

Heatly SCHOOL

"Every student will graduate prepared for college, career and citizenship"

News from the Green Island Union Free School District



Balancing present and future

Budget will be considered by the Green Island community on May 17, 2011

On Tuesday, May 17, 2011, Green Island residents will go to the polls to vote on a proposed \$7,077,869 million budget for the 2011-12 school year. This is a spending increase of \$191,122 or 2.78 percent. The proposal is expected to carry a tax rate increase of 1.79 percent. Polls will be open from 2 to 8 p.m. in the Heatly School Cafeteria.

"With this spending proposal, the district is attempting to balance the present and the future," said Superintendent Dr. Michael Mugits. "We look at the present as the ability and willingness of our taxpayers to support our instructional program. The future is represented in our district's mission to prepare all of our graduates for college, career and citizenship. In other words, we don't want to overburden our taxpayers or shortchange our learners at a time when society values education more than ever. We feel this spending plan is a good balance."

Closing the budget gap

At the beginning of the budget development process, the district was working with significant losses in state aid and federal grant funding, as well as increasing health care costs, pension contributions and salaries.

"This year, Green Island's state aid was cut significantly in addition to cuts totaling more than a half million dollars last year—very large amounts of money for a small district that has an annual operating budget of approximately \$7 million," Mugits pointed out.

To close the budget gap through local taxes alone would have increased taxes by more than 9 percent. "We knew it would be unfair to community members to present a spending plan that carried that type of increase," Mugits said.

Instead, the district will use approximately \$600,000 of its unassigned reserve funds ("rainy day funds") to help offset the tax impact

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Emily Thurber indulges in a classic during her classroom reading time. This year, Heatly made enough academic progress to be removed from the state's list of Schools in Need of Improvement. Congratulations to staff and students whose efforts contributed to this achievement.

What will I consider on May 17, 2011?

× \$7,077,869 budget for the 2011-12 school year

That amounts to a 2.78% spending increase.
The plan would raise taxes approximately 1.79%
or \$22 on a home with a \$5,400 total assessed value
(note: projections are based on April 2011 assessments)

× Two candidates for the Board of Education

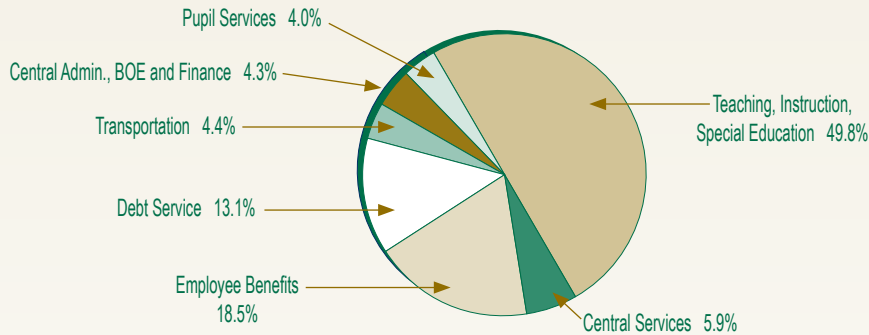
Tom McNulty and Robert Boudreau
are running unopposed for re-election

Where and when do I vote?

2 p.m. to 8 p.m. at the Heatly School Cafeteria

How are the funds invested?

Expenditures	Final 2009-10 budget	Approved 2010-11 budget	Proposed 2011-12 budget	Change in dollar amount
Board of Education	\$15,350	\$15,214	\$6,306	-\$8,908
Central Administration	\$132,455	\$136,013	\$131,924	-\$4,089
Finance	\$159,489	\$169,426	\$169,423	-\$3
Staff	\$62,950	\$87,570	\$113,831	\$26,261
Central Services	\$424,371	\$372,570	\$423,520	\$50,950
Special Items	\$94,570	\$108,255	\$128,600	\$20,345
Instruct., Admin. & Improv.	\$179,928	\$241,751	\$155,114	-\$86,637
Teaching - Regular School	\$1,768,949	\$1,401,109	\$1,921,068	\$519,959
Special Education programs	\$1,089,862	\$1,192,338	\$992,122	-\$200,216
Teaching - Special Schools	\$116,840	\$178,437	\$49,272	-\$129,165
Employment Preparation program	\$400	\$50	\$0	-\$50
Instructional Media	\$198,628	\$161,294	\$142,752	-\$18,542
Pupil Services	\$310,952	\$291,710	\$283,243	-\$8,467
Pupil Transportation	\$447,474	\$338,363	\$316,953	-\$21,410
Youth Program	\$150	\$0	\$0	\$0
Employee Benefits	\$1,007,555	\$1,256,553	\$1,316,031	\$59,478
Debt Service	\$956,646	\$936,094	\$927,710	-\$8,384
Planned Balance	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$6,966,569	\$6,886,747	\$7,077,869	\$191,122 (2.78%)



Two Board members running unopposed

In addition to voting on the school budget, Green Island residents will cast their ballots for two Board of Education seats. The positions are unpaid and become effective July 1, 2011.

Two current Green Island Board members—Tom McNulty and Robert Boudreau—are running unopposed for the two open seats. McNulty has been on the Board since 2002, while Boudreau was first elected in 2003.

More information on these Board members is available on the district website at www.greenisland.org. ✕

STAR saves money on school tax bills

It is important to note that STAR is a property tax relief program for individual homeowners. It is not a source of funding for school districts and therefore does not prevent tax rates from rising. However, the net taxes paid by district homeowners are reduced by STAR. The tax exemption included with the state's STAR school tax reduction program changes every year because of changing equalization rates.

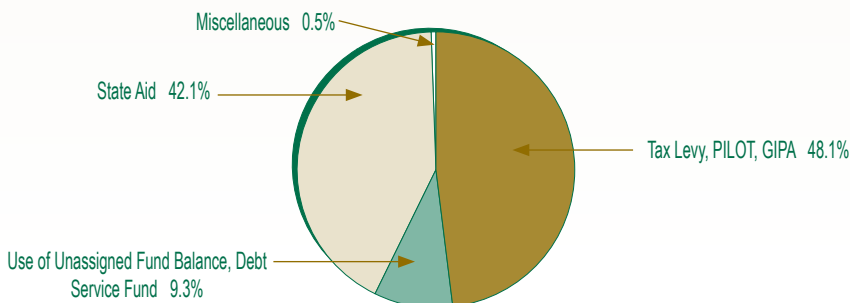
A community's equalization rate measures how close to full-value a home's assessment is set.

The STAR exemption is subtracted from the assessment before the school tax bill is computed. According to the state, the exemptions will reduce Green Island school assessments by \$1,730 for those with Basic STAR this fall and by \$3,460 for those with Enhanced STAR (*those over age 65 with qualifying income*).

In the fall of 2010, those exemptions decreased Green Island assessments by \$1,670 for Basic STAR and \$3,340 for Enhanced STAR. ✕

Revenue summary

Revenues	Final 2009-10 budget	Approved 2010-11 budget	Proposed 2011-12 budget	Change in dollar amount
State Aid	\$3,451,997	\$2,936,218	\$2,876,109	-\$60,109
Federal/state grants	\$21,000	\$205,000	\$105,551	-\$99,449
Investment interest	\$15,000	\$27,500	\$25,000	-\$2,500
Charges for services/tuition	\$8,850	\$5,750	\$4,500	-\$1,250
Admissions	\$3,000	\$3,500	\$4,000	\$500
Miscellaneous	\$150	\$1,300	\$1,300	\$0
Local tax levy	\$2,657,126	\$2,716,911	\$2,791,626	\$74,715
G.I. Power Authority	\$348,080	\$348,080	\$348,080	\$0
Payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT)	\$251,067	\$257,552	\$257,552	\$0
Tax penalties/interest	\$2,000	\$1,950	\$4,500	\$2,550
Transfer from fund balance	\$183,299	\$273,124	\$549,789	\$276,665
Transfer from debt service fund	\$0	\$109,862	\$109,862	\$0
Planned Balance	\$25,000	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total	\$6,966,569	\$6,886,747	\$7,077,869	\$191,122 (2.78%)



Budget addresses fiscal realities (continued from page 1)

so it's reduced to 1.79 percent (\$280,000 more than the prior year). The use of these funds also allows the district to formulate a budget that maintains funding for all current full-time instructional and support staff and for current educational programs—an important factor considering the devastating staff and program cuts the district experienced last year. The one expected change in the instructional staff for the 2011-12 school year is the loss of one teaching position due to attrition (a retirement without filling the vacancy).

In addition, district officials and Board of Education members looked for creative options for saving money and increasing educational opportunities. “We looked for leverage points,” Mugits explained. “And one of those leverage points involves making sure we retain our current learners rather than losing them to other learning alternatives, such as charter, parochial and private schools. This may seem counterintuitive, right? But, each time a Green Island student opts for these alternatives, the district loses the state aid that would be dedicated to that student. In addition, Green Island pays tuition and transportation costs for students attending charter schools and transportation and textbook costs for pupils who choose to go to private and parochial schools.”

Increasing the scope of learning opportunities

The solution? Ensure that Green Island presents the varied learning opportunities that our students are seeking. To this end, the district will begin offering online classes through an international program called Virtual High School. “Because we’re a small district, we may not have the student interest or the staffing to be able to efficiently run large numbers of classes that reflect the broad interests of our students,” Mugits said. “By taking advantage of online classes, some learners can replace their study halls with advanced classes in a variety of subjects. It’s a very exciting advancement in our educational program.”

The classes will be offered beginning next year. Students have already enrolled in Russian Language and Culture, Introduction to Statistics, Oceanography, Computational Science and Engineering Using Java Script, Young Adult Literature, Computer-Aided Design (CAD) and more.

“This new opportunity may make the difference for students who are looking toward their futures and perhaps making educational choices,” Mugits commented.

There’s an advantage for local taxpayers, as well. The funding for the first year of the Virtual High School program has been provided by an anonymous and very generous donor.

“This donor directed the district to plant seeds for the future and that’s exactly what we’re doing with Virtual High School,” Mugits said. ✕

“The donor directed the district to plant seeds for the future and that’s exactly what we’re doing with Virtual High School.”

-Superintendent Dr. Michael Mugits

Q & A on the proposed budget

How much of the budget do residents vote on?

Residents vote on the entire budget. This is a “yes” or “no” vote giving the district permission to spend the budgeted amount in the coming fiscal year. This district cannot spend any more money than the public approves.

What programs are mandated by the state?

The overwhelming majority of the district’s budget goes toward meeting state and federal mandates and requirements—from areas of study to building climate issues and transportation regulations. Elementary school mandates include instruction in math, science, technology, English language arts, social studies, health, physical education, art, music and library in addition to specific topics as varied as state history, bicycle safety and fire prevention. Among other mandates, students in grades 6-8 are required to have a certain number of credits in the study of English, social studies, math, technology, science, physical education, the arts, library skills and second language. In high school, the academic mandates vary depending on which diploma a student pursues.

What happens if the budget is defeated?

Under state law, if a school district budget is defeated, the Board of Education can propose the same or a revised budget for a revote, or move directly to a contingency budget. If the Board decides to present the budget—revised or not—for another vote and it is defeated a second time, the Board must adopt a contingency budget.

What is a contingency budget?

State law mandates that under a contingency budget a school district may not increase spending in most expenditure areas by more than 120 percent of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 4 percent, whichever is less. If forced to adopt a contingency budget, Green Island will be required to make approximately \$60,000 in cuts to the proposed budget. The district would also be subject to various limits and controls on how funds within a contingency budget are spent.

How can I get more information?

If you’d like more information about the budget, please call the district at (518) 273-1422. You can also stop by the Heatly School main office to pick up a copy of the district’s plain language budget and/or School Report Card. For a list of school budget terms and their definitions, please go to: <http://www.greenisland.org/budget/budgetglossary.html>.

Superintendent

Dr. Michael J. Mugits
(518) 273-1422

GREEN ISLAND UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

171 Hudson Avenue
Green Island, New York 12183

Non Profit Org.
Postage Paid
Permit #867
Troy, NY 12180

Board of Education

Norman Stebbins, *President*
Anita Brown, *Vice-President*
Beth Heffern
Tom McNulty
Robert Boudreau

School board meetings are open to the public and most are held at 6:30 p.m. on the first Thursday of each month at Heatly School. Published by the Green Island Union Free School District in conjunction with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

Editor: Kim Smithgall

School district budget notice: 2011-12

	Budget adopted for the 2010-11 school year	Budget proposed for the 2011-12 school year	Contingency budget for 2011-12 school year
Total budgeted amount	\$6,886,747	\$7,077,869	\$7,017,869
Increase/decrease, dollar amount		\$191,122	approx. \$60,000
Percent increase/decrease		2.78%	1.92%
Change in the consumer price index		1.6%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for 2011-12 school year		\$2,791,626	\$2,731,626

Administrative component	\$668,191	\$721,739	\$686,750
Program component	\$4,831,138	\$4,931,178	\$4,906,167
Capital component	\$1,387,418	\$1,424,952	\$1,424,952

Education Law, Section 2023, states that a contingency budget is limited by law to a growth cap of 120 percent of the consumer price index or 4 percent, whichever is less, excluding certain budget categories. It is anticipated that a contingency budget would require: elimination of new equipment purchases; reduction in the purchase of supplies; fee for non-school building use; and elimination of an unknown number of instructional and non-instructional staff positions.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR exemption savings based on a hypothetical home within the school district with a full value of \$100,000. This chart, mandated by New York State, is illustrative of the possible savings for a homeowner eligible for the Basic STAR exemption. All STAR savings and tax increases are subject to change, pending final equalization rates, assessments, etc.

	Budget proposed for the 2011-12 school year
Basic STAR tax savings	\$602.48

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2011-12 by the qualified voters of the Green Island Union Free School District, Albany County, New York, will be held at the Heatly School, 171 Hudson Avenue, in said district on Tuesday, May 17, 2011, between the hours of 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., prevailing time, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by ballot or machine.