



# UNATEGO

District Newsletter

[www.unatego.org](http://www.unatego.org)

Volume 38, Number 2

Budget Issue, May 2023

## 2023-24 PROPOSED BUDGET Superintendent's Message on behalf of the Unatego Board of Education

District staff are prepared for significant changes beginning this spring. Phase I of the voter-approved \$27.6 million capital project will begin this summer, bringing long-needed improvements to our facilities. Work in this phase includes renovations to the auditorium, locker rooms, and hallways at the Junior-Senior High School. A separate Energy Performance Contract or EPC will add more than \$2 million in energy efficiencies to the capital project. Additional health and safety work will be completed at the Unatego Elementary School while the Bus Garage will receive a new bus lift. The capital project, which will be completed over the next several years, will also include renovations to the classrooms at the Middle and High School, as well as improvements to the athletic fields. For more information on the Capital Project, see [Capital Project Update May 2023](#). For more on the EPC, see [Unatego Embarks on Energy Performance Contract \(EPC\)](#), also in this newsletter.

In addition to the opportunity to vote on the 2023-24 school budget, voters will also consider a proposition to allow school transportation for children who live more than a quarter mile from their school building (see [Proposition To Transport Students from ¼ Mile from their School Building on Ballot](#) in this newsletter). The EPC, which will produce sufficient energy savings to pay for the improvements in under 8 years, is also on the ballot and if voter-approved, will generate an additional 10% in state building aid.

As we all know, costs of everything have increased over the past couple of years. While inflation continues to increase costs at a rate of more than 6% annually, we are pleased to have kept the budget well below the inflation rate at an increase of 1.1%, which requires an increase in the tax levy of 1.9%. This modest tax increase will allow us to continue to provide our students with an outstanding education and services in the coming year.

If you have any questions, please go to the District website [www.unatego.org](http://www.unatego.org) and click the **Business Office** tab, or contact the Business Manager, Patti Loker at [ploker@unatego.stier.org](mailto:ploker@unatego.stier.org) or 607-988-5020, or the Superintendent, David Richards, at [drichards@unatego.stier.org](mailto:drichards@unatego.stier.org) or 607-988-5038.

Thank you for your support,  
*Dr. David S. Richards*  
Superintendent of Schools



### PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, May 2, 2023

### BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

May 8, 2023, 6:00 p.m. at the Jr-Sr High School  
May 9, 2023, 6:00 p.m. at the Unatego Elem. School  
May 10, 2023, 6:00 p.m.—Virtual  
(link will be available on district website)

### BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 16, 2023 — 12:00 Noon to 8:00 p.m.  
Unatego Middle/High School

# RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OPERATIONS

The financial support for district-operated programs and services are substantially derived from state sources and the property tax. The proposed tax levy increase is 1.9% for 2023-2024.

Object	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024 Proposed Budget
NYS Aid	\$ 15,221,230	\$ 14,806,790
Property Tax Levy	\$ 7,530,745	\$ 7,673,829
Other Revenue	\$ 375,800	\$ 436,100
Use of Reserves	\$ 149,832	\$ 329,450
Fund Balance	\$ 525,000	\$ 825,000
<b>Total Anticipated Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 23,802,607</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>

## WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

3-Part Appropriations Summary			
Category	2022-23 Amount	2023-24 Amount	% of Budget
Administrative	\$ 3,089,514	\$ 3,502,007	14.5%
Program	\$ 16,782,933	\$ 17,268,569	71.8%
Capital	\$ 3,930,160	\$ 3,300,593	13.7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 23,802,607</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Administrative:** The Administrative component of the budget includes expenditures for central administrative and support salaries and related costs, Board of Education expenses, legal expenses, business office expenses, and insurance.

**Program:** The program component of the budget includes expenses relating to instruction, including salaries, benefits, textbooks, supplies, transportation, and athletics.

**Capital:** The Capital component of the budget includes custodial salaries and benefits, building maintenance costs and debt service costs.

## COMPARISON OF PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024 Proposed Budget	% Increase
	\$23,802,607	\$24,071,169	1.1%
Object	2022-2023 Budget	2023-2024 Proposed Budget	
Salaries	\$ 8,593,235	\$ 9,190,687	
Benefits	\$ 5,821,391	\$ 5,754,959	
Equipment	\$ 98,000	\$ 213,000	
Contractual Items	\$ 1,286,743	\$ 1,425,533	
Materials & Supplies	\$ 715,132	\$ 801,862	
Tuition	\$ 213,000	\$ 351,243	
Textbooks	\$ 47,823	\$ 44,503	
BOCES Services	\$ 4,714,133	\$ 4,834,132	
Debt Service	\$ 2,263,150	\$ 1,455,250	
Inter-fund transfers	\$ 50,000	\$ 0	
<b>Total General Fund Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 23,802,607</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>	

**ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON  
OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.UNATEGO.ORG](http://WWW.UNATEGO.ORG)**

## PROPOSED TAX LEVY INCREASE IS 1.9%

The proposed Tax Levy increase for our school district is 1.9% for the 2023-24 school year. The proposed budget adopted by the Board of Education results in a tax levy increase that is within the district's allowable 2.2% Tax Levy limit.

The chart below is intended to show an estimate of projected tax increases for homes of different assessed values. Actual tax rates are affected by many factors beyond the school district's control such as Assessed Values, State Equalization Rates, and STAR Exemptions. Actual tax rates will not be set until sometime in August when the state finalizes equalization rates for each of our district's seven townships. The following chart simply displays the amount of a 1.9% increase on varying levels of hypothetical assessed values at Full Market Value.



Home Value (Assessed Value)*	Total Tax Bill		Change**	
	Current	Proposed	Annual	Monthly
\$ 50,000	\$ 972.00	\$ 990.50	\$ 18.50	\$ 1.54
\$ 75,000	\$ 1,458.00	\$ 1,485.75	\$ 27.75	\$ 2.31
\$ 100,000	\$ 1,944.00	\$ 1,981.00	\$ 37.00	\$ 3.08
\$ 150,000	\$ 2,916.00	\$ 2,971.50	\$ 55.50	\$ 4.63

\* Assessed values are shown at 100% of Full Market Value (The Town of Otsego is assessed at Full Value—other district townships are currently assessed at less than full value.

\*\* A monthly amount for the tax changes is provided as a convenience since most home mortgages are set up with a monthly tax escrow feature.

## CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE MAY 2023

We are extremely pleased to announce the first phase of our capital project will start this spring. Approved by district voters in May 2021, Phase I of the \$27.6 million building project was approved by NYSED in late January and The Board of Education has awarded bids to contractors. Phase I includes work at the Unatego Elementary School, the District Transportation Center, and primarily at the Junior-Senior High School.

Work at the Elementary School consists of minor plumbing, electrical, and safety upgrades, installation of a new PA, clock, and fire alarm system, and a monitoring station for wastewater to bring our septic system up to new standards. The focus of construction at the bus garage in Phase I is to replace the 1951 bus lift with a new state-of-the-art lift.

Most of the rest of the project is aimed at the Junior-Senior High School. This June, we will start renovations of the HS auditorium and the boys' and girls' locker rooms. Additional work in Phase I will include a new fire alarm system, roofing replacement, hallway renovations, and asbestos abatement. As the project progresses, additional work will be completed in classroom areas of the 1968 build-

ing. Athletic fields will receive much-needed improvements and the HS auditorium and classroom spaces will be air conditioned by the end of the project as well. Some of the original energy saving components have been moved from the project into an Energy Performance Contract or EPC to offset increasing construction costs.

Following an Energy Audit funded through a NYSERDA grant, much of the energy efficiencies recommended in the original project have been removed included in an Energy Performance Contract, or EPC, which guarantees the energy savings from the improvements will pay for the cost (See **Unatego Embarks on Energy Performance Contract (EPC)** elsewhere in this newsletter.

Once we get through what's left of winter, we are excited to start this amazing project to modernize our facilities, improve safety, and conserve energy. The anticipated completion of the project is September 2025.

Continue to check the District website [www.unatego.org](http://www.unatego.org) for more on both the EPC and Capital Project under the Capital Project tab on the home page for further updates.

## PROPOSITION TO TRANSPORT STUDENTS FROM ¼ MILE FROM THEIR SCHOOL BUILDING ON BALLOT



Currently, in accordance with NYS Law, Unatego is only required to transport students in K-8 who live more than two miles from their school building of attendance and more than three miles for students in grades 9-12. Student safety has long been a major focus at Unatego, and it is well-known that students are safest going to and from school on a bus, driven by highly qualified transportation professionals. In the interest of student safety, the Board of Education recently voted to allow any student living more than ¼ mile from their school to be picked up and dropped off by school bus. However, NYS Law also requires voter approval of such a change. On May 16, 2023, in addition to considering the district budget and electing three school board members, voters will also be asked to vote on the proposition to change pick up and drop off distances to one-quarter mile from the child's school. If you have further questions, you may contact the District Business Office at 607-988-5020 or go to the District Website at [www.unatego.org](http://www.unatego.org) and click on the **Transportation** tab.



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**ANNUAL DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE, ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION, TRANSPORTATION PROPOSITION, AND EPC PROPOSITION**

**Tuesday, May 16, 2023**

**Hours of Voting: 12:00-8:00 p.m.**

**Unatego Jr./Sr. High School, 2641 State Highway 7, Otego, NY**

**Voting Qualifications**

**For the May 16, 2023 Budget Referendum**

In order to vote, a person must fulfill all of the following requirements:

1. Be a citizen of the United States.
2. Be at least 18 years of age.
3. Be a resident within the district for a period of at least 30 days preceding the meeting at which he/she offers to vote.

**Applications for absentee ballots may be obtained at the District Clerk's office from 8:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. The District Clerk can be contacted at 607-988-5038.**

**UNATEGO EMBARKS ON ENERGY PERFORMANCE CONTRACT (EPC)**



As part of our ongoing effort to provide updates to our aging infrastructure and to reduce our carbon footprint, the District has agreed to have energy work done that is guaranteed to pay for itself over a period of time. This project, in conjunction with the ongoing Capital Project, will provide energy savings that will pay for the improvements over a period of 18 years and will require no local contribution from taxpayers.

The scope of the EPC includes work at the Jr-Sr High School consisting of LED lighting, high efficiency propane boilers, digital HVAC controls, and building envelope improvements resulting in approximately \$159,000 annual savings (without building aid) and an 18-year payback period. With state building aid, the District will see a surplus amounting to \$124,226 per year and a simple payback period of 7.5 years.

This project dramatically reduces our dependency on fossil fuels. The EPC will save 179 Metric Tons of CO2 based on electric emissions and 372 Metric Tons of CO2 based on fossil fuel emissions. This is equivalent to removing 143 cars from the road each year. This carbon reduction is equivalent to installing 4.55 acres of solar panels. Energy efficiency is not only good for the environment but saves the district money and acts as a hedge against volatile future energy costs.

Although the Board of Education has determined that this project makes sense without additional aid, they have decided to ask for voter approval which if given, will result in an additional 10% in state aid and provide even more savings to district taxpayers.

On May 17, 2023, in addition to electing board members and voting on the District budget, there will be referendum on the ballot asking voters to approve the EPC, thereby generating an additional 10% in building aid. For additional information, please contact the Unatego District Office at 607-988-5038 or go to the district website, www.unatego.org and click on the 2021 Capital Project tab.