At a Special meeting on May 19, 2020, the Rhinebeck Board of Education adopted a proposed budget of $36,182,065 for the 2020-21 school year. The proposed expenditure plan represents a budget-to-budget increase of 3.36% over the current year's budget. **The proposed 2020-21 budget will increase the tax levy by 2.93%, an increase that is $68,815 below the District's tax levy limit of 3.16%, and well below the requirements of New York State's tax levy cap legislation.** According to that legislation, a simple majority of the voters (50% + 1) is required for passage.

As written and adopted by the Legislature and signed by the Governor, §2023-a of the Education Law sets forth the formula that school districts must use to calculate their respective tax levy limits. The tax levy cap limit, or in the simplified term used in numerous media reports, the “2% tax cap,” is not accurate. The “allowable tax levy limit,” as defined in the law, is the product of a complex formula that includes some of the following factors and the associated percentage or dollar increase/decrease to the RCSD tax levy limit such as:

- Inflation Factor (1.81%), capped the less of CPI or 2.00%, which every is lower
- Tax base growth factor (1.10% in RCSD)
- Change in Payments in Lieu of Taxes (-$1,317)
- Capital Local Expenditures (+$96,516)

Given these variables, the allowable tax levy limit will differ from one school district to another and, in many cases, may exceed the 2% so popular in press reports.

For the Rhinebeck Central School District, the allowable tax levy limit for the 2020-21 school year is 3.16%, based on the formula set forth in the provisions of §2023-a. The Rhinebeck Central School District Board of Education is proposing a 2.93% tax levy increase which $68,815 below our allowable tax levy limit.

The State-required Budget Hearing was held at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, May 26, 2020, online virtually, via Zoom. Voting on the 2020-21 budget, as well as to fill two (2) three-year vacancies on the Board of Education, will be held via absentee ballot, with absentee ballots to be mailed to all voters registered to cast them in school district elections. Absentee ballots must be returned by mail and received by the school district no later than 5:00 pm on Tuesday, June 9, 2020.

Budget planning for 2020-21, even in the current uncertain economic climate, continues to provide:

- effective student-teacher ratios in the District’s elementary, middle, and high school;
- ongoing local curriculum development and professional training initiatives to reinforce rigorous academic standards for all students; and
- resources for increased student and staff access to technology to enhance teaching and learning, including a 1:1 computing program for every secondary-level student for use in school and at home.

The District is committed to maintaining a wide variety of opportunities for student engagement and success, both within and outside the classroom, through careful assessment of how these programs support student learning. Local and regional programs at all grade levels will continue with the ongoing approval of the community.

The Board also acknowledges the ongoing support of community groups, including the
Rhinebeck PTSO, the Rhinebeck Science Foundation, and CultureConnect, whose work helps to enrich the educational experiences of Rhinebeck students in so many diverse and meaningful ways.

The school district’s cumulative K-12 successes are evidenced, again this year with the continuation of many years of recognized excellence, by a number of outcomes:

- over 90% of Rhinebeck students graduate each year, and more than 90% of those diploma recipients indicate post-graduation plans that include two-year or four-year college attendance;
- Rhinebeck High School again this year has been recognized by US News and World Report as one of the “Best High Schools” in New York State and in the United States; and
- The New York State Education Department has recognized the school district by designating it again this year as a "Reward" school this year for academic improvement and achievement.
Board of Education Openings – In terms of Board of Education member representation, incumbent Jaclyn Savolainen and community member Megan Barbera have submitted petitions for election to the two (2) Board of Education seats that are open this year, each for a three year term. These choices will be included on the June 9th ballot, along with the 2020-21 school budget proposal.

The Vote - If approved by a simple majority (50% + 1) of the voters on June 9th, this proposed budget will continue to provide high quality educational and extracurricular experiences for the community’s children. New York State has not yet decided or informed school districts about the details of a second vote, which is required and provided by current law, in the event that the budget is not approved by the District’s registered voters. Therefore, it is not yet clear what the outcome will be for the school district in the event that the budget does not pass. However, if a revote is not permitted, the failure of the budget vote to be approved by the voters may result in a contingency budget, which would entail staff reductions, along with related reductions in programs, and/or services and would have a clear impact on the District's existing programs and services.

All qualified, registered voters are encouraged to exercise their right and responsibility to participate in the school budget vote and Board of Education member election, which will be held by absentee ballot as outlined above. Please feel free to contact your School Board members or District administrators with any questions you might have. The Board of Education and the District’s administrators thank you for your interest in, and your ongoing support of, Rhinebeck’s schools.