

The Panther Post

#WithMontiPride

MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT // BUDGET 2023-24 // VOLUME 9

Budget At-A-Glance

Proposed budget:
\$97,886,695

Proposed School
Tax Levy:
\$43,576,655

Tax Levy Change:
\$0
0%

Proposed budget change:
\$3,426,120
3.62%

Also on the ballot:
Election of Board of
Education Members
(see page 14)

VOTE:-
May 16
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

In this issue

page **2**
Community Corner Calendar

pages **4-5**
Fall & Winter Sports

pages **6-9**
Our Goals

pages **10-11**
A New Life for
22 Saint John Street

pages **13-15**
Budget Proposal

PROPOSED BUDGET ENHANCES SECURITY, ATHLETICS AND ACADEMICS WITH NO TAX LEVY IMPACT

Residents to vote on May 16, 2023

At its April 11 regular meeting, the Monticello Central School District Board of Education adopted a proposed budget for the 2023-24 school year. The proposed \$97,886,695 spending plan has a zero percent increase to the tax levy, preserves all current staff and vacant positions, boosts school safety measures, enhances athletics offerings and continues to build a strong educational foundation for our students to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

No Increase In Tax Levy

The proposed spending plan is a net increase of \$3.43 million over the 2022-23 budget. The rise in cost is primarily attributable to increased costs in existing expenditures, including health benefits, retirement contributions, and general supplies. New expenditures only account for \$916,165 of the \$3.43 million increase. However, although the budget has increased, the portion of the budget that is funded by taxpayers, or the tax levy, has remained unchanged.

Less than half of proposed budget is funded by property taxes

The district has historically worked to progressively shrink the percentage of the budget funded by the taxpayers, while aggressively pursuing alternative revenue streams. In the 2015-16 school year, the tax levy funded 51.56% of the budget. This year, the tax levy funds 44.52% of the budget, with the rest funded by state aid, grants and other sources.

Budget Highlights

Security

The proposed spending plan includes two armed security guards through Atlas Security. The district currently employs four School Resource Officers (SROs), who are active members of local law enforcement, along with a fleet of security attendants. The addition of these two guards would ensure that the district could provide constant armed security at the secondary level from the early morning hours through the evening and during school events. The budget also includes two portable metal detectors, which can be used to screen students or visitors on a randomized basis or during district events. The district's top priority is always the safety of its students and staff members, and the addition of these two new initiatives will add another layer to our already-robust security plan.

Athletics

The proposed budget includes a new scoreboard at the Robert J. Kaiser Middle School, as well as a new high jump pit for our track and field. It also initiates a new uniform replacement cycle for the athletics department. Under this new cycle, new uniforms will be purchased each year for either varsity, junior varsity or modified players, ensuring that no uniform is older than three years. The budget would also support a new girls flag football team, provided there is sufficient interest.

Academics

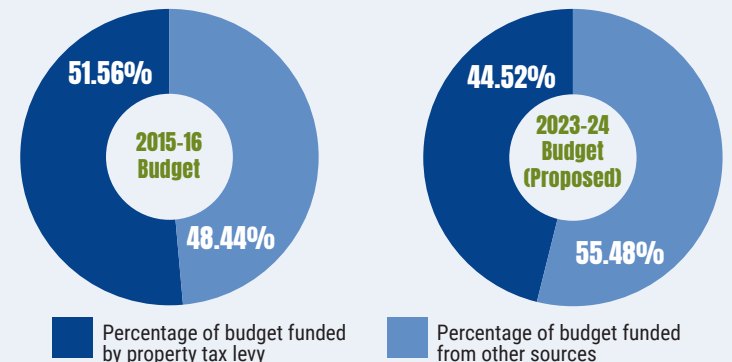
The proposed budget preserves all current staff and vacant positions that are funded through the general fund. It also adds a full-time Language Other Than English (LOTE) position that had previously been funded through ESSER. Various professional development opportunities are also supported by the proposed budget to ensure that our educators continue to develop the skills necessary to foster student growth.

WHERE TO VOTE ON MAY 16

- Thompson/Monticello - District #1**
Robert J. Kaiser Middle School
45 Breakey Avenue • Monticello, NY 12701
 - Rock Hill - District #4**
Rock Hill Fire Department
61 Glen Wild Road • Rock Hill, NY 12775
 - Bethel - District #2**
Duggan Community Center
3460 Route 55 • White Lake, NY 12786
 - Forestburgh - District #5**
Forestburgh Town Hall
332 King Road • Forestburgh, NY 12777
 - Mamakating - District #3**
Emma C. Chase School
28 Pennsylvania Avenue • Wurtsboro, NY 12790
- If you have a question about where you should vote, call 845-794-7700, ext. 70523*

ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE AVAILABLE ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 17 - SEE P. 12 FOR MORE INFORMATION

Taxpayer burden has decreased by 7.04% since 2015-16



Community GO-RNER

CALENDAR

MAY

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION

- 15 – 7:30–9 p.m. – RJK 6th Grade Spring Concert
- 16 – 8 a.m.–8 p.m. – Budget Vote & Election
7:30–8:30 p.m. – RJK 7th & 8th Grade Spring Concert
- 17 – 7:30–8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting
Election Results Available (see p. 12)

JUNE

- 1 – 7:30–8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting
- 5 – 7:30–8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting (Special Meeting)
- 6 – 6:30–7:30 p.m. – President’s Education Awards (Grades 5, 8, 12)
- 9 – 5–7:30 p.m. – K-12 District Wide Visual Art Show
- 22 – 7:30–8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting (Retiree Recognition)

JULY

- 6 – 6–6:30 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting (Reorganization meeting @ 6 p.m.; Regular Meeting begins after)
- 20 – 7:30–8 p.m. – Board of Education Meeting

AUGUST

- 13 – 9 a.m.–4 p.m. – Bagel Festival, Monticello Village

FIRST DAY OF 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR:
SEPTEMBER 7

Donations Sought

The Spirit Week Committee is seeking small donations of items to be used as prizes for students, staff and community members during our district-wide spirit week. Some examples include gift cards to local businesses, baskets or any item that would be a welcome surprise for folks who go out of their way to show their Monti pride during spirit week. Please contact Public Information Officer Courtney Bonfante at CBonfante@k12mcsd.net if you’d like to contribute.

★ Hall of Distinction ★

The Monticello Central School District Hall of Distinction honors highly successful alumni, former Board of Education members and former employees who have achieved distinction, outstanding accomplishments or made significant contributions within their school, family, career, community and/or personal lives. The committee is accepting nominations for the induction class of 2024. In the fall of 2023, the district will host a ceremony where a double induction class will be honored. More information and a nomination packet are available on the Hall of Distinction webpage located on monticelloschools.net under “About Us”.

CONNECT WITH US!

Are you a community member who wants to stay in touch with the most up-to-date news and events from the district? Use the QR code, or visit our website to sign up to receive district news via email.



Do one small thing on May 16 to celebrate our inaugural Community Day

On May 16, the Monticello Central School District will host its inaugural Community Day during its district-wide spirit week – and we’re asking you to join us in showing off that Monti pride, and work with us to prove that small acts of kindness create a ripple effect that grows and grows.

We are asking everyone to wear blue and white on Tuesday, May 16, and/or to do one small thing to make Monticello a better place. What sort of small thing? That’s up to you! Perhaps you’ll pay for a stranger’s coffee. Maybe you’ll grab a group of friends and pick up litter on your block? Maybe you’ll leave an especially generous tip for your server? Whatever you do, we want to hear about it so that we can share it, and inspire others to do the same!

Take a photo of your good deed (whether you perform the deed or are the recipient), or of you and your friends and co-workers wearing blue and white and tag us on social media using the hashtag #WeAreMonticello. No social media? Send your photos to communications@k12mcsd.net and we’ll share with our followers!

Visit our website, or follow us on social media for more information, or to get ideas about how you can celebrate as the day approaches!

Monticello



Community Day
May 16, 2023

#WeAreMonticello

Superintendent's Message

The 2022-23 school year marks another step of our journey towards becoming a district of choice. Around this time last year, a diverse group of stakeholders was in the process of creating our strategic plan - a road map towards meeting our four district goals of fiscal responsibility, student success, school culture and community engagement. They were also working towards our vision of becoming a district of choice. In August, the Board of Education formally adopted this plan, which identifies available resources and includes a year-by-year list of tasks, action items and accountability measures to help us gauge success and readjust where needed. The full plan is available on the "About Us" page on our website, www.monticelloschools.net, or you can view it using the QR code to the right.



Fiscal responsibility

As always, our primary goal during budget season is to create a spending plan that balances our responsibility to provide each learner with empowering educational experiences with our responsibility to our taxpayers to exercise financial prudence. The combination of New York State's commitment to fully fund foundation aid for our schools, and our aggressive pursuit of funding sources led to a \$3.4 million year-to-year increase in revenue which will result in a 0% increase to the tax levy.

Thanks to the historic ARP-ESSER funding expiring in the 2024 school year, we can improve the heating and ventilation systems at all of our elementary schools. We are grateful for the opportunity to provide these important upgrades to our facilities at no cost to our taxpayers through this funding. These projects are being scheduled to break ground during the summer months (see p. 9).

Student Success

One of the most ambitious action items in our strategic plan is the creation of an individualized student success plan (ISSP) outlining a pathway to academic success for each of our students. We've seen the benefits of providing such highly-individualized instruction through initiatives like our high school program at the St. John Street Community School (p. 12). We believe that such a detailed approach that takes into account each student's unique strengths and challenges will help propel student growth across the board.

We are pleased to be able to continue to include all programs and positions funded through the general fund that contribute to our students' current academic achievements in the proposed budget.

School Culture

According to our strategic plan, we hope to decrease suspension rates by 50% and also to have 90% of students believe that their school exhibits a safe, secure and orderly environment where stakeholders feel a sense of kindness, respect, inclusivity and belonging. To that end, we conducted a confidential survey where parents, students and faculty/staff members reflected on their perceptions of the school district and provided feedback

on how we could improve. The survey closed at the end of March, and we are presently in the process of compiling the results, which we will publish later this spring. We're excited to establish a baseline from which we can continue to grow. In addition to these surveys, I have been holding monthly "student roundtables" at our secondary schools, to give students a voice on important district matters, such as food service or school security.

As part of enhancing our district security, we have included two portable metal detectors and two new armed security guards in the proposed budget (see p. 1). These additions will complement our existing security plan, which we are constantly evaluating and refining. The safety and security of our students and staff is always our top priority.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is a cornerstone of our district. We are fortunate to be surrounded by a community that cares about education, and we are grateful for the many local organizations that partner with us to provide life-long learning opportunities for our students and their families (see p. 7 for just a few examples).

We're also committed to two-way communication with our constituents, and we have many opportunities to connect. Our website and social media channels are a wealth of information. We continue to utilize ParentSquare to communicate directly with our families and with the greater community. Our families receive these communications automatically, but community members without students in the district can register to receive district news delivered to their inbox (see p. 2).

Each Monday, I release a video in a series called "It's Monday in Monticello," where I detail important information for the week ahead. The videos are published on our YouTube channel and our website. I also schedule morning coffee and afternoon tea sessions throughout the year at various schools to give staff members and families the opportunity to chat in an informal setting during morning drop-off or afternoon pick up. Of course, I am always available via traditional means - I encourage any parent or community member with questions to contact me over the phone or via email.

I appreciate your continued support as we work towards our vision of becoming a district of choice.

With Monti Pride,

Matthew T. Evans, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

 @WithMontiPride
  @MonticelloCSD
 @MonticelloCentralSchoolDistrict



Secondary students have the opportunity to participate in student roundtables with Dr. Evans, where they are able to share feedback and suggestions on important district matters.

#WithMontiPride

HIGHLIGHTS FROM OUR FALL AND WINTER SPORTS SEASONS

Monticello skier Alexis Heins crowned state champion

Monticello Sophomore and Alpine Ski sensation Alexis Heins was crowned the 2023 Girls Slalom New York State Champion at Bristol Mountain on Monday, Feb. 27. She won with a time of 1:36.97.

Congratulations to Alexis and Coach Bittinger!



Aaliyah Mota joins 1,000 point club

On Tuesday, Feb. 21, girls basketball phenom Aaliyah Mota scored her 1,000th point with 15 seconds remaining in the final league game of the season at Minisink Valley.

The game was paused, Aaliyah was given the game ball and a standing ovation from both Monticello and Minisink Valley players and fans. Aaliyah becomes just the fourth girls basketball player in Monticello history to eclipse the 1,000-point mark, and ninth player overall.



Ski team takes division championship

The Girls Alpine Ski Team was crowned OCIAA Division 1 Champions for the 2022-23 school year.



Wrestling team shines at tournament

Congratulations to our varsity wrestling team, who competed in the Bulldog Wrestling Tournament at Beacon High School on Jan. 21.

Monticello senior Jesse Corces finished 1st in the 285-pound weight class and senior Irvin Oestrich finished 3rd in the 172-pound weight class.

Other notable finishes included:

- Arturo Benedicto, 4th place (152 pounds)
- Jeffery Ruiz, 5th place (102 pounds)
- Scott LaRusso, 6th place (110 pounds)
- Kenji Rodriguez, 6th place (118 pounds)
- Matt Finnerty, 6th place (160 pounds)
- Braedan Fairfield, 6th place (215 pounds)



The following students were named as Sullivan County Democrat All-Stars:

Monticello Panthers Aaliyah Mota, Janee Vias, Gianna DeMaio, Joe Russo, Daevion Sandoval, Xaevean Mitchell and Dylan Hardy were all selected as All Stars by the Sullivan County Democrat.



OUR GOALS:

OUR VISION

This Board aspires to build a world-class community of schools, and be a district of choice.

OUR MISSION

This Board's mission is to ensure that each learner is future-ready by providing empowering educational experiences.

This Board will provide a holistic education comprised of extensive curricular and extra-curricular experiences that empower each individual student to conquer challenges, develop talents, and discover passions, while sustaining rigor and achieving evidence-based academic growth.



The St. John Street Community School Preschool program held its inaugural Family Literacy Night on March 2 – Dr. Seuss' birthday! Students made their way through a series of fun Seuss-themed activities, while parents had the opportunity to learn more about the various teaching methods that help young children develop their literacy skills. Parents also gained insight into community resources they can utilize to help grow their children's love of reading. As Dr. Seuss would say "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."



Eighth-grade students in Angela Braselmann's class celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month – which runs from Sept. 15 through Oct. 15 – by holding classroom discussions and composing writings based on a short film they watched called "La Capa Azul." The short film focuses on ten-year-old Junior and his family's strife after Hurricane Maria devastated much of Puerto Rico. Drawing on their personal experiences with Hurricane Maria, in addition to the film, students wrote a R.A.F.T. (Role, Audience, Format, and Topic), which is a creative writing technique that allows students to write from various perspectives to different audiences using the format that fits them best. Students produced compelling works such as letters, diary entries, poems and even song lyrics.



In March, Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary school hosted its STREAM fair, where students had the opportunity to showcase their exceptional talent and STREAM-related knowledge through innovative projects and activities. Families were also in attendance to support the hard work of their students. A special congratulations to fifth-grade student Domenick Allen, who took home first place!



The "New to You Bookstore" is back at Chase Elementary – in a new location! The store was moved to its new location on the gymnasium's stage and unveiled at a school assembly back in November. Students have the option to trade a book or pay a quarter to buy one. Fourth and fifth-grade students run the bookstore in the mornings, escorting younger students down to the store and collecting money or books. Last year, third grade students chose to donate the bookstore's earnings – \$270 – to the St. Jude Children's Hospital and the Chase backpack program. Principal Bill Frandino celebrated the grand opening of the new location with a special performance.

Five Monticello High School seniors were recognized for their academic excellence on Feb. 10, 2023 at the New York State Scholarships for Excellence Award ceremony. In front of families and guidance counselors, Principal Stephen Wilder honored four students – Eddie Chen, Michael Feltman, Irvin Oestrich and Kush Patel – for their exceptional hard work in earning the second level of the award, which is \$500 a year, for four years, to attend a NYS college or university. Similarly, senior Allison Weinstein was recognized for her academic talents, earning the first level of the award. This includes \$1,500 each year, for four years, to be used at a NYS college or university.



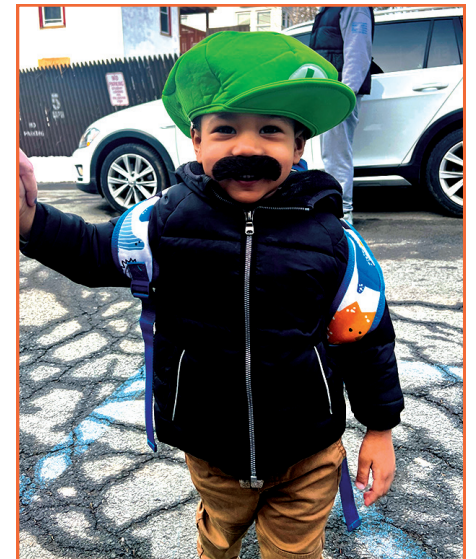
The polls came to second-grade students at George L. Cooke Elementary school this past election cycle, thanks to teacher Ms. Kilcoin. Ms. Kilcoin transformed her classroom into a makeshift polling station, complete with ballots, privacy shields, ballot boxes and "I Voted" stickers. Students cast their votes on three propositions: Oreo cookies or chocolate chip?; salty or sweet snacks?; and wavy Lays or thin Lays? After completing their ballots, students received an "I Voted" sticker and waited for the results to be tallied. Students enjoyed the winning snacks the following week.



This Board will strive to build authentic relationships rooted in trust, transparency and two-way communication with all constituents. We will actively seek avenues to partner with local organizations and agencies to increase our network of resources to improve and support life-long learning opportunities for our community.



Students at Cooke Elementary School had their fire safety knowledge put to the test when members of the Wurtsboro Fire Department and Monticello Fire Department visited students as part of Fire Prevention Week. The local firefighters provided students with vital tips on fire safety, including the classic phrase of “stop, drop and roll,” as well as the importance of regularly checking smoke detector batteries. The firefighters also shared why families should have an emergency meeting place and reviewed situations when 911 should be called (or not be called).



The St. John Street Community Preschool Center held its first Harvest Festival on Oct. 27, with over 120 families and seven community agencies in attendance. Agencies present included EPIC, Fidelis Care, MVP, Sullivan County Attain Lab, Nesin Cultural Arts, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Sullivan County Department of Public Health. Families enjoyed fun fall-themed activities such as a “Trunk or Treat,” a photo booth and a food art table. There was also a costume contest, which representatives from the community agencies judged. The night concluded with a family “take home project” that was supplied by EPIC.



Poets in the making – eighth-grade students at RJK Middle School attended a February poetry workshop led by Sullivan County Poet Laureate, Dr. Sharon Kennedy-Nolle, and eighth-grade teacher, Angela Braselmann. The workshop provided insight into different poetic devices; students also read and discussed a variety of list poems. Students then experimented with composing their own list poems and shared their works in a guided workshop format.

Students in Monticello High School Academy of Finance’s Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program have wrapped up another successful tax season. This year, student volunteers prepared 172 tax returns for community members, saving these taxpayers more than \$42K in tax preparation fees. The VITA program, now in its 16th year at Monticello, enables students to gain useful, real-life experience while giving back to their community. The service is free for taxpayers below a certain income threshold (the limit changes from year to year; this year it was \$58k). Students become IRS-certified prior to volunteering for the program.



Students at Chase Elementary had a special guest reader for Agricultural Literacy Week: Barbara Moran, 4-H Youth Development Program Manager at Cornell Cooperative Extension Sullivan County. During Agricultural Literacy Week, which was March 20-24, volunteers throughout New York State visited classrooms to read a book with an agricultural theme. Ms. Moran visited Mrs. Furman’s second-grade class and read the story, “Tomatoes for Neela.” Students then had the exciting opportunity to plant tomato and basil seeds and monitored their progress over the next several weeks.



Math + movement = fun! More than 200 students and their families recently enjoyed a Family Fun Night at Rutherford Elementary School that featured the school’s Math and Movement program. The program incorporates movement and visuals to make learning math concepts fun and simple. Families enjoyed a pasta dinner, then rotated through a series of stations with the help of a Math & Movement activity guide.

This Board will foster an inclusive culture that sparks community pride, emphasizes kindness and respect and ensures that all students, staff and visitors are valued and supported in safe, secure, orderly and clean appropriately effective facilities.



There's a new cat in town at Chase Elementary: Emma the Blue Panther! The new mascot was introduced to students, staff and families at the school's Reading Assembly on March 2 by the Cat in the Hat. The Dr. Seuss character made a special appearance as the mystery guest reader, then helped announce Emma's arrival! The pair closed out the assembly with a performance to the Pharell Williams' song, "Happy." Welcome to the district, Emma!



The hard work of three students enrolled in the alternative high school program at the St. John Street Community School has paid off after they made the honor roll for the second marking period. Jaquie Gable earned high honor roll for the first and second marking periods. Destiny Zimmer also made the high honor roll for the first marking period, in addition to earning a spot on the honor roll for marking period two. Lastly, Arianna Foote (not pictured) achieved the honor roll for the second marking period. Congratulations ladies!



A new initiative has launched at Monticello High School called PROJECT: Gratitude where senior athletes choose a staff member to honor for their support and encouragement over the years. Student athletes surprised their selected staff member in February, commemorating the special moment with a t-shirt bearing the athlete's name and number. MHS teacher Katie Alvarez organized the new tradition after being inspired by a social media post of a student in another state doing something special for a staff member that impacted them. The school intends to continue this new tradition each season.

The Wellness Club at Cooke Elementary School has been hard at work developing new ways to incorporate health into the daily lifestyles of its students and staff. Co-facilitators Elisa Mendels and Joan Mingo have addressed how the lack of physical activity has impacted students over the years in several ways. For example, they've made changes to the playground, adding smaller basketball hoops and purchasing more play equipment. The dynamic duo has also painted the blacktop to encourage physical activity and emotional wellness. A unique feature is the "dispute resolution circle" which students can utilize to resolve a disagreement. In addition, Ms. Mendels and Ms. Mingo have brought "blender bikes" and "celebration carts" to Cooke classrooms, demonstrating how physical activity can create a delectable treat! The Wellness Club at Cooke is made possible through a Healthier Generation grant from Sullivan 180.



Students and staff at RJK Middle School traded places one Friday as part of the school's "Spirit Week" celebrations. Staff dressed up like students, complete with hoodies and Crocs. Students dressed as staff, wearing their best professional attire.

Students at the Rutherford Elementary School took a trip to the future to celebrate the 100th day of school. Students imagined what they would look like as centenarians and came up with some unique ensembles.



This Board will fortify its financial assets through long-term, strategic planning that aims to consistently maximize district improvements while minimizing taxpayer impact.



What's Next?

In response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, school districts across the nation became eligible to receive one-time funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 and Federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ARP-ESSER). The district was allocated \$4.9 million through the ESSER II and approximately \$10.9 million through the ARP to be used on initiatives to address learning loss, facilities updates and technology. The district sought to avoid a "fiscal cliff" scenario, and opted to use the one-time cost and long-term investments to avoid recurring expenses that would be unsustainable in the long term.

These historic funding packages were intended to help districts navigate through the uncertainty of the pandemic through the 2020-2024 school years. ESSER funding will expire in September 2023 and ARP funding will expire in 2024. A large portion of the funding has been allocated over the past few years on expenses related to addressing learning loss, facilities upgrades and technology (a full list is available on our website). The remaining funds will be used to enable the district to upgrade the heating and ventilation systems at all three elementary schools at no impact to the tax levy. The district expects the work to begin at the Emma C. Chase Elementary School during the summer of 2023, and at the Kenneth L. Rutherford and George L. Cooke Elementary Schools during the summer of 2024. These projects will improve temperature control, energy efficiency and ventilation at the elementary schools.

High School Construction Nears Completion

For the first time since its construction in the 1960's, Monticello High School students returned to a completely new 100/200 wing in September. The interior of the new wing was completed over the summer months, and students and staff have been enjoying the new classrooms, science labs, gathering areas, office space and outdoor amphitheater. The hallways are much brighter, with lots of natural lighting from the skylights. In addition, new windows and HVAC systems have improved the wing's ventilation and climate.

Construction on the exterior of the building continues. Building crews are putting the final touches on the steel-frame façade facing Breakey Avenue, and the district expects the new façade to be completed by July 2023.

Meanwhile, construction on the tennis courts located in between the 100/200 wing of the high school and Breakey Avenue near the cafeteria/gymnasium entrance is almost complete. The district expects the tennis courts to be finished by the end of June 2023.



A breakout space in the hallway of the new wing of the high school where students can gather to study or meet.



Construction is nearing completion on the steel frame exterior of the building.



The district has been making improvements to its athletic fields, including two new dugouts.



Students participate in Jeanine Nielson's class in one of the high school's newly-renovated science labs.

A New Life for 22 Saint John Street

From being the first high school in the village, to hosting space for agencies to provide community services, the building at 22 Saint John Street has served the Monticello community for generations. This year, a new initiative launched – the Saint John St. Community School (SJSCS), which serves some of our youngest learners, as well as some of our most complex learners in a preschool and high school program.

For many years, the Easter Seal’s Project Excel program was housed in the building. After Project Excel announced their closure in January of 2022, the district sought to create a new, district-managed program to continue to provide this important programming to the youngest residents of Monticello. The program, which serves three and four-year old residents of the district, strives to prepare students to enter kindergarten. To that end, there is an immense amount of collaboration between the teachers at the preschool and the district’s kindergarten teachers to create a program that increases literary skills and gives students a strong foundation for future learning. The program also emphasizes parent engagement – hosting monthly parent engagement nights where parents are empowered to be partners in learning. The program’s self-contained classrooms are able to include students from other school districts in Sullivan County. The district has hired a speech pathologist and social worker and is in the process of hiring occupational and physical therapists with the goal of being able to provide specialized services to the preschool population of Monticello, as well as students throughout Sullivan County.



EPIC Program Manager Jane Sorensen leads SJSCS preschool students in a Thanksgiving activity.

Down the hallway, the tiniest children of the district – aged birth through three – and their families are able to play, learn and socialize at the newly-imagined Tiny Town.



During a Family Literacy Night at the SJSCS, Ethelbert B. Crawford Youth Services Librarian Mariana Sprouse shares information about children’s programming at the library and assists a SJSCS preschool student in signing up for her very first library card, as her mom looks on.

The district first implemented the Tiny Town program in 2019 at the Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School. The program, which was the brainchild of district staff members Sarah Mootz and Jill Yanetta, saw great success in providing the tiniest Panthers and their families a place to play, learn and connect. With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the district’s grade level restructuring

at the two village schools, Tiny Town closed its doors at the Rutherford School. However, with the district’s new pre-school program opening at the Saint John St



Superintendent of Schools Dr. Matthew Evans, flanked by EPIC Program Manager Jane Sorensen and EPIC Director of Family Engagement Monica Richardson cuts the ribbon at the Tiny Town grand opening on January 18. They are joined by Board of Education members Todd Grodin, Wendy Galliagan-Weiner, Ashley Rielly and Helen Jersey; Saint John Street Community School Principal Jennifer Gorr and Senior Typist Christine Budinich, MCSD Director of Security Doug Murphy, Sullivan County Legislator Alan Sorensen, EPIC Student Liaison Josephine Marotta, and Monticello families with their children.

Community School, it seemed a natural fit for Tiny Town’s new home.

The new Tiny Town is managed by a partnership between the Monticello Central School District and the Every Person Influences Children (EPIC) program. Unlike it’s predecessor, it does not offer drop-in hours, but instead offers two to three scheduled sessions per week. Each session begins with 45 minutes of unstructured playtime for children and their families to engage in – Tiny Town is chock-filled with age-appropriate toys and activities. After unstructured playtime, the EPIC program offers structured activities based upon different monthly themes, such as “ocean creatures”, “winter wonderland”, “reading is everywhere” and more. Guests from community agencies such as Sullivan 180, Bethel Woods, Fidelis Cares and the district’s libraries also visit Tiny Town to share resources with parents and lead activities.



Monticello children aged birth through three and their families are able to participate in activities at Tiny Town.

Reimagining High School at SJSCS

Two floors up from Tiny Town, a group of Monticello High School students are attending a new program at the SJSCS designed to accommodate students who perform well in a non-traditional environment. These are students who have great academic skills, but just don't thrive in a larger setting. With a total enrollment of 25, the classes are much smaller, so each student receives highly individualized attention. The program also has a later start than the traditional high school, which has resulted in improved attendance rates among the students, many of whom had been considered chronically absent in the past. The students are taking an active role in building a strong program, offering their insight on what is working well, and where there is room for improvement. Next year, Ms. Gorr hopes to be able to double the number of spots available in the program to 50.

"I didn't even realize I was learning when I started here," said Ariana Foote, a 10th grade student at the SJSCS. "I'm very energetic – I'm a big ball of energy, even when I'm tired. Not everyone can handle me. Here, it's a more flexible way of learning, and the teachers let me be free."

The curriculum for these high school students revolves around Project-Based Learning, which incorporates real-world challenges into lessons and allows students to complete projects together, helping to develop their social skills.

Educators teach in teams – history lessons are reiterated in English lessons and so on. In addition, the program emphasizes college and career-readiness, partnering with community groups to provide internships and other real-world experiences. Students have opportunities to learn about local businesses and attractions and participate in team-building activities.

"I want to bring the community into the school, and the school into the community," SJSCS Principal Jennifer Gorr said. "I want them to have the opportunity to see what else is out there outside of their current environment. Many students have the mindset that there's nothing here in Monticello, and that they need to get out of Monticello as soon as possible. We want students to see the value of our community, and hopefully, for them to be an integral part of making this community a better place."



Students at the high school program at SJSCS often work with the younger students downstairs. Here, Lauren and Brooke Babcock, both students at the St. John Street Community School's high school program volunteered their time to help set up for the preschool's Family Literacy Night.



High school students at the SJSCS work with renowned fashion designer Daryl Kerrigan and Tom Bosket of ENGN (<https://www.engncntr.com/>) to learn how to upcycle clothing.

The best of both worlds: Principal Gorr takes the helm

As Principal, Ms. Gorr oversees both the preschool and the high school program and plays an integral part in creating the blueprint for both programs. Her career in public education began in a special education classroom, where she worked as a teacher assistant. It was in this setting where she discovered her passion for serving students with special needs, and where she was inspired to pursue teacher certification in that area. After receiving her teacher certification in special education, she worked in the Independent Academic Therapeutic Program (ITAP) at BOCES, serving students throughout the county. During that time, she completed her administrative certification, eventually joining the Monticello Central School District team as Supervisor of Special Education.

"I felt that this job was the best of both worlds," Ms. Gorr said. "I missed being in the classroom as an educator and missed being around kids. I also missed the atmosphere of ITAP, where we were able to reach some of the hardest-to-reach kids. With the district building a similar program, I knew I wanted to be part of it."



Principal Jennifer Gorr poses with SJSCS student Ariana Foote

Cooking up a new lunch experience at MCSD

Donald “Mac” Thurston has spent most of his life working in the restaurant business. In an industry notorious for its staff turnover, Mr. Thurston spent a whopping 41 years at one establishment, beginning as a dishwasher and working his way up through the decades to the main chef.

“Wearing all these different hats meant that I could run all the moving parts pretty fluidly,” he said. It’s an important skill that will be essential in his new role as cook manager at the Monticello Central School District.

The district created the new position as part of an effort to improve school meals. Currently, the district utilizes a shared service through BOCES with only three days of on-site supervision. With the new position, the district will have a full-time supervisor on-site each day overseeing five kitchens and the staff within, as well as planning menus, ordering food and complying with all United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) regulations. Through the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), free breakfast and lunch is available for all 2,700 Monticello students. The USDA and CEP set numerous regulations and guidance as to what may be served in a school setting. Although the regulations can be limiting, the district is determined to improve meals to the best of its ability within these guidelines.

“We really wanted to see more of an emphasis on whole foods with less processed items in the meals that we’re serving,” Assistant Superintendent for Business Lisa Failla said. “We’re looking to Mr. Thurston to diversify the menu and train our cooks in different, healthier methods of food preparation.”

One group of students who were particularly excited to hear the news was the high school’s student roundtable group. The group, which has been meeting with Superintendent of Schools Dr. Evans to share feedback regarding a variety of district-related topics, has been advocating for more fresh fruits and vegetables,



Mr. Thurston (L) is already increasing salad bar selections.

more reliable menus, more vegetarian options and overall, more appealing food choices. Once Mr. Thurston was hired, he also made it a priority to meet with this group and hear their suggestions and feedback about the district’s food service.

Aside from meeting with the students in the two short weeks since Mr. Thurston began his position (as of press time), he has also been spending time evaluating what students enjoy eating and what they don’t. He’s already implemented additional salad bar options and is working diligently to use his wealth of restaurant-related knowledge to create new menu options.

“The entire staff here has been wonderful to work with and very welcoming. It’s a challenging job, and very fast-paced, but we will all work together to find creative ways to make sure our kids are being served healthy meals that they will actually eat and enjoy,” Mr. Thurston said.

Election results available May 17

According to New York state law, school districts have 24 hours from the close of polls to certify election results. In MCSD, the Board has typically held a meeting on the night of the election, certifying the votes nearly immediately after they are reported from the polling stations. However, beginning this year, the Board will now accept and certify the results on the day after the election. The Board of Education has scheduled a meeting on Wednesday, May 17 at 7:30 p.m. in the Robert J. Kaiser Middle School. During that meeting, the Board will accept the results and the district will release the results via its communications channels and the media.

Last year, a clerical error in the formula on the spreadsheet used to calculate

the number of votes from each polling site was discovered after the Board had certified the results late in the evening of the budget vote. The error did not impact the final results of the election, but since the Board had already certified the results, its only way to officially accept the corrected results was through an appeal to the Commissioner of Education. The Board wanted official numbers recorded; it wanted to be transparent with the results.

After reviewing the appeal, the Commissioner dismissed it, determining that no recount was necessary, recognizing that the discrepancy was a result of a “simple computation error” that did not impact the results of the election. In her decision, the Commissioner did not find fault with any of the district’s procedures in the matter.

The Board is hopeful that moving the certification to the following day will reduce the risk of future clerical errors.

3-Part Budget Fiscal Year: 2023

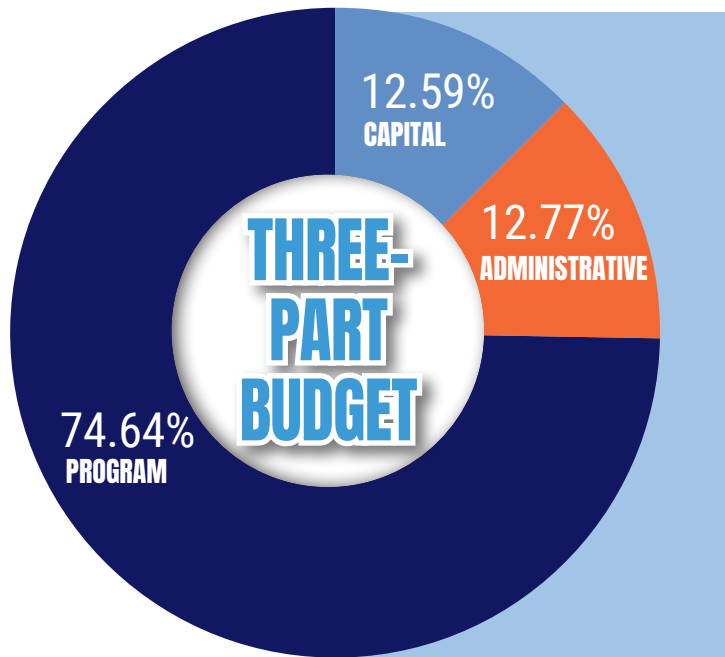
State Function	Description	2023-24 Proposed Budget	2022-23 Adopted Budget
ADMINISTRATION			
1010	Board Of Education	\$59,000	\$61,000
1040	District Clerk	\$53,000	\$40,306
1060	District Meeting	\$42,640	\$45,890
1240	Chief School Administrator	\$327,491	\$313,051
1310	Business Administration	\$911,814	\$837,011
1320	Auditing	\$84,000	\$84,000
1330	Tax Collector	\$47,500	\$56,500
1380	Fiscal Agent Fee	\$20,000	\$20,000
1420	Legal	\$260,000	\$250,000
1430	Personnel	\$249,840	\$338,536
1460	Records Management Officer	\$50,000	\$50,000
1480	Public Information and Services	\$181,674	\$181,268
1670	Central Printing & Mailing	\$55,000	\$0
1910	Unallocated Insurance	\$284,500	\$284,500
1920	School Association Dues	\$15,000	\$15,000
1950	Assessments on School Property	\$30,000	\$30,000
1981	BOCES Administrative Costs	\$1,380,116	\$1,387,546
2010	Curriculum Development and Supervision	\$961,834	\$980,204
2020	Supervision-Regular School	\$3,748,909	\$3,434,689
2070	Inservice Training-Instruction	\$80,000	\$80,000
2110	Teaching-Regular School	\$189,600	\$204,700
9000	Employee Benefits	\$3,472,104	\$3,345,386
Total Administration		\$12,504,022	\$12,039,587
CAPITAL			
1620	Operation of Plant	\$3,935,363	\$3,846,971
1621	Maintenance of Plant	\$2,051,324	\$1,780,882
1930	Judgments and Claims	\$5,000	\$5,000
1964	Refund on Real Property Taxes	\$40,000	\$50,000
5510	District Transportation Services	\$600,000	\$550,000
9000	Employee Benefits	\$1,750,895	\$1,686,995
9711	Serial Bonds-School Construction	\$412,300	\$409,290
9731	Bond Antic Notes-School Construction	\$2,620,175	\$2,047,026
9732	Bond Antic Notes-Bus Purchases	\$647,221	\$0
9785	Install Purch Debt/Leases	\$157,828	\$397,520
9950	Transfer to Capital Fund	\$100,000	\$100,000
Total Capital		\$12,320,106	\$10,873,684

State Function	Description	2023-24 Proposed Budget	2022-23 Adopted Budget
PROGRAM			
1420	Legal	\$2,000	\$2,000
1910	Unallocated Insurance	\$55,000	\$55,000
2070	Inservice Training-Instruction	\$133,166	\$158,000
2110	Teaching-Regular School	\$22,340,265	\$21,733,963
2250	Program For Students w/Disabilities-Med-Eligible	\$19,793,068	\$19,853,525
2280	Occupational Education (Grades 9-12)	\$2,098,150	\$2,221,000
2330	Teaching-Special Schools	\$424,000	\$424,000
2610	School Library & AV	\$364,078	\$334,317
2630	Computer Assisted Instruction	\$2,069,421	\$1,899,790
2805	Attendance-Regular School	\$146,290	\$143,377
2810	Guidance-Regular School	\$968,058	\$949,876
2815	Health Services-Regular School	\$582,921	\$597,530
2820	Psychological Services-Regular School	\$291,528	\$228,487
2825	Social Work Services-Regular School	\$810,945	\$699,880
2830	Pupil Personnel Services-Special Schools	\$388,639	\$363,721
2850	Co-Curricular Activities-Regular School	\$224,150	\$230,400
2855	Interscholastic Athletics-Regular School	\$800,135	\$685,849
5510	District Transport Services-Med-Eligible	\$4,001,709	\$4,028,356
5530	Garage Building	\$90,608	\$90,608
8070	Census	\$34,756	\$34,181
9000	Employee Benefits	\$17,268,680	\$16,638,444
9901	Transfer to Special Aid Fund	\$175,000	\$175,000
Total Program		\$73,062,567	\$71,547,304

BUDGET COMPONENT SUMMARY

	2023-24 Proposed Budget	% of Budget	2021-22 Adopted Budget	% of Budget
Administration	\$12,504,022	12.77%	\$12,039,587	12.75%
Capital	\$12,320,106	12.59%	\$10,873,684	11.51%
Program	\$73,062,567	74.64%	\$71,547,304	75.74%
Total	\$97,886,695	100.00%	\$94,460,575	100.00%

For more information about the 2023-24 proposed budget, please visit our website www.monticelloschools.net



By law, school districts must divide their proposed budgets into three portions – administrative, capital and program – and compare them to the current year’s amounts. Monticello’s three-part budget breaks down as follows:

	Proposed 2023-24	Budgeted 2022-23
ADMINISTRATIVE Amount:	\$12,504,022	\$12,039,587

The administrative component includes all administrative salaries, benefits and office and program costs for directing and supervising all instructional activities of the district.

	Proposed 2023-24	Budgeted 2022-23
PROGRAM Amount:	\$73,062,567	\$71,547,304

The program component includes salaries and benefits for classroom teaching personnel, instructional materials, supplies and services, interscholastic sports, extracurricular programs and transportation.

	Proposed 2023-24	Budgeted 2022-23
CAPITAL Amount:	\$12,310,106	\$10,873,684

The capital component includes all costs for facility maintenance operations, including salaries and benefits of plant operations staff, supplies, utilities, capital expenditures, debt service and purchase of transportation vehicles. Contractual leases that were included in the program budget for installment purchases and leases are now included in the capital budget.

REVENUES ▶ Where the money comes from

REVENUE	Proposed 2023-24	Budgeted 2022-23
Charges for Services	\$200,000	\$233,000
Other	\$3,926,034	\$4,659,417
Interest Income	\$15,000	\$15,000
Medicaid	\$250,000	\$250,000
State Aid	\$49,919,006	\$45,150,791
Fund Balance	\$0	\$575,712
Tax Levy	\$43,576,655	\$43,576,655
TOTALS	\$97,886,695	\$94,460,575

EXPENSES ▶ Where the money goes

EXPENSES	Proposed 2023-24	Budgeted 2022-23
Employee Salaries	\$41,647,975	\$40,424,259
Benefits	\$22,491,679	\$21,670,826
BOCES	\$17,713,100	\$18,019,954
Program Support	\$8,257,342	\$7,943,026
Equipment	\$950,297	\$897,797
Materials and Supplies	\$2,713,778	\$2,375,878
Debt Service	\$4,112,527	\$3,128,836
TOTALS	\$97,886,698	\$94,460,576

Q. What happens if voters reject the proposed 2023-24 school budget on May 16?

Under New York State Education Law, if voters defeat their school district budget in May, a district has three options. It can:

- ✓ Resubmit the same proposal for a revote;
- ✓ Submit a revised proposal for a revote; or
- ✓ Adopt a contingent budget.



If it resubmits a proposal and the proposal is rejected a second time, it must adopt a contingent budget.

Under a contingent budget, a school district cannot increase the amount of taxes levied during the previous school year. Since the tax levy of MCS D’s proposed 2023-24 budget has not increased from last year, a contingent budget would not necessarily further decrease the tax levy from the proposed levy.

According to state law, a contingent budget prevents the district from spending money on particular expenses, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases, non-essential maintenance, capital expenditures (except in emergencies) and certain field trips and student supplies. Therefore, the district would need to remove \$2,296,537 worth of buses, equipment, training, supplies and materials, as well as unrepresented employee salary increases if it adopted a contingent budget.

BOARD OF EDUCATION CANDIDATES

VOTE ONE FOR EACH SEAT:

Seat 1	Seat 2	Seat 3
Rosemary Berson	Lisa Maranzana	Helen Jersey
Aдриanna Mayson Greco	Wendy Galligan Weiner	Mary Beth Bastone

Board of Education candidate statements are available on the budget webpage on the district’s website www.monticelloschools.net

What are EQUALIZATION RATES and why are they used?

A tale of two houses, two towns, one school district, and two tax bills

Town A and Town B are different towns within the same school district. The house in Town A and the house in Town B recently sold for the same amount. So, the two houses have the same market value and should pay the same amount in school taxes.

However, Town A and Town B use different assessment practices, which means that the houses have different assessed values – and assessed values are used in the computation of property tax bills. Therefore, for the houses in Town A and Town B to pay the same in taxes, the tax rates (per \$1,000 of assessed value) must be different for each town.

The process of equalization is used to determine these tax rates. Essentially, full market value serves as a common denominator, or equalizer, in the process of setting tax rates.

Equalization rates indicate the ratio of the assessed value to market value in the municipality. They are used in an effort to fairly apportion the share of taxes when a taxing jurisdiction, such as a school district, contains multiple municipalities. They are designed to ensure that owners of properties with similar full market values pay an equivalent amount of taxes.



TAX BILL – HOUSE IN TOWN A

Full Market Value:	\$250,000
Equalization Rate:	74.00
Assessed Value:	\$185,000
Town Tax Rate:	\$27.03 per \$1,000
Total Taxes Due:	\$5,000



TAX BILL – HOUSE IN TOWN B

Full Market Value:	\$250,000
Equalization Rate:	100.00
Assessed Value:	\$250,000
Town Tax Rate:	\$20.00 per \$1,000
Total Taxes Due:	\$5,000

In this example, House A and House B pay an equivalent amount of taxes due to the different tax rates.

Remember: Assessed value × Tax Rate = Total Tax Bill

$$\frac{\text{Assessed value} \times \text{Tax Rate}}{1,000} = \text{Total Tax Bill}$$

In the example given, **properties in Town A are assessed at 74 percent of full market value** (an equalization rate of 74) and **Town B properties are assessed at full market value** – an equalization rate of 100.

School districts calculate the total full market value of all properties in each municipality. Equalization rates allow them to determine the share of the tax levy to be paid by each town, a necessary step to calculating tax rates for each town. The process is designed to:

- Fairly apportion the tax levy among the municipalities in a school district ; and
- Ensure that the amount of taxes paid by owners of similar properties in the district is similar – regardless of the town and its assessment practices.

Board of Education

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 Wendy Galligan-Weiner
 Todd Grodin
 Jennifer Holmes
 Helen Jersey
 Victoria LaRusso
 Ashley Rielly
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Leana Auletta
 Michael Feltman

District Administration

Superintendent of Schools
 Matthew T. Evans, Ed.D.

Assistant Superintendent for Business

Lisa Failla

Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction

Theresa Carlin

District Public Information Officer

Courtney Bonfante

*Produced in cooperation with the
 Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.*



**BUDGET
 EDITION
 2023**

CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

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**BUDGET EDITION 2023**

MONTICELLO CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT // BUDGET 2023-24 // VOLUME 9 // PAGE 16

School District Budget Notice

VOTE!

**May 16
 8 a.m.
 to 8 p.m.**

**Voting Locations:
 See page 1**

**Results
 announced
 May 17
 (see p.12)**

For more information
 about the 2023-24
 proposed budget,
 please visit our website
www.monticelloschools.net

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2022-23 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-24 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$94,460,575	\$97,886,695	\$96,757,112
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-24 School Year		\$3,426,120	\$2,296,537
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.63x%	2.43%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$43,576,655	\$43,576,655	
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)	\$43,576,655	\$43,576,655	\$42,447,072
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$2,831,880	\$2,755,458	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$40,744,775	\$40,821,197	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$40,744,775	\$40,821,197	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative Component	\$12,039,587	\$12,504,022	\$12,324,736
Program Component	\$71,547,304	\$73,062,567	\$72,852,270
Capital Component	\$10,873,684	\$12,320,106	\$11,580,106

* According to state law, a contingent budget prevents the district from spending money on particular expenses, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases, non-essential maintenance, capital expenditures (except in emergencies) and certain field trips and student supplies. If the district adopted a contingent budget it would need to remove \$2,296,537. All replacement buses will be removed plus a reduction in materials and supplies, in service training, and unrepresented employee salary increases.

** Separate Propositions that are NOT included in the Total Budgeted Amount

Description	Amount

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2023-24 School Year

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings ¹	\$450.00
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The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2023-24 by the qualified voters of the Monticello Central School District, Sullivan County, New York, will be held at Robert J. Kaiser Middle School, Dr. Duggan Community Center, Emma C. Chase Elementary School, Rock Hill Fire Department and Forestburgh Town Hall in said district on Tuesday, May 16, 2023 between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m., prevailing time in the Robert J. Kaiser Middle School, Dr. Duggan Community Center, Emma C. Chase Elementary School, Rock Hill Fire Department and Forestburgh Town Hall, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

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