We thank our community for its support and look forward to the many ways these new environments will inspire students for years to come.



Foal's Gold
Braelyn Switala



Life's Cyclicity
Elise Furstoss



Obscurely Akin
Mari Mayo



This Tomato is Beautiful
Maddie Labuski Uhler

Students Recognized in Scholastic Art and Writing Awards

Students from Horseheads High School and Middle School earned recognition in the 2025 Scholastic Art Awards. These awards celebrate young artists for creativity and technical excellence across a variety of mediums.

- High School honorees: Hadilat Fuad, Elise Furstoss, Mari Mayo, Braelyn Switala, Breanna Van Gorden, and Abigail Wood.
- Middle School honorees: Charlee Felko, Derek Madison, Rocco Narsiff, Amelia Nelson, Phoenix Skinner, and Hannah Sydlansky.

Senior Britney Wheeler also received a prestigious Gold Key Award from the Scholastic Art Writing Awards for her original dramatic script, *May*.

PROPOSITION 2: PURCHASE OF BUSES

Each year, voters are asked to vote on the purchase of buses. This allows the district to borrow funds to replace buses that are ten years old or older and have 100,000 miles or more. This replacement process meets New York State Education Department recommendations for maintenance and replacement of a bus fleet.

For 2025-2026, the district seeks approval to purchase school buses at a cost not to exceed \$1,900,000. It is anticipated that the district will purchase seven school buses with the approval of this proposition. This purchase **will not include any electric buses**. The district will finance the purchase through a five-year bond, with a substantial portion of the payment covered primarily by state aid for the five years following the purchase.

Maintaining a replacement schedule allows the district to keep its bus fleet in good working order, minimizing maintenance needs. The district's transportation department has a current bus inspection passing rate of 99.21% as a result of the regular care they take in maintaining buses while minimizing costs.



Currently, the district has 77 buses and nine other student transportation vehicles.

Pursuing Excellence Through Athletics

This year, 69 athletic teams competed in three seasons, with participation numbers of approximately 1,535 (this total includes duplicate student-athletes who participated in multiple sport seasons). All varsity teams have been recognized as Scholar-Athlete teams by New York State Public High School Athletic Association, making Horseheads High School a School of Distinction. Competitively, five teams earned top finishes in STAC, eight teams are Section IV Champions, and seven teams or student-athletes competed at the State level during the fall and winter seasons, reinforcing our district's proud athletic traditions.

Several programs made history this year: winter cheerleading earned a STAC Championship for the first time in 15 years; varsity football won Sectionals, advanced to state quarter-finals for the first time in 26 years; and girls swimming extended their remarkable winning streak to 40-0 over five years, continuing their reign as STAC West Division Champions.

These achievements are a direct result of the dedication, leadership, and integrity shown by our student-athletes and coaches. Horseheads athletics continues to be a powerful source of pride for the community and a vital part of our students' growth, both on and off the field.



Vote

Tuesday, May 20 | 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Horseheads High School North Gym

BOARD OF EDUCATION ELECTION

On May 20, voters will elect three residents to three-year terms on the Board of Education. Below are seven candidates and information (**unedited**) they provided to the district. Candidates are listed in the order their names will appear on the ballot.



Daniel Christmas

Employment: Attorney at Corning Incorporated

Educational background: B.A. in Government from Georgetown University; J.D. from the University of Virginia School of Law

Family: Wendy Christmas (Spouse); Abigail (HH graduate); Erin (HH graduate); Amelia (HH graduate); Sophia (HH HS, 11th grade), Michael (HH MS, 8th grade)

Number of years living in the district: 18

Reason(s) for running: I am running for reelection to the school board because I want to continue the serve the district, with a focus on the best interests of our students while keeping in mind the needs of all district stakeholders. I have served on the board for the past 9 years and I am proud of the progress we have made over that time in our curriculum, our educational programs, our facilities, and our financial position. We have endured difficult times, such as the pandemic and resulting budget challenges, and through the collective efforts of our teachers, staff, and community we have remained strong despite these challenges. We will no doubt continue to encounter challenges in the coming years and I think it is important to have experienced leaders on the school board to help continue the progress we have made. As a proud parent of three Horseheads graduates, with two more children currently in the district, I care deeply about the experience that all of students have in the district; I strongly support our teachers and staff; and I know the importance of our district to our community. Thank you for your support and your vote!



Kara Sheehan

Employment: GST BOCES- Cosmetology Instructor for 18 years

Educational background: Bachelor of Science in Education, SUNY Oswego

Family: James Sheehan (Spouse); Jordan (Senior, Horseheads High School); Andrew Sheehan (Sophomore, Horseheads High School); Alexis Sheehan (6th grade, Horseheads Intermediate School)

Number of years living in the district: 2

Reason(s) for running: Community empowerment amongst as many members within the Horseheads school district is key to a successful future. As I run for the position of the school board, I am hopeful to make a significant impact on the educational landscape here in Horseheads. It is essential to engage with parents, teachers, staff and community members to understand their needs. I am running for the board because I believe being involved in our small-town community that I can make positive and helpful impact. Having experience in education for over 18 years with communication being the forefront of everything I do will help make a positive impact within our school district. As a 1997 graduate of Horseheads High School, I care deeply about the future of our school and all employees and students that work and attend. Being proactive in addressing challenges such as funding, curriculum development and student well-being is crucial. As a former private school owner for 7 years my experience both as a teacher and in administration will help make an effective and beneficial influence. I will be dedicated, and I am looking forward to the opportunity of becoming a Horseheads Central School District Board member.



Vote

Tuesday, May 20 | 7 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Horseheads High School North Gym



Matthew Feinberg

Employment: High School Band Director, Waverly Central Schools

Educational background: Bachelor of Music in Education, Ithaca College; Master of Music in Education, Ithaca College

Family: Amanda (Spouse) 15 years; Maya (5th Grade, Intermediate School), Sebastian, (3rd Grade, Center Street Elementary), and Beatrice, (Pre-K, Center Street Elementary).

Number of years living in the district: 9 1/2 years

Reason(s) for running: Our community is what defines us. With an uncertain future on the horizon, community members will need a well-informed Board of Education. As a current educator for the past 21 years, my expertise in budget matters and school policies will help guide our district when important decisions must be made.

My family made the conscious decision to move here because of the amazing opportunities the Horseheads School District offers. From academics to extra-curricular activities, transportation to building management, we understand and appreciate everything that needs to happen for a school district to be successful. And Horseheads has it.

Board of Education members must be constantly aware of the impacts its decisions have on the community. Too often, voters feel their concerns fall on deaf ears. If I'm elected, this will never be the case. I will represent your concerns and make sure communication between our Board of Education and the community at large is open and transparent. If elected, I will serve this role with integrity, honesty, and accountability.



Nicole Tirgari-White

Employment: Registered Nurse

Educational background: Bachelor's of Science, Registered Nurse

Family: Franck Tirgari (Spouse); Arianna (6th Grade, Intermediate School); Brantley (4th grade, Gardner Road), Raegan (Pre-K, St. Mary Our Mother), Gabriel (House and Gardner Road in the fall)

Number of years living in the district: Seven years

Reason(s) for running: I am running for the school board because I believe in the power of education to shape the future of our children, our community, and our world. As a parent, I've seen firsthand the challenges and opportunities our students face, and I am committed to ensuring that every child has access to a high-quality education that prepares them for success.

My focus will be on advocating for academic excellence, supporting our teachers, and fostering a safe, inclusive learning environment. I believe in strong communication between schools, families, and the community to ensure that our children receive the best possible education. I will work to ensure that resources are used efficiently, that students of all abilities are supported, and that parents have a voice in decisions that impact their children.

I am running because I care deeply about our schools and want to make a difference. I plan to bring a fresh perspective, a passion for education, and a commitment to working together to create the best opportunities for our students. I would be honored to serve and represent our community on the school board.

ABSENTEE AND EARLY MAIL BALLOTS

Qualified voters who cannot get to the polls on May 20 may request an application for absentee or early mail ballot.

Applications for absentee and early mail ballots are available in the district's Business Office, 143 Hibbard Road, Horseheads, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. up to and including May 19.

Completed ballots must be returned to the District Clerk no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 20. The district mails absentee ballots to voters listed as "permanently disabled" by the Chemung County Board of Elections.

Questions? Call (607) 739-5601, x4201.



Angie Finlayson

Employment: Accountant, GST BOCES

Educational background: Bachelor's of Science in Accounting, SUNY Old Westbury; Masters in Business Administration, Delaware State University

Family: Nick Finlayson (Spouse); Amelia (Class of 2022); Kathryn (Phoenix Academy Class of 2027), Jacob (Horseheads High School Class of 2026)

Number of years living in the district: Almost 6 years

Reason(s) for running: I am running for the Horseheads Board of Education because I believe in the power of public education and the profound impact it has on our community's future. I am the proud parent of a Horseheads/CTE graduate, a special education student-athlete who attends Phoenix Academy, and a Junior who has turned me into an active "Band Mom". My personal experiences in parenting have shaped my understanding of how vital it is to provide different opportunities for each student to succeed – whether it's through diverse academic options, special education services, or extra-curricular programs.

As an accountant with GST BOCES and a former school district accountant for Corning-Painted Post, my professional background offers a unique perspective on the importance of transparency and accountability in managing our resources. I am dedicated to ensuring that taxpayer dollars are spent wisely to enhance educational opportunities for our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

I am committed to pursuing educational excellence, advocating for necessary resources, and ensuring that Horseheads continues to build an environment where ALL students can reach their full potential. My goal is to work collaboratively with families, teachers, staff, administrators, and fellow board members to make informed decisions with a "students first" mindset.



Liz O'Dell Wehling

Employment: I am a seasoned nonprofit development professional with a focus on fundraising and volunteer management. I have worked for organizations big and small, with my most recent position being at Cornell University. Currently, I volunteer weekly at Gardner Road and the Intermediate School, while also volunteering as a parent advocate, helping families navigate their Committee on Special Education meetings.

Educational background: Master's degree in Education from the University at Buffalo; Certified Master Gardener through the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE). Additionally, I am currently pursuing a Graduate

Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership and Management.

Family: Amelia (6th Grade at the Intermediate School), Gabe (2nd Grade at Gardner Road)

Number of years living in the district: 11

Reason(s) for running: I am running for the Board of Education to serve as an advocate for students, educators, and families in our community. With a Master's degree in Education from the University at Buffalo and experience as a newly certified Master Gardener through the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE), I value growth, learning, and collaboration. As I work towards earning a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Leadership and Management, I am further enhancing my ability to lead and support community initiatives.

I am passionate about fostering an educational environment where every student can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally. I believe in prioritizing transparency, equity, and inclusivity in decision-making and ensuring that our schools are safe, innovative, and equipped to meet the diverse needs of all learners. I am dedicated to building bridges between the school district and the wider community to create a strong foundation for future success.



Mary Joan Glanton

Employment: CASA-Trinity (Retired)

Educational background: Bachelor's Degree in Accounting with a minor in Education, St. Bonaventure University; Post-graduate courses, University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

Family: Dawn Bush (Spouse); Michael Collins, Kathleen Collins, Cory Bush (Adult Children)

Number of years living in the district: 14

Reason(s) for running: I have several family members who have taught in public school systems in Trumansburg, Geneva, and Horseheads. I am acutely aware of the challenges faced by faculty and staff in light of the continually growing needs of our students. I believe that a school district's administration and board are responsible for the healthy, mutually respectful work environments of its employees. I am interested in contributing my time and skill set to the efforts of the board.

SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET NOTICE

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for 2024-25 School Year	Budget Proposed for 2025-26 School Year	Contingency Budget for 2025-26 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$102,686,280	\$105,800,502	\$102,312,795
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-26 School Year		\$3,114,222	- \$373,485
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.03 %	- 0.36%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.95%	
Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$47,820,026	\$51,357,733	
Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable	\$0	\$0	
Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	\$0	\$0	
Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy	\$47,820,026	\$51,357,733	\$47,820,026
Total Permissible Exclusions	\$2,317,250	\$3,639,593	
School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$44,214,624	\$46,426,887	
Total Proposed Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions	\$45,502,776	\$47,718,140	
Difference: (Negative Value Requires 60% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions)**	- \$1,288,152	- \$1,291,253	
Administrative Component	\$13,978,603	\$13,885,912	\$13,131,044
Program Component	\$67,993,121	\$69,904,976	\$67,456,550
Capital Component	\$20,714,556	\$22,009,614	\$21,725,201

*A contingency budget includes ordinary contingent expenses as determined by the Board and salaries subject to a cap on the administrative portion of the budget, with no increase in the tax levy over the prior year. There would be no purchase of new equipment, including buses unless approved by separate proposition, no capital expenditures unless approved by separate proposition and except in emergency situations, no salary increases for certain civil service employees not covered by an agreement with a recognized bargaining unit, outside organizations would have to pay for all facilities use, and the budget would be subject to an administrative cap on administrative expenditures.

** List 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)

Separate Propositions**

Description	Amount
Acquire school buses	\$1,900,000

Estimated Basic School Tax Relief (STAR) Exemption Savings¹

	Budget Proposed for 2025-26 School Year
Basic STAR Tax Savings	\$479

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2025-26 by the qualified voters of the Horseheads Central School District, Chemung, and Schuyler Counties, New York, will be held at the Horseheads High School in said district on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Horseheads High School, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

¹The basic School Tax Relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Horseheads Central School District
143 Hibbard Road • Horseheads, NY 14845

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Budget Vote/Board of Education Election

**Tuesday, May 20, 2025
7 a.m. - 9 p.m.**

Horseheads High School, North Gym

Who is eligible to vote?

All district residents are eligible to vote, as long as they meet the following requirements:

- Are a U.S. citizen
- Are 18 years of age or older on the day of the vote
- Have lived in the district for at least 30 days prior to the vote on May 20
- Are not restricted from voting in general elections based on election law

You do not have to be registered in general elections or own property in order to vote.



Stay Connected with HCSD

 www.horseheadsdistrict.com

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