

2025-2026 SCHOOL BUDGET KEY DATES

Budget Hearing

Wednesday, May 7, 2025

6:00 PM

Elementary Cafeteria

Budget Vote

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

8:00 AM to 8:00 PM

Elementary Cafeteria

QUALIFICATIONS FOR VOTERS:

- 1 United States Citizen
- 2 18 years of age or older
- 3 District resident for at least 30 days prior to the vote
- 4 No voter registration required

ABSENTEE/EARLY VOTER BALLOTS

Applications for ballots may be requested from the District Clerk via email at gmarriam@catomeridian.org or by calling the District Office at 315-626-3439, ext. 5001. Your ballot must be received by the District Clerk by 5:00 PM on the day of the election.

CATO-MERIDIAN CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

BUDGET EDITION 2025



DEAR CATO-MERIDIAN COMMUNITY:

We are facing challenging financial times in public education. All school districts lost federal pandemic money and tough decisions had to be made for the financial health of our district. This includes the reduction of administrative and teaching positions, mainly based on declining enrollment.

Our 2025-26 budget reflects an overall **decrease** of 1.35% despite increasing costs in every area. Contractual obligations, the cost of health care, and rising energy costs drive the major cost increases, while revenue is decreasing. Our State Aid allocation is less than it was last year.

Given these challenges, the Board of Education set the tax levy at 1.94%, which is less than the 2.55% allowed under the Tax Cap Formula.

You will be voting on the following items on **May 20, 2025**:

Proposition 1: Approval of the 2025-26 school district budget of \$23,484,786.

Proposition 2: Approval of the purchase of two large buses, one small bus and one student transport vehicle. These purchases are to replace vehicles past their useful life and maintain our bus replacement schedule, maximizing trade-in value and decreasing maintenance costs.

You will also have the opportunity to vote on three vacancies on the Board of Education (Kathleen Bratt, Tim Hulbert, and Kristin Cox). Excerpts of Board candidate biographies are included in this brochure, and the full versions can be found at: www.catomeridian.org.

We believe that this budget keeps expenditures to a minimum despite the loss of revenue. The Board and administration continue to strive to provide a world-class education for our students while protecting the taxpayers' investment in our district and our children.

The public hearing/budget presentation is on May 7, 2025. It will be held at 6:00 PM in the Elementary School Cafeteria. We encourage you to come and participate in the presentation. The Board of Education prides itself on transparency and welcomes clarifying questions or comments from the community.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Bratt, BOE President
Kristin Cox, BOE Member
Jenny Kyle, BOE Member
Eric Peckham, BOE Member

Timothy Hulbert, BOE Vice-President
Harmon Kent III, BOE Member
Nathan Wallace, BOE Member



THREE-COMPONENT BUDGET 2025-2026

	2024-2025	2025-2026	\$ Change	% Change
Board of Education	\$41,094	\$35,645	-\$5,449	-13.26%
Central Administration	\$267,687	\$252,450	-\$15,237	-5.69%
Finance	\$339,152	\$357,751	\$18,599	5.48%
Legal	\$55,000	\$55,000	\$0	0%
Personnel	\$48,000	\$49,000	\$1,000	2.08%
Public Information	\$83,650	\$86,330	\$2,680	3.2%
Central Services	\$84,550	\$70,550	-\$14,000	-16.56%
Supervision	\$591,500	\$548,074	-\$43,426	-7.34%
Special Programs	\$42,000	\$43,000	\$1,000	2.38%
Special Items	\$318,239	\$337,788	\$19,549	6.14%
Benefits	\$388,092	\$385,958	-\$2,134	-0.55%

ADMINISTRATION TOTAL: \$2,258,964 \$2,221,546 -\$37,418 -1.66%

	2024-2025	2025-2026	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$85,000	\$70,000	-\$15,000	-17.65%
Teaching -- Regular School	\$5,734,656	\$5,675,738	-\$58,918	-1.03%
Teaching -- SWD	\$2,534,614	\$2,591,047	-\$56,433	2.23%
OCC. Ed.	\$1,020,816	\$802,167	-\$218,649	-21.42%
Special Schools	\$42,000	\$55,000	\$13,000	30.95%
School Library & Audio Visual	\$1,044,986	\$1,051,679	\$6,693	0.64%
Pupil Personnel	\$599,611	\$593,553	-\$6,058	-1.01%
Co-Curricular	\$90,000	\$90,000	\$0	0%
Interscholastic Activities	\$377,741	\$377,752	\$11	0%
Pupil Transportation	\$1,365,976	\$1,481,396	\$115,420	8.45%
Benefits	\$3,751,436	\$3,923,499	\$172,063	4.59%

INSTRUCTION TOTAL: \$16,646,836 \$16,711,831 \$64,995 0.39%

	2024-2025	2025-2026	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$1,866,601	\$2,082,359	\$215,758	11.56%
Special Items	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0	0%
Benefits	\$316,927	\$375,746	\$58,819	18.56%
Debt Service	\$2,613,846	\$1,991,304	-\$622,542	-23.82%
Transfer to Capital	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$0	0%

CAPITAL TOTAL: \$4,899,374 \$4,551,409 -\$347,965 -7.1%

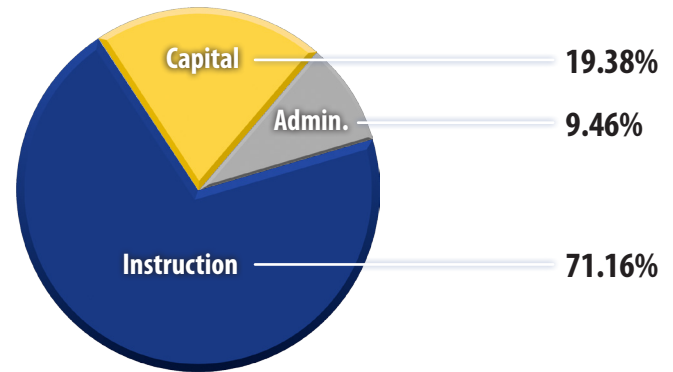
TOTAL BUDGET: \$23,805,174 \$23,484,786 -\$320,388 -1.35%

2025-26 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.



2025-2026 PROPOSED REVENUES

Description	2024-2025	2025-2026	Difference	% Change
Real Property Tax Levy	\$6,529,201	\$6,655,969	\$126,768	1.94%
Foundation Aid	\$10,677,764	\$10,703,123	\$25,359	0.24%
BOCES	\$1,850,000	\$1,750,000	-\$100,000	-5.71%
Building Aid	\$1,791,817	\$1,023,194	-\$768,623	-75.12%
High Cost Excess Aid	\$275,121	\$315,424	\$40,303	-12.78%
Private Excess Aid	\$39,937	\$0	-\$39,937	100.00%
Transportation Aid W/O Summer	\$1,500,000	\$1,555,000	\$55,000	3.54%
Hardware & Software Aid	\$15,344	\$15,090	-\$254	-1.68%
Software, Library, Textbook Aid	\$65,990	\$66,986	\$996	1.49%
Medicaid	\$75,000	\$75,000	\$0	0.00%
Rent/Fees/Unclassified	\$335,000	\$425,000	\$90,000	21.18%
Unemployment Reserve	\$250,000	\$200,000	-\$50,000	-25.00%
Insurance Reserve	\$0	\$100,000	\$100,000	100.00%
Retirement Reserve	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$0	0.00%
Fund Balance	\$100,000	\$0	-\$100,000	-33.33%
Interfund Transfer		\$300,000	\$300,000	100.00%

TOTAL REVENUE: \$23,805,174 \$23,484,786 -\$320,388 -1.35%

2025-2026 Propositions

PROPOSITION #1

Shall the Board of Education be authorized and directed to expend the sum of \$23,484,786 for General Fund appropriation.

PROPOSITION #2

Shall the Board of Education of the Cato-Meridian Central School District be authorized to purchase and finance of two large School Buses, one small School Bus, and one (1) Student Transport Vehicle, including necessary furnishings, fixtures and equipment and all other costs incidental thereto, and expend a total sum not to exceed \$624,000, which is estimated to be the total maximum cost thereof, and said amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, be raised by the levy of a tax upon the taxable property of said School District and collected in annual installments as provided by Section 416 of the Education Law; and, in anticipation of such tax, obligations of said School District, in the principal amount not to exceed \$624,000, be issued.

\$100K CAPITAL OUTLAY PROJECT

The 2025-2026 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. **Jr.-Sr. High School Entrance Improvements**
2. **Elementary Infrastructure Improvements**
3. **Bus Garage Improvements**

MEET THE CANDIDATES NIGHT!

coordinated by the Jr.-Sr. H.S. Student Council

- Monday, May 5th at 6:00 PM
- in the Jr.-Sr. High School Library

BOARD CANDIDATE BIOS | VOTE FOR 3

There are three (3) vacancies on the Board of Education that shall be voted upon at the annual budget vote and election on Tuesday, May 20, 2025, each for a three-year term commencing July 1, 2025 and concluding June 30, 2028. These vacancies arise from the expiration of the terms of current Board members Kathleen Bratt, Kristin Cox and Timothy Hulbert. The five (5) candidates for these seats are: Kathleen Bratt, Amanda Vallee, Beth Nasholts, Kristin Cox, and Timothy Hulbert.

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.

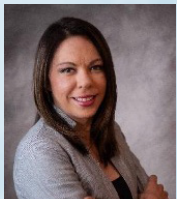


To view full candidate bios, please visit our website at catomeridian.org/BOECandidates or scan the QR code!



KATHLEEN BRATT

I am a life-long resident of the Cato-Meridian school district and community. My husband and I are both alumni of CM as are our 6 children and so far, 6 grandchildren. I have been a member of the school board since 2003, and also serve on the Cayuga-Onondaga BOCES school board.



AMANDA VALLEE

As a mother of two amazing daughters in the district, I am deeply committed to ensuring our school district delivers an outstanding education. With a Bachelor of Science in Psychology from SUNY Oneonta and 16 years of leadership experience at Lifetime Benefits Solutions—where I serve as Manager of COBRA & Premium Billing—I bring a broad range of expertise across various leadership domains.



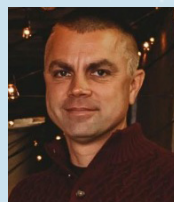
BETH NASHOLTS

Hello Cato-Meridian! As a lifelong resident of the area and a parent of two children in the district, I'm proud to be running for a seat on the Cato-Meridian School Board. For the past 13 years, my family and I have been deeply rooted in this community, and I'm committed to giving back through meaningful service.



KRISTIN COX

I am running for re-election for the Cato-Meridian School Board. I was born and raised in Freehold, NJ, graduated from Cornell University in 1996 and moved to Cato-Meridian in 2001 with my husband and 2-year-old daughter and started our dairy farm, Ox Cart Dairy.



TIMOTHY HULBERT

My wife and I have been married for almost 19 years and have four children, all of whom attend school here in the district. I am running for re-election because I believe I bring an honest and common-sense approach to my position on the school board.

Mr. Michael Hoose
Interim Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education

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

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

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Current Resident

**Estimated Basic STAR
Exemption Savings***

Under the Budget Proposed for
the 2025-26 School Year, the
Estimated Basic STAR Savings:

\$409

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, 2025.

**School District Budget Notice
Overall Budget Proposal**

	Budget Adopted for the 2024-2025 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2025-2026 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2025-2026 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$23,805,174	\$23,484,786	\$23,261,741
Increase/Decrease for the 2025-26 School Year		\$(320,388)	\$(543,433)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		(1.35)%	(2.28)%
Change in the Consumer Price Index		8.0%	
A. Proposed Tax Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	\$6,529,201	\$6,655,969	
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)	\$6,529,201	\$6,655,969	\$6,529,201
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	\$369,915	\$335,140	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, <u>Excluding</u> Levy for Permissible Exclusions	\$6,160,176	\$6,320,829	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, <u>Excluding</u> Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E - B - F + D)	\$6,160,176	\$6,320,829	
I. Difference: G - H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval - See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	\$0	\$0	
Administrative component	\$2,258,964	\$2,221,546	\$2,207,268
Program component	\$16,646,836	\$16,711,831	\$16,622,028
Capital component	\$4,899,374	\$4,551,409	\$4,432,445

TAXPAYER NOTICE:

Community Bank has informed us that they will no longer accept your school tax payments! We are currently exploring other options for a safe and efficient method to process payments. Information will be shared as it becomes available.