



CATO-MERIDIAN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT



BUDGET EDITION 2024

DEAR RESIDENT:

The details of the proposed 2024-2025 school budget are included in this newsletter. The total budget of \$23,805,174 represents a \$133,121 decrease. We have two propositions for you to consider this school year.

Proposition One is our school budget in the amount of \$23,805,174, which includes a 1.94% local tax levy increase. **The 1.94% local tax levy is under our calculated 4.18% tax cap.**

Proposition Two is the purchase of two large school buses and one (1) small wheelchair bus. The purchase of the buses allows the district to continue our 8-year bus replacement plan. The 8-year plan allows us to keep our entire bus fleet under warranty. All costs of these buses and student transport vehicles are estimated to a maximum cost of \$437,970, minus any trade-in value. The costs for these purchases are up to 90% New York State Aideable.

We hope the residents of the Cato-Meridian School District will support both school budget propositions. Please consider supporting the 2024-2025 school budget and our propositions. We, the Cato-Meridian Board of Education, believe that this budget represents a balance between educational opportunities for our students, supports future enhancements of our facilities, as well as remaining fiscally responsible to our taxpayers.

Please review the enclosed information and feel free to ask for any necessary clarification. Dr. Terry Ward, Superintendent of Schools; Elizabeth Kupiec, Assistant Superintendent for Business; or any Board of Education member will be happy to answer any questions or address any concerns that you may have.

The school budget presentation will be on Monday, May 13, 2024 at 6:30 PM in the Round Table Cafeteria in the Elementary School. The budget presentation will be recorded and posted to our website. You can access the presentation by going to our school website (www.catomeridian.org) and click on District, Board of Education, Online Meetings. More importantly, the budget vote and election will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2024 between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM in the Round Table Cafeteria in the Elementary School.

As always, we welcome your support for our district and the students we serve. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Kathleen Bratt, Board President

Mrs. Kristin Cox, Board Member

Mrs. Jenny Kyle, Board Member

Mr. Nathan Wallace, Board Member

Mr. Timothy Hulbert, Board Vice-President

Mr. Harmon Kent III, Board Member

Mr. Michael Lees, Board Member

2024-25 SCHOOL BUDGET KEY DATES

Budget Hearing

Monday, May 13, 2024

6:30 PM

Elementary School Cafeteria

Budget Vote

Tuesday, May 21, 2024

8 AM to 8 PM

Elementary School Cafeteria

2024-25 Propositions

PROPOSITION #1

Shall the Board of Education be authorized and directed to expend the sum of \$23,805,174 for General Fund appropriation.

PROPOSITION #2

Resolved that the Board of Education of the Cato-Meridian Central School District is hereby authorized to undertake the acquisition of two (2) large school buses and one (1) small wheelchair bus, all at an estimated maximum aggregate cost of \$437,970, less trade-in value, if any, and that such costs, or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall be raised by the levy of a tax to be collected in annual installments; and, in anticipation of such tax, debt obligations of the school district as may be necessary not to exceed \$437,970 shall be issued, or the School District may enter into an installment purchase contract if the Board of Education determines that it is in the best interest of the School District to finance the purchase in that method.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOTERS:

- 1 A citizen of the United States
- 2 At least 18 years of age
- 3 A resident of the district at least 30 days prior to the date of the vote



THREE-COMPONENT BUDGET 2024-2025

	2023-2024	2024-2025	\$ Change	% Change
Board of Education	\$41,850	\$41,094	-\$756	-1.81%
Central Administration	\$264,264	\$267,687	\$3,423	1.30%
Finance	\$326,508	\$339,152	\$12,644	3.87%
Legal	\$51,000	\$55,000	\$4,000	7.84%
Personnel	\$45,500	\$48,000	\$2,500	5.49%
Public Information	\$75,810	\$83,650	\$7,840	10.34%
Central Services	\$96,500	\$84,550	-\$11,950	-12.38%
Supervision	\$601,500	\$591,500	-\$10,000	-1.66%
Special Programs	\$67,000	\$42,000	-\$25,000	-37.31%
Special Items	\$296,124	\$318,239	\$22,115	7.47%
Benefits	\$386,307	\$388,092	\$1,785	0.46%

ADMINISTRATION TOTAL: \$2,252,363 2023-2024 \$2,258,964 2024-2025 \$6,601 \$ Change 0.29% % Change

	2023-2024	2024-2025	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$80,000	\$85,000	\$5,000	6.25%
Teaching -- Regular School	\$5,910,425	\$5,734,656	-\$175,769	-2.97%
Teaching -- SWD	\$2,446,537	\$2,534,614	\$88,077	3.60%
OCC. Ed.	\$818,203	\$1,020,816	\$202,613	24.76%
Special Schools	\$66,500	\$42,000	-\$24,500	-36.84%
School Library & Audio Visual	\$1,167,889	\$1,044,986	-\$122,903	-10.52%
Pupil Personnel	\$608,830	\$599,611	-\$9,219	-1.51%
Co-Curricular	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$0	0.00%
Interscholastic Activities	\$387,712	\$377,741	-\$9,971	-2.57%
Pupil Transportation	\$1,337,442	\$1,365,976	\$28,534	2.13%
Benefits	\$3,857,392	\$3,751,436	-\$105,956	-2.75%

INSTRUCTION TOTAL: \$16,770,930 2023-2024 \$16,646,836 2024-2025 -\$124,094 \$ Change -0.74% % Change

	2023-2024	2024-2025	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$1,814,715	\$1,866,601	\$51,886	2.86%
Special Items	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0	0.00%
Benefits	\$310,200	\$316,927	\$6,727	2.17%
Debt Service	\$2,688,087	\$2,613,846	-\$74,241	-2.76%
Transfer to Capital	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0	0.00%

CAPITAL TOTAL: \$4,915,002 2023-2024 \$4,899,374 2024-2025 -\$15,628 \$ Change -0.32% % Change

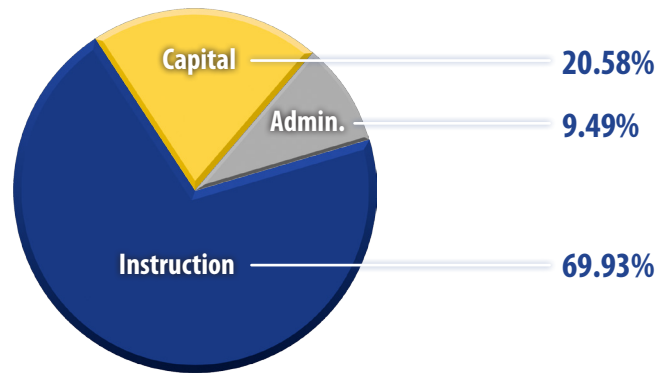
TOTAL BUDGET: \$23,938,295 2023-2024 \$23,805,174 2024-2025 -\$133,121 \$ Change -0.56% % Change

2024-25 THREE-COMPONENT BREAK DOWN

Administrative Component: Salaries and benefits, as well as all other costs to operate the central district services and each school's main office and cover Board of Education expenses.

Instructional Component: Funding for all K-12 educational programs, including teacher and support staff salaries and benefits, BOCES special education and instructional services, interscholastic athletics and transportation.

Capital Component: Cleaning and maintaining district facilities, including salaries, benefits, service contracts, utilities, materials and supplies, capital outlay projects and debt service.



2024-2025 PROPOSED REVENUES

Description	2023-2024	2024-2025	Difference	% Change
Real Property Tax Levy	\$6,404,945	\$6,529,201	\$124,256	1.94%
Foundation Aid	\$10,677,764	\$10,677,764	\$0	0.00%
BOCES	\$1,713,079	\$1,850,000	\$136,921	7.99%
Building Aid	\$1,887,288	\$1,791,817	-\$95,471	-5.06%
High Cost Excess Aid	\$355,020	\$275,121	-\$79,899	-22.51%
Private Excess Aid	\$39,613	\$39,937	\$324	0.82%
Transportation Aid W/O Summer	\$1,476,313	\$1,500,000	\$23,687	1.60%
Hardware & Software Aid	\$15,805	\$15,344	-\$461	-2.92%
Software, Library, Textbook Aid	\$63,741	\$65,990	\$2,249	3.53%
Medicaid	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	0.00%
Rent/Fees/Unclassified	\$275,000	\$335,000	\$60,000	21.82%
Unemployment Reserve	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	100.00%
Retirement Reserve	\$0	\$300,000	\$300,000	100.00%
Fund Balance	\$250,000	\$100,000	-\$150,000	-60.00%
TOTAL REVENUE:	\$23,233,568	\$23,805,174	\$571,606	2.46%

\$100K CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECT

The 2024-2025 budget includes \$100,000 for a capital outlay project. This type of project is eligible for NYSED Building Aid reimbursement in the school year following completion. This allows the district to address facility needs between major construction projects. This year we are proposing one of the below areas of improvement which will be determined by the Facility Committee.

1. Elementary Infrastructure Upgrades
2. Jr.-Sr. High School Gym Upgrades
3. Bus Garage Improvements
4. Jr.-Sr. High School Infrastructure Upgrades

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

Qualified school district voters may vote in the Annual School District Election and Budget Vote by absentee ballot if they are unable to vote in person on Tuesday, May 21, 2024. Individuals who may use an absentee ballot include those who are temporary or permanently ill (temporarily illness includes being unable to appear due to risk of contracting or spreading a communicable disease like COVID-19), hospitalized, physically disabled, away on business, on vacation or who are detained in jail awaiting action by grand jury, awaiting trial or confined for an offense other than a felony.

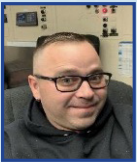
Applications for an absentee ballot are available in the district office and may be filed up to one day prior to the date of the vote. Absentee ballot applications may be requested from Gwendolyn Marriam, District Clerk, by email at gmarriam@catomeridian.org, by telephone at 315-626-3439, extension 5001, or by mail at Cato-Meridian Central School District, 2851 State Route 370, Cato, NY 13033.

When will your absentee ballot be sent to you? If you request on your application that your absentee ballot be mailed to you, the district clerk will mail your ballot by regular mail no later than 6 days prior to the election. Otherwise, the district clerk will deliver your ballot to you or your agent, as designated on your application, when you or your agent appears in the district clerk's office. For your ballot to be canvassed, it must be received by the school district clerk by 5:00 p.m. on the day of the election.

BOARD CANDIDATE BIOS | VOTE FOR 2

There are two (2) vacancies on the Board of Education that shall be voted upon at the annual budget vote and election on Tuesday, May 21, 2024, each for a three-year term commencing July 1, 2024 and concluding June 30, 2027. These vacancies arise from the expiration of the terms of current Board members Jenny Kyle and Michael Lees. The four candidates for these seats are: John Simons, Amanda Vallee, Eric Peckham, Jenny Kyle.

The Cato-Meridian Board of Education is composed of seven board members elected by the voters of this school district. Terms of office are for three years. Board members receive no salary. As representatives of the New York State government, the Board has a legal responsibility to provide for the proper education of children living in the district. Exercising this responsibility includes developing a budget, which will adequately support the school and its programs.



JOHN SIMONS: Hello Cato-Meridian. I am John Simons, a 2000 Cato-Meridian graduate. My wife and I have three children in the school district ranging from elementary to the Junior-Senior High School. I am a senior plant operator with Brookfield Renewable Energy's East Syracuse Co-Generation energy plant. I served my country as a United States Marine. Now I would like the to serve our community as the newest school board member. My vision is to better represent the Cato-Meridian School District community, students, and employees. If elected I will ensure that the school district is responsive to the values, beliefs and priorities of the community while making ethical and responsible decisions on your behalf. Thank you to everyone for their continued support.



AMANDA VALLEE: My name is Amanda Vallee. I am the mother of two amazing daughters Adalyn Vallee, age 9 and Abigail Vallee, age 12. My daughter Adalyn attends the elementary school and my daughter Abigail attends the JR/SR High School.

I graduated from SUNY Oneonta with a bachelor's of science degree in Psychology. Over the past 15 years I have been an employee with Lifetime Benefits Solutions where I have held many roles within the organization such as Claims Adjuster, Business Analyst, System and Business Implementation Liaison and Supervisor. My current role within the organization is the Manager of the COBRA and Premium Billing Department where I also oversee a department of 18 people over multiple locations.

I moved to Cato-Meridian School District in 2008 after meeting my husband Adam who is a Cato Alumni. I am a current board member for Cato-Meridian Otters Team and the Cato-Meridian Rec Center Foundation Board where I hold the position of Treasurer for both boards. I am also an alternate board member on the Town of Cato Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals. I also recently accepted the position of Code Enforcer Clerk for the Town of Cato.

I am running for school board to bring forth meaningful change while hold our school administration accountable. I want to ensure our teachers have the resources they need to provide the best education possible to our children. I also want to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being used appropriately and the funds are truly going to the Children. I want to be voice for those that feel they don't have a voice in this district.



ERIC PECKHAM: I am a 2003 alumni and a 2007 graduate from SUNY University at Buffalo with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. I have been a resident of this community for the last 33 years. My wife, Karen and I have two children (ages 9 & 6) who attend Cato Meridian, so I understand firsthand the importance of providing a quality education for our kids. I am running for school board because I feel I can utilize what I have learned in my professional career to continue to improve Cato-Meridian Schools.

I am currently a Manufacturing Engineering Manager at Belden, Inc. I collaborate with various departments to enhance efficiency and drive continuous improvement throughout the company. During my career I have managed many capital projects, and I am currently managing a global capital budget with Belden. I also oversee and mentor young engineers and skilled trades people through our co-op and apprenticeship programs.

I am currently on the Board of Directors for CNY Works (Onondaga County's workforce development agency). I am a member of two Syracuse School District technical education steering committees. My involvement in these programs gives me a unique perspective on what larger local schools are doing.

I am a member of the Cato Trailblazers Snowmobile Club and have been teaching the snowmobile safety course for the last 10 years. I have been a Cato Youth Soccer coach for the last five years and a Cato Youth Basketball/CCYO coach for the last 3 years.

I am passionate about STEM, sports, and providing our kids with the resources they need to succeed. I believe in practical, common-sense solutions. I will push for transparency; accountability and I am not afraid to ask the hard questions. I look forward to helping make Cato-Meridian the excellent school I know it can be. I hope to earn your support and vote in the upcoming election. Thank you for your consideration.



JENNY KYLE: I'm a mother of 5 Children (Ages 16, 14, 11, 7, and 4). My husband Chuck and I own and operate Kyle Farms which is a crop farm and Preferred Grain Systems which is a Grain Handling, Tillage Tool and Animal Handling dealership right here in Cato, NY. I was born and raised in Northern Michigan on a dairy farm. I came to New York in 2001 to finish up my undergrad at Cornell University in Animal Science and Agri-Business. Cornell is where I met my husband. I remember when we were dating, he said, "I want our children to attend school in the Cato-Meridian School District." I quickly learned why he said that and he couldn't have been more right. Just don't tell him I said that!

I believe anything you do in life you have to know your why. What are the things that put that fire in your step? When you know your why in life, that is when you are able to serve at your maximum potential. So, what is Jenny Kyle's why? I choose to serve on the Cato-Meridian School Board because I have a love for education and children. Education is huge! To me it opens up so many opportunities and possibilities for children and helps to prepare them for their adult lives. We as community members have an obligation to make sure every single child has the best education our community can afford. I am proud of our school, the students, staff, and the community members that make up our district. I am honored to be a part of making Cato-Meridian School District the best school district in New York State.

Dr. Terry Ward
Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education

Kathleen Bratt, *President*
Timothy Hulbert, *Vice President*
Kristin Cox
Harmon Kent III
Jenny Kyle
Michael Lees
Nathan Wallace

Cato-Meridian Central School District
2851 State Route 370
Cato, NY 13033
315.626.3439
www.catomeridian.org

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 11
Cato, NY 13033

Current Resident



**Estimated Basic STAR
Exemption Savings***

**Under the Budget Proposed
for the 2024-25 School Year,
the Estimated Basic
STAR Savings:**

\$445

STAR is New York State's School Tax Relief program that provides a partial exemption from school property taxes for owner-occupied, primary residences such as homes, condominiums, farm homes. In effect since January 1997, Senior citizens age 65 or older whose incomes do not exceed \$90,550 are eligible for the enhanced STAR exemption. Senior citizens who have not enrolled in the Income Verification Program must apply each year for the Enhanced STAR program. For all other homeowners the original application for the Basic STAR exemption automatically renews each year as long as they own their home. Homeowners that have not purchased a new home have the option to switch to the STAR credit no later than June 17, 2024.

**School District Budget Notice
Overall Budget Proposal**

	Budget Adopted for the 2023-2024 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2024-2025 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2024-2025 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 23,938,295	\$ 23,805,174	\$23,509,111
Increase/Decrease for the 2024-2025 School Year		\$ (133,121)	\$ (296,063)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		(.56) %	(1.24)%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		4.12%	
A. Proposed tax levy to support the total budgeted amount	\$ 6,404,945	\$ 6,529,201	
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)	\$ 6,404,945	\$ 6,529,201	\$ 6,404,945
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$ 426,404	\$ 369,100	
G. School tax levy limit, <u>excluding</u> levy for permissible exclusions	\$ 5,978,541	\$ 6,160,176	
H. Total proposed tax levy for school purposes, <u>excluding</u> permissible exclusions and levy for library debt, plus prior year tax cap reserve (E - B - F + D)	\$ 5,978,541	\$ 6,160,176	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative value requires 60.0% voter approval - See note below regarding separate propositions) **	\$ 0	\$ 0	
Administrative component	\$ 2,252,363	\$ 2,258,964	\$ 2,260,364
Program component	\$ 16,770,930	\$ 16,646,836	\$ 16,483,666
Capital component	\$ 4,915,002	\$ 4,899,374	\$ 4,805,415