



# UNATEGO

District Newsletter

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

Volume 39, Number 1

Budget Issue, May 2024

## 2024-25 PROPOSED BUDGET SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

*on behalf of the Unatego Board of Education*

Following weeks of uncertainty surrounding the state budget and school aid, the budget was finally approved on the weekend of April 19, and the adopted budget left Unatego receiving the same amount in foundation aid as during the current school year, despite rising costs. Salaries and benefits have increased. In order to better meet the needs of our students, we have picked up the cost of our School Resource Officers, social worker, and LPN, all initially funded by federal COVID relief funds which expire this fall. Overall, our year-to-year budget is up about 6.3%. Much of this increase will be offset through anticipated building aid and use of reserves, resulting in the District asking voter approval for a 2.0% increase in the local tax levy.

The proposed 2024-2025 school year budget is balanced and financially sound, and allows us to continue to offer services and programs to our students, while keeping the levy increase within the state-mandated tax cap. Unatego has been at or under the state tax cap for each of the past ten years, despite significant cost increases. We will continue to offer Advanced Placement (AP) and college level courses to our high school students, Middle Schoolers are offered advanced coursework in Math, Science, and Foreign Languages, and elementary students are provided with a variety of extracurricular opportunities both during and after the school day. Our on-going voter-approved capital project and Energy Performance Contract (EPC) are serving to modernize our facilities and allowing students to have access to the most up-to-date technology available. We are also in the process of securing an agreement with Bassett Healthcare to provide a School Based Health Center at the Jr-Sr High School, which would provide medical, dental, and mental health services for our students. We continue to offer free breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of income, and provide school safety through our SRO's.

In addition to voting on the proposed school budget, qualified district residents will be asked to choose three board members as well as consider a proposition to add a student as a non-voting member of the Board of Education.

For more information on the Capital Project and EPC, see the **Capital Project Update** in this newsletter.

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 7, 2024

### BUDGET PRESENTATION

May 15, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. at the Unatego  
Middle/High School Auditorium

### BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 21, 2024 — 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 2.0% for 2024-2025.

Object	2023-2024 Budget	2024-2025 Proposed Budget
NYS Aid	\$ 14,806,790	\$ 16,030,783
Property Tax Levy	\$ 7,673,829	\$ 7,827,306
Other Revenue, including tuition	\$ 436,100	\$ 507,800
Use of Reserves	\$ 329,450	\$ 525,260
Fund Balance	\$ 825,000	\$ 825,000
<b>Total Anticipated Revenues</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>	<b>\$ 25,716,149</b>

## WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

3-Part Appropriations Summary			
Category	2023-24 Amount	2024-25 Amount	% of Budget
Administrative	\$ 3,502,007	\$ 3,541,281	13.7%
Program	\$ 17,268,569	\$ 17,760,687	69.1%
Capital	\$ 3,300,593	\$ 4,414,181	17.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>	<b>\$ 25,716,149</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

2023-2024 Budget	2024-2025 Proposed Budget	% Increase
\$24,071,169	\$25,716,149	6.83%

Object	2023-2024 Proposed Budget	2024-2025 Proposed Budget
Salaries	\$ 9,190,687	\$ 9,818,754
Benefits	\$ 5,754,959	\$ 5,586,774
Equipment	\$ 213,000	\$ 118,455
Contractual Items	\$ 1,425,533	\$ 1,506,694
Materials & Supplies	\$ 801,862	\$ 847,195
Tuition	\$ 351,243	\$ 245,000
Textbooks	\$ 44,503	\$ 45,959
BOCES Services	\$ 4,834,132	\$ 4,959,015
Debt Service	\$ 1,455,250	\$ 2,588,303
<b>Total General Fund Expenditures</b>	<b>\$ 24,071,169</b>	<b>\$ 25,716,149</b>

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



## PROPOSED TAX LEVY INCREASE IS 2.0%

The proposed Tax Levy increase for our school district is 2.0% for the 2024-25 school year. The proposed budget adopted by the Board of Education results in a tax levy increase that is within the district’s allowable 2.05% 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 2.0% 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	\$ 1,011.00	\$ 1,031.00	\$ 20.00	\$ 1.67
\$ 75,000	\$ 1,516.00	\$ 1,546.00	\$ 30.00	\$ 2.50
\$ 100,000	\$ 2,022.00	\$ 2,062.00	\$ 40.00	\$ 3.33
\$ 150,000	\$ 3,033.00	\$ 3,093.00	\$ 60.00	\$ 5.00

\* 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.



*UPK students are enjoying the new piece of playground equipment that was purchased with grant funds*



## CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE MAY 2024

Work on Phase I of our \$27.6 million capital project is proceeding in a timely manner and is on track to be completed by this September. A new fire alarm system is being installed at both the Elementary and Jr-Sr High School buildings. Other work scheduled for the Elementary school is nearly complete. Major pieces of the project at the Jr-Sr High School, also nearing completion, include a renovated auditorium and locker rooms. We expect work on a multi-purpose athletic field to be completed by fall as well.

Phase II plans are waiting state approval, which we anticipate will happen in time to start that work this summer as well. Phase II includes classroom renovations at the Jr-Sr High School, site work, parking lots, and creation of space for a Bassett School Based Health Center.

In addition to the original scope of the project, work will begin this spring on an Energy Performance Contract or EPC. The \$2.8 million EPC includes installation of LED lighting, high efficiency propane boilers, digital energy management systems, and building envelope enhancements.

We anticipate all phases of the much-needed project, including the EPC, to be completed by September of 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.







## BOARD CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHIES

### Matthew Downey

My name is Matthew Downey, a graduate of Unatego CSD class of 2007. I have an undergraduate degree in Music Education and a master's degree in Classical Guitar Performance from SUNY Fredonia. I currently work with Bainbridge Guilford CSD as the Music Department Chair, High School Choir/General Music Instructor, and Drama Club Director. I have been working as an educator for nine years now while engaged in small private music business teaching lessons, tuning pianos, and performing. I have served as the Treasurer of the Classical Guitar Society of Upstate New York, a local non-profit arts organization, for the past eight years. I also work at SUNY Oneonta teaching Classical Guitar group and private lessons.

Unatego has always been important to me, and I have followed my interests in music from the classroom of Unatego to my present jobs. The past three years on the Board of Education has been a great experience and I want to continue to invest time in my own local community and help students with their education. It would be an honor to serve another three years on the Unatego Board of Education.

### Janette Johnson

As my first term on the Unatego School Board of Education ends, my priorities remain focused on Education, Transparency and Budget. I am running for re-election to continue to be an advocate and voice for the students, parents, and community members. I remain committed to a vision focused on providing polices that will improve student achievement for all children. I will help provide clear communication between the board of education and the public while ensuring we maintain the fiscal responsibility and budget appropriately. As a local business owner and parent of students in the district I believe my leadership abilities, entrepreneurial skills, analytical skills and respect for the community will support my effectiveness.

### Jim Salisbury

An Otego resident since 1978, is currently on the School Board since September 2014 having served previously 1989-1999, is seeking to be re-elected for another term. Jim retired as a Vice President and CFO from a banking career spanning forty-five years. Most of those years were spent in accounting, budgeting and control. Jim, also served on the Hoosic Valley Central School Board 1969-1978. He currently is a Trustee in the Village of Otego and has been since the year 2000. He is a member of the Oneonta Rotary since 1979 having served as Treasurer for twenty-seven years and being President for one year. Jim's two adult children are graduates of the Unatego School. He has one grandchild currently attending Unatego, and two who graduated. He would like to continue to serve the Unatego School District to ensure that all students can obtain an education that will prepare them for the future.





## PROPOSITION-STUDENT BOARD MEMBER

This year, voters of the Unatego School District will be asked to consider adding a student member to the school board in an *ex-officio* capacity. The student board member, who would be chosen by one of a variety of methods but not by public vote, would sit with the board at meetings and participate in discussion, but would not be allowed to vote or to attend executive sessions of the Board.





**Unatego Central School District**  
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**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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 David Clapper, Vice President  
 Brian Davis  
 Matthew Downey  
 Janette Johnson  
 Jilene Nordberg  
 Cindy O'Hara

**SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS**

Dr. David S. Richards

**DISTRICT CLERK**

Sheila Nolan

**BUSINESS MANAGER**

Patricia Loker

**CURRENT RESIDENT OR**

**ECRWSS  
 POSTAL PATRON**

**ANNUAL DISTRICT BUDGET VOTE, ELECTION OF MEMBERS TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION,  
 AND STUDENT BOARD MEMBER PROPOSITION**

**TUESDAY, MAY 21, 2024**

**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 21, 2024  
 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.**

