



School budget vote on May 18

No Increase in Proposed School Budget for 2010-11

Schalmont Central School District residents can vote on a \$42,325,000 budget proposal for the 2010-11 school year on Tuesday, May 18, from 6 a.m. to 9 p.m. in the foyer of the Schalmont High School New Gym, 1 Sabre Dr. Voters will also pick candidates to fill three seats on the Schalmont Board of Education and consider a bus purchase proposition.

The total proposed 2010-11 school budget is exactly the same as the total budget approved for the current school year.

More than \$1.5 million in cuts allowed the school board to propose an overall budget for next year with no increase. Those cuts are in a variety of areas, including staffing, programs and supplies (see page 2). With the proposed cuts, the school board hopes to limit any negative impact on students and still be responsive to taxpayers' financial concerns, according to President Kevin Thompson.

"The board is very mindful of the economic challenges facing our community, but our most important goal was to limit the impact on educational programs. I believe we accomplished this goal, and in fact, there will actually be some new electives available at the high school next year," he said.

Those electives and several ongoing educational initiatives are discussed on page 2.

The proposed budget would increase the school tax levy by 1 percent from its current 2009-10 level to \$28,753,009. A school tax levy is the total amount of money that a district collects from local taxpayers. Schalmont reduced the percentage increase of its school tax levy each year for the last five years, and actually had no increase in the tax levy for the current school year.

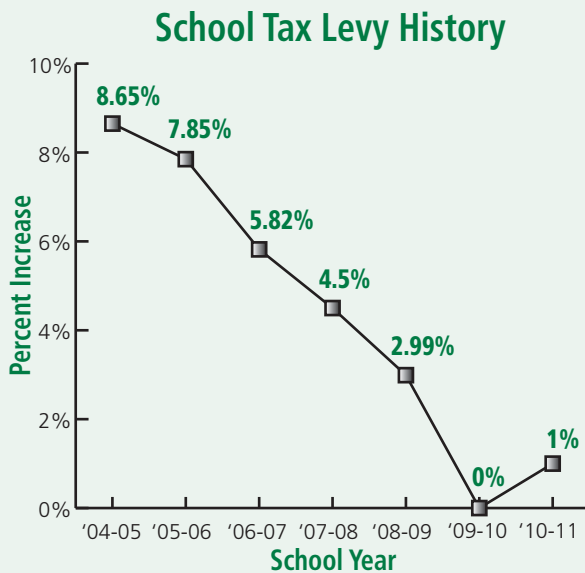
Next year the tax levy is increasing, even

though the budget is not, because state aid for Schalmont is expected to drop by more than \$1.2 million, or 3.21 percent, from the 2009-10 level.

According to Superintendent Valerie Kelsey, "When revenue from the state drops, we have to make cuts or increase revenue from our other main source –

local taxpayers. By taking both steps, we hope to avoid additional cuts that could undo the academic advancements our students have made in the last few years," (see page 4).

The district will set school tax rates (i.e., amount of tax residents pay per \$1,000 of home value) for homestead and non-homestead properties in August. Individual school tax bills will



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Budget Summary

2010-11 School Budget
\$42,325,000

School Budget Change
0%

School Tax Levy Change
+ 1%

be calculated using the assessed value of a property, any applicable exemptions, and the school tax rate for the town in which the property owner resides. The school board has approved all possible school tax exemptions, and many taxpayers may also be eligible for a STAR exemption (see page 3).

Additional details about the proposed budget, as well as Schalmont educational programs and student achievements, can be found in this newsletter and online at www.schalmont.org.

Cuts Made to Balance Budget; Programs Still Top Priority

School budgets are always a balancing act, but not just between expenses and revenue. School boards also have to balance two goals: meeting students' educational needs and offering a budget that taxpayers will support. The proposed budget attempts that balancing act by funding a variety of educational initiatives despite more than \$1.5 million in cuts.

The proposed school budget allows Schalmont Central School District to offer several unique and/or advanced programs in addition to the state-required core curriculum. That is important because most students' learning interests extend beyond what some might consider "the basics," according to Director of Curriculum Susan Cook.

"It's equally important to address the needs of students who are seeking a vocational education, those whose academic interests exceed the traditional curriculum, and disengaged students with more complicated needs," she said.

A variety of successful programs will continue next year. At Schalmont High School, ongoing classes include the Project Lead the Way pre-engineering program; more than 20 honors, advanced placement and/or college-level courses; and distance learning classes in topics such as theatre production, psychology, sociology, French, and Mandarin Chinese. Schalmont Middle School will also continue many of its enhanced programs next year, including Gateway to Technology and the accelerated math and science programs. At the elementary level, teachers will continue to implement programs like Everyday Mathematics and the elementary literacy initiative.

The high school will also offer several new classes next year using existing teaching staff. Subject areas include current affairs, digital photography, sports and the media, film and TV production, and astronomy. Some classes will be held in the distance learning lab.

"The distance learning lab gives students more choices and opportunities. They're able to participate in a number of classes via video conferencing with several districts at a time, making this another cost-saving initiative," said Cook.



Keeping the Quality in Education: Next year's budget will preserve many successful educational initiatives and introduce several new electives using existing staff.

Schalmont will preserve these and many other educational opportunities next year, but the district will also make \$1,565,922 in cuts (see chart at right). Declining enrollment will help make those cuts and their impact on class sizes manageable, according to Superintendent Valerie Kelsey.

"The state's money troubles aren't going away anytime soon, so it'll become more and more difficult for schools to preserve their programs without turning to local taxpayers for help. For now, I'm pleased that we could avoid increasing the budget next year and still offer great programs," said Kelsey.

Proposed Cuts

The budget proposed for the 2010-11 school year was reached by making \$1,565,922 in cuts to the rollover budget. A rollover budget is when a school district rolls over all expenses from the current school year into the following year. Those cuts are outlined below.

Schalmont High School

- Reduce instructional materials by 30 percent
- Cut 1.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions: 1 math, 0.5 home economics

Schalmont Middle School

- Reduce instructional materials by 30 percent
- Cut 3.1 FTE positions: 1 MS section; 1 AIS teacher; district-wide – 0.6 PE, 0.5 art

Elementary Schools

- Reduce instructional materials by 30 percent
- Cut 5 FTE positions: 4 part-time kindergarten aides, 1 section at Jefferson, share 1 secretary at Mariaville and Woestina, combine first and second grades at Mariaville

Extracurricular Programs

- Cut math and science summer academy
- Cut summer music camp
- Cut DARE
- Cut gifted and talented

Support Personnel

- Cut 1.5 FTE positions: 0.6 social worker (BOCES employee), 0.5 speech improvement, 0.4 deaf education

Music Program

- Reduce instructional materials by 30 percent
- Cut 0.4 FTE position

Athletic Program

- Reduce equipment, supplies by 25 percent
- Cut ice hockey, boys' and girls' freshman basketball, modified track

Other Cuts and Reductions

- \$240,150 – miscellaneous (e.g., paper, postage, fuel, natural gas, insurance, sewer, telephone, contract transportation)
- \$100,000 – equipment
- \$50,000 – operations and maintenance
- \$20,000 – cafeteria
- \$5,000 – HS/MS summer school administrator
- \$3,500 – field trips



BUDGET Q&A

Q. How was the budget proposal developed?

Each year the Schalmont Board of Education and administrators begin crafting a budget proposal by looking at factors such as the current cost to operate the district, likely increases or decreases in that cost, and trends in state and federal aid. They also consider educational standards, the success of current school programs and feedback from community members such as those who serve on the Community Budget Advisory Committee.

Q. What increases are included in this budget?

While individual budget line items may have increased (see pages 4-5), the total \$42,325,000 school budget proposed for 2010-11 does not increase spending from the current school year.

Q. What cuts are included in this budget?

The 2010-11 school budget includes \$1,565,922 of cuts and reductions in staffing, programs and miscellaneous expenses (see page 2).

Q. Will those cuts affect class sizes?

Yes, but the change will be relatively small because overall enrollment in Schalmont schools has dropped in the last several years from about 2,200 students to 2,000 students. So, for example, average class sizes at Schalmont Middle School will increase from 22-24 to 22-25 next year.

Q. What does the district do to limit spending and contain costs?

Schalmont competitively purchases goods and services, as required by law. For example, wherever possible, the district makes purchases through cooperative arrangements with BOCES or New York State as well as through its membership in the Schenectady County Schools Buying Consortium.

Schalmont also implemented an energy savings plan in October 2008. Since then, the district has saved approximately \$193,000 by reducing the use of electricity, natural gas and heating oil.

Q. How will state aid and the federal stimulus affect the budget?

Schalmont looks to all other available revenue sources – state and federal aid, interest earnings, facility rental fees, etc. – before seeking help from local taxpayers to pay for education. State and federal aid make up 28.54 percent of the district's revenue, and this year Schalmont will receive \$12,081,560. That is a 3.21 percent decrease from 2009-10 state aid levels.

The largest portion of state aid is "foundation aid," which has been frozen at the 2008-09 level for two years in a row. The formula to determine foundation aid was originally established by the state to provide school districts with regularly scheduled, predictable aid increases. The aid is based on factors such as the number of total students, disadvantaged students, special education students, and limited English proficiency students in a district. The state has indicated it will now delay the full implementation of the foundation aid formula until the 2016-17 school year.

In January, Gov. David Paterson included a one-time "gap elimination adjustment" (GEA), or cut in state aid, of \$1,280,120 for Schalmont in his 2010-11 executive budget proposal. He used the remaining money from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to prevent the GEA from being larger. That means federal stimulus funds are not available to reduce this state aid cut.

At the time that this newsletter went to print, the Legislature was still negotiating a state budget. Exact state aid figures are not yet known, but most, if not all, of the GEA seems likely to remain.

Q. What effect do mandates have on the budget?

State and federal mandates, such as No Child Left Behind, generally are intended

to raise educational standards. The costs associated with meeting such mandates – for things like administering and grading state tests and providing struggling students with individualized/small group support – are often not covered by the government. That means Schalmont must look locally to fund such initiatives.

Q. How will this budget affect school taxes?

The 2010-11 school budget would increase the school tax levy (i.e., total amount of money that the district collects from local taxpayers) by 1 percent to a total of \$28,753,009.

The 2010-11 school tax rate (i.e., amount of tax residents pay per \$1,000 of home value) for residential property owners (homestead) will be less than the rate for all other property owners (non-homestead). Rates will be set in August 2010.

Taxpayers may be able to reduce their school taxes through exemptions. The school board has approved all possible school tax exemptions, and exemption applications are available in your town assessor's office.

Q. Why is the tax levy increasing when the budget is not increasing?

State aid for Schalmont is expected to drop by more than \$1.2 million, or 3.21 percent, from 2009-10 state aid levels. Because revenue from the state is decreasing, the district has to make cuts and increase revenue from its other main source, local taxpayers, to have no increase in the budget.

Q. How do STAR exemptions reduce school taxes?

Those who own a home can significantly reduce their school property taxes through a School Tax Relief (STAR) exemption. There are two standard STAR exemptions: Basic STAR for owner-occupied, primary residences regardless of owners' ages and incomes; and Enhanced STAR for primary residences of owners aged 65 and older with yearly household incomes below

continued on page 6 ---->

Where does the money come from?

▶ Revenue Summary

	Approved Budget 2009-10 (\$)	Proposed Budget 2010-11 (\$)	Percent Change
State and Federal Aid	\$12,482,426	\$12,081,560	-3.21
Fund Balance Appropriations	400,000	623,000	55.75
Interfund Transfers	263,317	0	-100.00
Interest Earnings/Building Use/Refunds	274,500	454,000	65.39
Payments in Lieu of Taxes	435,986	413,431	-5.17
Property Tax Levy for Budget	28,468,771	28,753,009	1.00
Revenue in budget	\$42,325,000	\$42,325,000	0.00%

▶ Expenditure Summary

	Approved Budget 2009-10 (\$)	Proposed Budget 2010-11 (\$)	Percent Change
Instruction	\$20,061,244	\$19,511,345	-2.74
Employee Benefits	11,221,546	12,188,868	8.62
Operations and Maintenance	2,818,544	2,649,619	-5.99
Transportation	2,792,493	2,613,910	-6.40
District Support	1,339,768	1,302,373	-2.79
Debt Service and Transfer	4,091,405	4,058,885	-0.79
Expenditures in budget	\$42,325,000	\$42,325,000	0.00%

Where does the money go?

(see next page for details)

Students in the Spotlight

Academic Achievements

Schalmont High School Class of 2009:

- 92 percent earned a Regents, Advanced Regents or Advanced Regents with Honor diploma
- 89 percent attended a two- or four-year college
- Average SAT critical reading score (506), math score (527) and ACT composite score (22.3) were all higher than the national average

Athletic Achievements

- NYS Public High School Athletic Association scholar-athlete teams: fall – Boys Cross Country, Girls Cross Country, Golf, Boys Soccer, Girls Soccer, Girls Tennis, Girls Volleyball; winter – Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Boys Bowling
- State Championship Participants: Varsity Football Team; Natasha Bidwell, Liz Kuhlkin and Meredith Juers - Girls Bowling; Dylan Woythal - Boys



- Swimming; Vincent Gallo - Wrestling
- Section II Class B Champions: Football, Boys Bowling, Girls Bowling
- Colonial Council Champions: Boys Soccer, Girls Volleyball, Boys Bowling, Girls Bowling

Music Achievements

- Four HS students in New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA) All-State Festival
- Seven HS students in NYSSMA Area All-State Festival
- More than 100 HS and MS students in NYSSMA solo competition festival
- Thirty-two elementary, MS and HS students in Schenectady All-County Music Festival
- Schalmont Marching Band received "Chairman's Youth Award" at the Schenectady Holiday Parade

Community Service Achievements

- All schools collected gifts and food for local families

continued on page 5 ----▶



▶ Instruction

46.10% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Teaching - Regular School	\$10,053,580	\$9,859,197
Occupational Education	640,266	693,414
Special Education	5,398,972	5,143,661
Curriculum Development	235,120	202,574
Supervision	1,124,382	1,119,052
Summer School	93,607	63,488
Library	332,963	339,437
Computer Assisted Instruction	599,005	502,741
Guidance	591,600	570,689
Health Services	334,424	353,115
Psychological Services	197,306	235,051
Co-curricular Activities	73,600	68,565
Athletics	386,419	360,360
Total	\$20,061,244	\$19,511,345
Percent Change		-2.74%

▶ Employee Benefits

28.80% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Health Insurance	\$7,518,575	\$8,284,650
Teachers' Retirement	1,365,000	1,365,000
Employees' Retirement	400,000	440,000
Social Security (FICA)	1,555,269	1,625,000
Worker's Compensation	190,000	190,000
Unemployment	50,000	137,730
Life Insurance	118,202	121,988
Disability Insurance	24,500	24,500
Total	\$11,221,546	\$12,188,868
Percent Change		+8.62%

▶ Transportation

6.18% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Transportation	\$2,397,810	\$2,318,894
Garage	94,683	95,016
Contracted Transportation	300,000	200,000
Total	\$2,792,493	\$2,613,910
Percent Change		-6.40%

in need during the winter holidays.

- HS and MS choral students raised \$525 for the City Mission of Schenectady at their concert in March.
- Jefferson Elementary School students collected more than \$1,300 to support children in Haiti.

▶ District Support

3.08% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Board of Education	\$7,999	\$7,281
District Clerk/Meeting	3,301	2,210
Central Administration	202,840	212,340
Business Administration	367,711	362,937
Auditing	47,630	47,630
Treasurer	80	60
Tax Collection	10,820	10,810
Purchasing	8,618	8,728
Fiscal Agent Fees	0	0
Legal Services	108,150	108,150
Personnel	59,783	55,144
Public Information	98,593	100,958
Central Printing	58,971	55,521
Insurance	168,000	128,000
School Dues	18,700	18,700
Assessment	0	0
Tax Refunds	0	0
BOCES Administration	174,329	180,723
Census	4,244	3,183
Total	\$1,339,768	\$1,302,373
Percent Change		-2.79%

▶ Operations and Maintenance

6.26% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Custodial Services	\$2,222,869	\$2,109,157
Maintenance	595,675	540,462
Total	\$2,818,544	\$2,649,619
Percent Change		-5.99%

▶ Debt Service and Transfers

9.59% of total budget	2009-10	2010-11
Buses	\$372,420	\$338,520
Construction	3,071,754	3,094,684
Tax Certiorari	482,231	480,681
Interfund Transfer	165,000	145,000
Total	\$4,091,405	\$4,058,885
Percent Change		-0.79%

- Mariaville Elementary School raised money for the Make-a-Wish Foundation by selling paper angels.
- Woestina Elementary School hosted its first ever "Woestina's Closet" clothing exchange event.

Budget Q&A

– continued from pg. 3

state standard. Contact your town assessor to apply or visit www.orps.state.ny.us/star/ for more details.

Q. Can STAR exemptions change each year?

Yes. Exemptions can be reduced based on changes in the assessed value of a homeowner's property, as determined by a town assessor, and in the equalization rates for various towns within a school district. Gov. Paterson has also proposed changing the maximum reduction in taxpayers' STAR exemption amounts next year. Visit ww.schalmont.org and click on "Budget" for more information.

Q. What happens if the budget is voted down?

If the proposed school budget is defeated on May 18, the school board can put the same budget up for a revote, put a revised budget up for vote or go directly to a contingency budget. If the board decides to put the proposed budget up for a revote or to put a revised budget up for a vote and either one is voted down, the board must adopt a contingency budget.

Q. 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 or 4 percent, whichever is less. Based on that formula, the spending cap for most expenditure areas is 0 percent for 2010-11.

A contingency budget is calculated by removing all non-contingent appropriations from the proposed budget, including student supplies, certain equipment purchases, and community use of school facilities (i.e., must charge a fee).

If forced to adopt a contingency budget under current law, Schalmont will need to cut \$36,114 from the proposed budget.

School Board Candidates, Bus Purchase Up for Vote



Sandra Beloncik

is running for her sixth term.

She is an active member of the New York State School Boards Association, where she served on the Resolutions Committee for three years. She also served as the Capital District

School Board Association representative for Schalmont for 11 years. For the past two years, she has served as president of the Capital Region Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) Board of Education. She is also a trustee for Tech Valley High School.

At Schalmont, Beloncik has served as a secretary for the Friends of Music, as an officer of Woestina Little League, and on various elementary, middle and high school parent-teacher organizations. She also has served as a fund raiser for Capital District Junior Achievement and Channel 17, an advisory board member for Rotterdam DARE, and the vice chair of the Town of Rotterdam Ethics Committee for seven years.

Beloncik graduated from Mohonasen High School and attended Brockport University. She and her husband, Michael, have two children who are Schalmont graduates.



John DiCocco

is running for his first term.

He is a contract manager in the Global Project Operations group at General Electric. He is also a pack master for Cub Scout Pack 57. For the past two years, he has served on

the Schalmont Community Budget Advisory Committee.

After graduating from Draper High School, he earned a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He and his wife, Brenda, have three children currently attending Schalmont schools, one at the elementary level and two at the secondary level.

- On May 18, voters will help fill three seats on the Schalmont Board of Education.
- The ballot will also include a separate proposition asking voter permission to purchase three large 66-passenger buses.
- The school board is made up of seven non-paid citizens elected to serve overlapping terms of three years each.
- The four candidates above have submitted petitions to run for the three seats available.
- To learn more about the school board, visit www.schalmont.org or come to Meet the Candidates Night on Monday, May 10, at 7 p.m. in the Schalmont Middle School LGI Room, 2 Sabre Dr.



Michael DellaVilla

is running for his third term.

He is a cofounder of Rockit Science Solutions and has more than 25 years of experience in information technology. He also volunteers as a coach for AAU and CYO Basketball.

After graduating from Schalmont High School in 1981, he earned his bachelor's degree from Siena College in 1985. He and his wife, Debbie, have three children who all attend or attended Schalmont schools. His two daughters attend Nazareth College, with the eldest graduating this year.



Robert Sheehan

is running for his third term.

He is a pharmacist with the Bureau of Pharmacy Policy and Operations for the State of New York. Sheehan is also a member of the American Society of Health Systems

Pharmacists, Northeast Society of Hospital Pharmacists, American Pharmaceutical Society and Professional Employee Federation. He serves as a soccer official for Section II and is a member of the Eastern Board Approved Soccer Officials Association.

After graduating from Schalmont High School, he received a bachelor's degree from Union University, Albany College of Pharmacy. He and his wife, Sharon, have three children: two daughters, who are both Schalmont alumnae, and a son, who is a 2009 Schalmont alumnus and a freshman at Hofstra University.

**Meet the Candidates Night
Monday, May 10 @ 7 p.m.
Schalmont Middle School LGI Room
2 Sabre Dr.**

District residents can also vote on a proposition to purchase three 66-passenger buses for \$294,000. Schalmont is eligible for state aid reimbursement on a portion of that cost, so the real cost to the district would be \$117,600.

The proposition takes advantage of the trade-in values of older, heavily used buses before they exceed their life expectancy. So if voters pass the proposition, the district's current fleet will not increase because older buses will be traded in towards the purchase of new buses. The proposition would also provide students with buses built based on the latest safety standards.



2010-11 SCHOOL BUDGET NOTICE

School districts are required by state law to mail this information to all households within the district. If you would like more information about the budget, please call the superintendent's office at 355-9200.

DEFINITIONS

The state requires school districts to present their annual budgets in three parts: program, administrative and capital.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS:

Salaries and benefits of all professional staff members who spend 50 percent or more of their time in administration and supervision. Also included: salaries and benefits of clerical staff for administrators; public relations; central printing; curriculum development and supervision; research planning and evaluation; central data processing; tax collection; most legal services; and school board costs.

2. PROGRAM COSTS:

Salaries and benefits of all teachers, guidance counselors, speech therapists, nurses, psychologists, social workers, aides, monitors, etc. Also included: district transportation costs (except bus purchases); interscholastic athletics; in-service training; computer assisted instruction; library, audiovisual and educational TV costs; and co-curricular recreation, youth and civic programs.

3. CAPITAL COSTS:

Debt service on buildings; leases; school bus purchases; tax certiorari and court-ordered costs; operation and maintenance costs, including salaries and benefits of all janitorial staff.

	Budget Adopted for the 2009-10 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2010-11 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2010-11 School Year
Total budgeted amount	\$42,325,000	\$42,325,000	\$42,288,886
Increase or decrease for 2010-11 school year		\$0	- \$36,114
Percentage increase or decrease in proposed budget		0%	- 0.085%
Change in the consumer price index		- 0.4%	
Resulting est. property tax levy for 2010-11 school year		\$28,753,009	\$28,716,895
Component Breakdown			
1. Administrative Component	\$2,459,907	\$2,418,243	\$2,405,723
2. Program Component	\$33,020,144	\$33,263,253	\$33,245,401
3. Capital Component	\$6,844,949	\$6,643,504	\$6,637,762

What happens if the 2010-11 school budget proposal is not approved by a majority of voters?

Under state law, school boards can submit a budget to voters a maximum of two times. If the budget is defeated twice, the board must adopt a contingency budget, which would put a cap on new spending. Based upon a formula, this year's spending cap is 0 percent (some exclusions allowed).

A contingency budget is calculated using the spending cap and by removing all non-contingent appropriations from the proposed budget. Items which are statutorily considered non-contingent expenses are, for example, student supplies, certain equipment purchases, and community use of school facilities. If forced to adopt a contingency budget under current law, Schalmont will need to cut \$36,114 from the proposed budget.

If the contingency budget is put in place as the result of two defeated budget votes, under current state law there can be no more votes on a budget for this year. Also, there can be no referendum to reinstate any of the specific components that were removed from the budget to meet the spending cap imposed by a contingency budget.

Basic STAR Exemption Impact

Estimated Basic STAR* Exemption savings

	Budget proposed for the 2010-11 school year
Basic STAR Tax Savings	\$532.14

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

The budget vote for the fiscal year 2010-11 by the qualified voters of Schalmont Central School District will be held in the foyer of the Schalmont High School New Gym on Tuesday, May 18, 2010, between the hours of 6 a.m. and 9 p.m., at which time the polls will be open to vote by machine.

Photo ID or other proof of residency is required to vote.



Produced in cooperation with the Capital Region BOCES Communications Service.

Schalmont

CENTRAL SCHOOLS

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WHAT'S INSIDE? CUTS MADE, BUDGET Q&A, SCHOOL BOARD CANDIDATES, AND MORE!

2010-11 School Budget Vote

Coming Soon: A New Way to Vote!

What exactly am I voting on?

- ▶ A \$42,325,000 budget for the 2010-11 school year. There is **no increase in spending** from the current school year, but the school tax levy will increase by 1 percent.
- ▶ Three seats on the Schalmont Board of Education (see page 6)
- ▶ A proposition to purchase three 66-passenger buses (see page 6)

When and where is the vote?

The **vote will be held on Tuesday, May 18, 2010**, from 6 a.m. – 9 p.m. in the foyer of the Schalmont High School New Gym, 1 Sabre Dr. The best parking is in the lot closest to the athletic fields.

Who can vote?

A U.S. citizen who is 18 or more years old and has been a district resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote. No pre-registration is required.

What should I bring with me?

Personal identification/proof of residency is required (e.g., driver's license with current address, utility bill showing your name and current address). You will not be allowed to vote without I.D.

Can I vote by absentee ballot?

Those unable to appear in person on May 18 may vote by absentee ballot. To receive an absentee ballot, voters may obtain an application from the district office (DO) or download one at www.schalmont.org. The application must be returned to the DO by May 11 if the absentee ballot is to be mailed to the voter or by May 17 if the absentee ballot is to be picked up personally by the voter at the DO between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Absentee ballots must be returned no later than 5 p.m. on May 18. For more information, call 355-9200, x4002.

- A familiar sound will be missing this May: the ch-ching of lever machines.
- Schenectady County residents will instead place their school budget votes using new ballot marking devices (BMD).
- BMDs are digital scanners that read paper ballots (pictured below). Users place their votes on paper ballots while behind a privacy screen, put their ballots into privacy folders, leave the voting booth, and then go to a scanner to submit their votes.
- One of the benefits of the new system is that it provides instant feedback. If a ballot is filled out incorrectly, the voter is given the opportunity to void his or her ballot and to submit a new one.
- The county, which supplies the machines used at the budget vote, is changing to BMDs to comply with the federal Help America Vote Act.
- Visit www.voteschenectady.com for more information.



Looking for the latest budget news? To receive e-mail updates, register for the School News Notifier service at www.schalmont.org.