



2023-24  
SCHOOL BUDGET  
**KEY DATES**

**Budget Hearing**  
Monday, May 8, 2023  
6:30 p.m.  
*Elementary School Cafeteria*

**Budget Vote**  
Tuesday, May 16, 2023  
8 a.m. to 8 p.m.  
*Elementary School Cafeteria*

## 2023-24 Propositions

### PROPOSITION #1

Shall the Board of Education be authorized and directed to expend the sum of \$23,938,295 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) school buses and one (1) student transport vehicle, all at an estimated maximum aggregate cost of \$366,108, 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 \$366,108 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.

### PROPOSITION #3

Resolved, the Board of Education of the Cato-Meridian Central School District is hereby authorized to establish a capital reserve fund pursuant to Section 3651 of the Education Law to be designated, "2023 Capital Reserve Fund" created to defray the cost of the construction, reconstruction and equipping of School District buildings and facilities, including original equipment, machinery, apparatus, appurtenances, furnishings, land acquisitions, and other incidental improvements and expenses in connection therewith, and to defray the cost of, in whole or in part, and in order to accomplish the same, the Board is hereby authorized to establish the ultimate amount of such reserve fund to Ten Million Dollars (\$10,000,000) inclusive of accrued interest and other investment earnings, with a probable term of ten (10) years. The Board of Education is hereby authorized to pay funds from the available fund balance, state aid reimbursement to the School District on account of capital projects, such other monies as the voters may direct, and/or other legally available funds of the School District to such reserve fund in an amount determined by the Board of Education up to the maximum authorized amount.

## DEAR RESIDENT:

The details of the proposed 2023-2024 school budget are included in this newsletter. The total budget of \$23,938,295 represents a \$810,323 increase. We have three propositions for you to consider this school year.

**Proposition One** is our school budget in the amount of \$23,938,925 which includes a 1.94% local tax levy increase. **The 1.94% local tax levy is under our calculated 2.34% tax cap.**

**Proposition Two** is the purchase of two 65-passenger school buses and one (1) student transport vehicle. 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 \$366,108, minus any trade-in value. The costs for these purchases are 90% New York State Aideable. In other words, after state aid reimbursement we pay 10% of the total cost with our local tax dollars.

**Proposition Three** is to establish up to a \$10,000,000 Capital Reserve Fund for future projects. Simply put, this proposition establishes a savings account for future project costs. This proposition does not raise your taxes. Money left over each school budget year will be used to fund this account. Our current \$5,000,000 Capital Reserve Fund has been completely exhausted. It is important to note, everytime a school district spends the entire Capital Reserve, by law the school district must ask its voters to establish another Capital Reserve Fund (savings account). The establishment of this savings account (Capital Reserve Fund) allows our school district to maintain, repair and enhance our facilities for future building projects. We will fund this account with leftover money from each school year. If passed by the voters, we anticipate this Capital Reserve Fund to last 7 to 10 years. Again, this proposition does not increase your taxes.

We hope the residents of the Cato-Meridian School District will support all three school budget propositions. Please consider supporting the 2023-2024 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 8, 2023 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](http://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 16, 2023 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,**

**Mr. Paul Byrne**, Board President

**Mrs. Kathleen Bratt**, Board Member

**Mr. Timothy Hulbert**, Board Member

**Mrs. Jenny Kyle**, Board Member

**Mr. Michael Lees**, Board Vice-President

**Mrs. Kristin Cox**, Board Member

**Mr. Jason Hirvela**, Board Member

## Three-Component Budget 2023-2024

**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.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	\$ Change	% Change
Board of Education	\$36,420	\$41,850	\$5,430	14.91%
Central Administration	\$250,500	\$264,264	\$13,764	5.49%
Finance	\$292,190	\$326,508	\$34,318	11.75%
Legal	\$38,821	\$51,000	\$12,179	31.37%
Personnel	\$42,000	\$45,500	\$3,500	8.33%
Public Information	\$58,700	\$75,810	\$17,110	29.15%
Central Services	\$88,263	\$96,500	\$8,237	9.33%
Supervision	\$643,000	\$601,500	-\$41,500	-6.45%
Special Programs	\$65,000	\$67,000	\$2,000	3.08%
Special Items	\$287,857	\$296,124	\$8,267	2.87%
Benefits	\$356,506	\$386,307	\$29,801	8.36%
<b>ADMINISTRATION TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$2,159,257</b>	<b>\$2,252,363</b>	<b>\$93,106</b>	<b>4.31%</b>

**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.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$67,034	\$80,000	\$12,966	19.34%
Teaching -- Regular School	\$5,714,757	\$5,910,425	\$195,668	3.42%
Teaching -- SWD	\$2,197,100	\$2,446,537	\$249,437	11.35%
OCC. Ed.	\$829,102	\$818,203	-\$10,899	-1.31%
Special Schools	\$60,193	\$66,500	\$6,307	10.48%
School Library & Audio Visual	\$1,125,130	\$1,167,889	\$42,759	3.80%
Pupil Personnel	\$662,453	\$608,830	-\$53,623	-8.09%
Co-Curricular	\$87,500	\$90,000	\$2,500	2.86%
Interscholastic Activities	\$390,252	\$387,712	-\$2,540	-0.65%
Pupil Transportation	\$1,340,400	\$1,337,442	-\$2,958	-0.22%
Benefits	\$3,642,760	\$3,857,392	\$214,632	5.89%
<b>INSTRUCTION TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$16,116,681</b>	<b>\$16,770,930</b>	<b>\$654,249</b>	<b>4.06%</b>

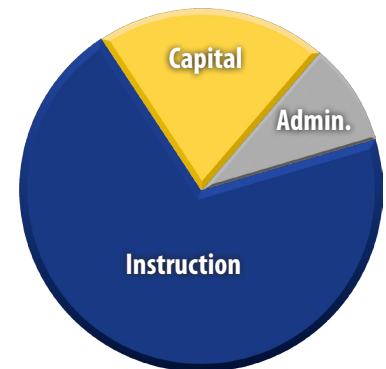
**Capital Component:** Cleaning and maintaining district facilities, including salaries, benefits, service contracts, utilities, materials and supplies, capital outlay projects and debt service.

	2022-2023	2023-2024	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$1,631,122	\$1,814,715	\$183,593	11.26%
Special Items	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$500	33.33%
Benefits	\$282,755	\$310,200	\$27,445	9.71%
Debt Service	\$2,811,657	\$2,688,087	-\$123,570	-4.39%
Transfer to Capital	\$125,000	\$100,000	-\$25,000	-20.00%
<b>CAPITAL TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$4,852,034</b>	<b>\$4,915,002</b>	<b>\$62,968</b>	<b>1.30%</b>
<b>TOTAL BUDGET:</b>	<b>\$23,127,972</b>	<b>\$23,938,295</b>	<b>\$810,323</b>	<b>3.50%</b>

## 2023-2024 Proposed Revenues

Description	2022-2023	2023-2024	Difference	% Change
Real Property Tax Levy	\$6,283,146	\$6,404,945	\$121,799	1.94%
Foundation Aid	\$10,366,762	\$10,677,764	\$311,002	3.00%
UPK	\$161,533	\$369,455	\$207,922	128.72%
BOCES	\$1,794,042	\$1,954,000	\$159,958	8.92%
Building Aid	\$2,229,849	\$1,888,221	-\$341,628	-15.32%
High Cost Excess Aid	\$253,393	\$355,020	\$101,627	40.11%
Private Excess Aid	\$34,611	\$41,527	\$6,916	19.98%
Transportation Aid	\$1,472,014	\$1,565,000	\$92,986	6.32%
Hardware & Software Aid	\$16,024	\$15,880	-\$144	-0.90%
Software, Library, Textbook Aid	\$66,598	\$66,483	-\$115	-0.17%
Medicaid	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	0.00%
Rent/Fees/Unclassified	\$200,000	\$275,000	\$75,000	37.50%
Unemployment Reserve	\$50,000	\$0	-\$50,000	-100.00%
Retirement Reserve	\$125,000	\$0	-\$125,000	-100.00%
Fund Balance	\$0	\$250,000	\$250,000	100.00%
<b>TOTAL REVENUE:</b>	<b>\$23,127,972</b>	<b>\$23,938,295</b>	<b>\$810,323</b>	<b>3.50%</b>

## 2023-24 Three-Component BREAK DOWN



Admin.	Instruction	Capital
9.41%	70.06%	20.53%



# \$100K CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECT

The 2023-2024 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. **Repair of Auditorium Porticos**
2. **Elementary Utility Upgrades**
3. **Pool Filter Replacement**
4. **Bus Garage Improvements**
5. **Work Based Learning Improvements**

## 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

## 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 16, 2023. 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](mailto: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



### BETH NASHOLTS:

I am running for the Cato-Meridian School Board. I am running for the Cato-Meridian School Board because I want to serve the community that I have been a part of for the past 10 years. As a parent of two children in the Cato-Meridian School district, I have been actively involved in their education and extracurricular activities, including PTO, Odyssey of the Mind, and drama. I would bring a unique perspective to the board in that I am a parent of current students, I am a business professional and I have a Master's degree in Management.

In Cato-Meridian we are privileged to have incredible teachers, administrators, and staff at our schools. As a board member, I will work to ensure that they are all held to the highest standards, and will make the success of our students my number one priority. I will be an advocate for students and will work to guarantee that they graduate with the skills needed to be successful in life and contributing members of society.

With so many other educational options available to today's students, we need to keep public school relevant. The key to this is being fiscally responsible. The school district has the duty of providing a service to the families of our community in establishing an environment where students can safely learn and grow, be allowed to explore their individuality, and have the opportunity to participate in non-academic activities.



### AMANDA VALLEE:

I am the mother of two amazing daughters (ages 8 and 11). I graduated from SUNY Oneonta with bachelor's degree while volunteering for a Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Program. Over the past 14 years I have been an employee with Lifetime Benefits Solutions and I have held many roles within the organization such as Claims Adjuster, Business Analyst, System and Business Implementation Liaison and Supervisor. My current role with the organization is the Manager of the COBRA and Premium Billing Department. As part of my role

I am responsible for my department's budget along with reconciling our COBRA and Premium Billing accounts to ensure the premium amounts collected from our participants matches the amount remitted out. 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 hold the Treasurer position. I am running for the School Board because I want to bring my personal and professional experience to my role as a board member. My family and I love the school district and I want to ensure that we are putting our children first while being fiscally responsible.



### JASON HIRVELA:

First I would like to thank you for allowing me to serve as a board member for the last 3 years, I hope I will be allowed to do so again for this coming term. I graduated from Cato in 2005 and work at Tessy as an Automation Engineer, designing equipment and managing projects for cutting edge automated manufacturing equipment for 17 years now. I have 2 children that attend Cato in grades 5th and 6th, they participate in several clubs and sports. I help run our local Cub Scout Pack 50 and volunteer with the Cato Little League when I

can. I believe that all students deserve a safe environment where they can thrive, and be provided the necessary tools and guidance to help them grow into successful individuals ready to take on the world, while utilizing funds and staff as efficiently as possible. Our students' health and safety are always my 1st priority. The last 3 years I have learned so much about school law, best practices and finance, with this knowledge I believe I can make good decisions to help improve and maintain our district, students experiences and opportunities.

*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 16, 2023, each for a three-year term commencing July 1, 2023 and concluding June 30, 2026. These vacancies arise from the expiration of the terms of current Board members Paul Byrne and Jason Hirvela. The six candidates for these seats are: Beth Nasholts, Amanda Vallee, Jason Hirvela, Paul Byrne, Harmon Kent III, and Nathan Wallace.*

*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.*



### PAUL BYRNE:

Hello Cato-Meridian! As I embark on what would be my 16th year on the Board the question of why I'm running again may come to your mind. You see, our three kids have graduated C-M and are well on their life paths. However, the answer still lies where it always has: I'm still involved in the district working with our talented students (and lovely high school drama director) on our musical. I'm still on our district facilities and policy committees. I'm still participating in activities like our NYC trip and Expedition Electives. As I see and interact with our students now I have the same enthusiasm I had when they were my kids' friends. I've also been President now for almost four years, since just before COVID hit. Over the last two years as our strategic plan came together and we designed our now passed and moving forward Capital Project, I want to be able to follow through on the promises I made to the citizens who voted 3-1 for these exciting improvements to our beautiful campus. The upgrades to our district since Dr. Ward joined us have been leaps and bounds and I'm excited to be an important part of it as we take the next step in our transformation to a cutting edge, technologically-rich district that holds onto its small town values and history. I'm so proud and thankful for the opportunity to represent the citizens of our district. Please join and support me in the upcoming election. Let's keep going Cato-Meridian!



### HARMON KENT III:

Hello, I'm running for one of the open seats on the Cato-Meridian board of education. I am a lifelong resident of the Cato-Meridian area and a 2004 graduate. I live in the community with my wife, Marianne, and 3 children, Owen, Carson and Jordyn. I am a corrections officer with NYSDOCCS for the past 10+ years. I'm also a union steward with NYSOPBA which represents correctional officers across NYS. I'm also active in the Cato community volunteering with many organizations. I've been a member of the Cato Fire Department for the past 18+ years and currently hold the title of assistant chief. I've decided to run for one of the open board seats because I want to help with the future of the district. I want to be a voice of the decision making that will lay the footprint for current and future students and faculty of the Cato-Meridian school district. I want to help keep Cato-Meridian a sought after school district for all families, and help keep the pride of being a Cato-Meridian parent, student, and employee alive! Please get out and vote for the future of the Cato-Meridian Schools!



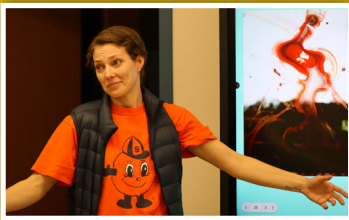
### NATHAN WALLACE:

I am a lifelong community member and Alumni. My wife and I have raised our two children here with both children still attending. I am the Building Manager at James M. Hanley Courthouse & Federal Building in Syracuse. I have spent the last 19 years volunteering for Cato Fire Department and the past 8 years volunteering with Cato Little League. My wife and I also work together as a Real Estate team and have also helped many other organizations in the community and donated to the school in the past for such things as the sensory walk, and clothes for children in the health office. I am seeking to add a different voice to the board, for those in the community who don't feel like they are being heard. As an Alumni and Parent I seek to see the improvement project be ones that benefit all students. I want to see the Cato Pride brought back that was here when I was a student.



# Expedition ELECTIVES

In lieu of traditional classes, students attended sessions about the different elective offerings at Cato-Meridian Junior-Senior High School. Teachers provided overviews of electives with assistance from some of our seniors. The day also featured panel discussions about college, the military, and the workforce. Thank you to all of our guest speakers!





# SPRING Showcase

Elementary students created impressive projects on plants, seasons, animal habitats, insects, vikings, solar houses, the Renaissance, and Egypt. Fantastic work, everyone!



**Dr. Terry Ward**  
Superintendent of Schools

**Board of Education**

Paul Byrne, *President*  
Michael Lees, *Vice President*  
Kathleen Bratt  
Kristin Cox  
Timothy Hulbert  
Jason Hirvela  
Jenny Kyle

Cato-Meridian Central School District  
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**Current Resident**



**Estimated Basic STAR  
Exemption Savings\***

**Under the Budget Proposed  
for the 2023-24 School Year,  
the Estimated Basic  
STAR Savings:**

**\$470**

*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, 2023.*

**School District Budget Notice  
Overall Budget Proposal**

	Budget Adopted for the 2022-2023 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2023-2024 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2023-2024 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$ 23,127,972	\$ 23,938,295	\$ 23,504,248
Increase/Decrease for the 2023-2024 School Year		\$ 810,323	\$ 443,310
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		3.50%	1.92%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed tax levy to support the total budgeted amount	\$ 6,283,146	\$ 6,404,945	
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)	\$6,283,146	\$ 6,404,945	\$ 6,283,146
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$ 462,042	\$ 426,404	
G. School tax levy limit, <u>excluding</u> levy for permissible exclusions	\$ 5,861,316	\$ 5,978,541	
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)	\$ 5,821,104	\$ 5,978,541	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative value requires 60.0% voter approval - See note below regarding separate propositions) **	\$ 40,212	\$ 0	
Administrative component	\$ 2,159,257	\$ 2,260,364	\$ 2,218,553
Program component	\$ 16,116,681	\$ 16,762,930	\$ 16,564,593
Capital component	\$ 4,852,034	\$ 5,065,002	\$ 4,471,102