



UNATEGO

District Newsletter

www.unatego.org

Volume 40, Number 2

Budget Issue, May 2025

2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

on behalf of the Unatego Board of Education

As I write this article, the NYS budget is now sixteen days late. As Unatego is dependent on State Aid for more than 60% of our revenue, we are forced to make an educated guess as to State Aid, and are dependent on the Governor's proposed budget, where we are slated for a 2% increase. However, our expenses have increased more than that. Salaries and benefits have gone up, as have materials, supplies, and health insurance costs. We continue to meet the increasing needs of our students by maintaining two School Resource Officers, and a social worker. Overall, our year-to-year budget is up about 2.36%. Much of this increase will be offset through anticipated building aid and use of reserves but will require the District to ask voter approval for a 2.0% increase in the local tax levy.

We recently completed Phase I of the voter-approved \$27.6 million capital project and the entire \$2.8 million Energy Performance Contract (EPC). Phase II will be completed by this fall, with Phase III still in the planning stages. For more information on the Capital Project and EPC, see photos and the separate article in this newsletter.

This year's proposed school budget is balanced, fiscally sound, and allows us to continue to offer important services and programs to our students, while keeping the tax increase under the state-mandated cap. High School students can take 22 college and 6 Advanced Placement (AP) classes at no cost to them and their families. Each year, some of our students earn enough college credits for an Associate's Degree as they graduate with a High School diploma. 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. As part of our on-going project, we have refurbished a space in the Junior-Senior High School to house a Bassett School Based Health Center which will offer medical, dental, and mental health services to our students at no cost. We continue to offer no-cost breakfast and lunch to all students, regardless of income, and keep our students and staff safe with highly qualified SRO's assigned to each building. We believe this year's proposed school budget balances the needs of our students with the ability of our community to support those needs.

The annual Budget vote is May 20 at the District Office from noon until 8:00 PM. In addition to voting on the proposed school budget, qualified district residents will be asked to choose one board member. Also on the ballot will be a request to increase the tax levy for the Harris Memorial Library by \$13,062.

For more information on the Capital Project and EPC, see the **Capital Project Update** in this newsletter. For more on the library tax, see **A Message from the Harris Memorial Library**, also in this newsletter.

If you have any questions, please go to the district website www.unatego.org and click the Business Office tab, or contact the Business Manager, Patti Loker, at ploker@unatego.stier.org or 607-988-5020, or the Superintendent, David Richards, at drichards@unatego.stier.org or 607-988-5038.

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



PUBLIC HEARING

Tuesday, May 6, 2025
6:30 p.m.

BUDGET VOTE

Tuesday, May 20, 2025
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 2025-2026.

Object	2024-2025 Budget	2025-2026 Proposed Budget
NYS Aid	\$ 16,030,783	\$ 16,096,676
Property Tax Levy	\$ 7,827,306	\$ 7,983,852
Other Revenue, including tuition	\$ 507,800	\$ 665,300
Use of Reserves	\$ 525,260	\$ 753,237
Fund Balance	\$ 825,000	\$ 825,000
Total Anticipated Revenues	\$ 25,716,149	\$ 26,324,065

WHERE DOES THE MONEY GO?

3-Part Appropriations Summary			
Category	2024-25 Amount	2025-26 Amount	% of Budget
Administrative	\$ 3,541,281	\$ 3,816,190	14.5%
Program	\$ 17,760,687	\$ 17,897,010	68.0%
Capital	\$ 4,414,181	\$ 4,610,865	17.5%
Total	\$ 25,716,149	\$ 26,324,065	100%

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

2024-2025 Budget	2025-2026 Proposed Budget	% Increase
\$25,716,149	\$26,324,065	2.36%

Object	2024-2025 Proposed Budget	2025-2026 Proposed Budget
Salaries	\$ 9,818,754	\$ 9,765,046
Benefits	\$ 5,586,774	\$ 5,613,912
Equipment	\$ 118,455	\$ 108,354
Contractual Items	\$ 1,506,694	\$ 1,775,635
Materials & Supplies	\$ 847,195	\$ 998,794
Tuition	\$ 245,000	\$ 265,000
Textbooks	\$ 45,959	\$ 43,746
BOCES Services	\$ 4,959,015	\$ 5,049,953
Debt Service	\$ 2,588,303	\$ 2,703,625
Total General Fund Expenditures	\$ 25,716,149	\$ 26,324,065

**ADDITIONAL BUDGET INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND ON
OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.UNATEGO.ORG**

PROPOSED TAX LEVY INCREASE IS 2.0%

The proposed Tax Levy increase for our school district is 2.0% for the 2025-26 school year. The proposed budget adopted by the Board of Education results in a tax levy increase that is within the district's allowable 2.02% 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	\$ 1,031	\$ 1,052	\$ 21	\$ 1.75
\$ 75,000	\$ 1,546	\$ 1,577	\$ 31	\$ 2.58
\$ 100,000	\$ 2,062	\$ 2,103	\$ 41	\$ 3.42
\$ 150,000	\$ 3,093	\$ 3,155	\$ 62	\$ 5.17

* 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 2025

Work on Phase I of our \$27.6 million capital project is complete and includes significant upgrades to the district infrastructure. Phase I work included new fire alarm systems at Unatego Elementary and the Jr-Sr High School. Additional work at Unatego Elementary included some classroom renovations, HVAC and plumbing repair, and a newly resurfaced parking lot. At the Jr-Sr High School, completed work includes a newly renovated auditorium and locker rooms. Work on a multi-purpose athletic field was completed this past fall as well. Needed work was completed at the Bus Garage as was replacement roofing over some sections of the Jr-Sr High School. Hallway renovation and asbestos abatement were completed as well. Also finished since last spring was a \$2.8 million Energy Performance Contract, or EPC.

The \$2.8 million EPC at the Jr-Sr High School, completed this past fall, includes LED lighting, high efficiency propane boilers, digital energy management systems, and building envelope enhancements, which are guaranteed to provide energy savings that will pay for the improvements in less than 7½ years.

Phase II, started last summer, includes classroom renovations at the Jr-Sr High School, site work, park-

ing lot resurfacing, and creation of space for a Bassett School Based Health Center. The antiquated HVAC system there is being replaced with new unit ventilation and digital controls, which will provide even heat and air conditioning throughout the building. The remainder of the work from Phase II will be completed by this fall.

At this time, there are enough funds left from the first two phases to design a Phase III to address items that couldn't be included in the original project. Phase III, which hopes to address needed improvements to the HS gym, roofing, refinishing additional areas at the Elementary and Jr-Sr High Schools, and purchase and installation of new interior doors at the Elementary building. We hope to receive state approval for Phase III by early August and anticipate completion of that scope of work by the end of the year.

We plan on an open-house for the Unatego community in late summer/early fall to show off our improved facilities! Watch our website and social media for more information!

Continue to check the District website www.unatego.org for more on the Capital Project under the Capital Project tab on the

home page for further updates.





BOARD CANDIDATE BIOGRAPHY

Jilene Nordberg

My name is Jilene Nordberg, and I am running for a second term on the Unatego Central School Board of Education. I am a lifelong resident of Unadilla, where I currently live with my husband and two children, who attend Unatego. I graduated from Unatego in 2000. I received my Bachelor's Degree from Hartwick College and my Master's Degree and Certificate of Advanced Study in School Counseling from SUNY Oneonta. I have been a high school counselor in a local school district for the past 19 years.

I have truly enjoyed the last three years serving my first term on the school board. It has been a true privilege to celebrate the successes of our students and staff and to be part of the process of planning for the future. My sincere interest is in maintaining and creating opportunities for our students through creativity and thinking outside of the box. There are always new challenges in education, and I am hopeful that we can continue to work together to face those challenges for our children. I look forward to being a representative of the community and the district that will always seek to put our students first. Thank you for your support!



PROPOSITION-LIBRARY TAX LEVY

A Message from Harris Memorial Library

Dear Community,

Harris Memorial Library has seen significant growth in community use, with more visitors, programs, and services than ever before. To continue meeting these needs and keeping pace with rising costs, Harris Memorial Library is requesting an increase in funding through the Unatego School District Library Tax Levy this year. Please be aware that Unadilla Public Library is not requesting an increase in their allocation.

This funding helps keep our doors open six days a week, supports programs for all ages, and ensures we can continue offering valuable resources to the community. The proposed adjustment will help maintain library operations, support educational programs, and ensure continued access to valuable resources for all residents.

The current annual levy to residents of the Unatego School District is \$85,000. We have proposed an increase of \$13,062 to the total levy, making the new amount \$98,062. This increase in cost to residents of the Unatego Central School District would be an average of \$4.00 per household for every \$100,000 of your property's full value. Unadilla will receive \$30,000 (no increase from prior years) and

Harris Memorial Library will receive \$68,062 (an increase of \$13,062 from prior years). This increase is at pace with the roughly 24% cumulative inflation since the 2019 levy was requested.

Since 2019, our number of daily visits has increased by 69.4% and our library is now open 6 days a week. In 2024, the use value of our library totaled \$119,093.20, an average value of \$43.21 per resident of our community. We hosted more than 1,500 attendees at more than 180 events, including 466 children at our 58 summer programming events for local children. These funds will help continue these increasing benefits and keep pace with rising costs.

For more information call Harris Memorial Library at 988-6661, leave your name and phone number, a library trustee will contact you.

It is your library, your community! Thank you for being part of our library's story and future.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees
of Harris Memorial Library,
Sarah Livingston
President, Board of Trustees
Harris Memorial Library





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 Janette Johnson
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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 LIBRARY TAX LEVY

TUESDAY, MAY 20, 2025

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 20, 2025 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.

