

A Message From the Cato-Meridian Board of Education

Dear Resident:

The details of the proposed 2020-2021 school budget is included in this newsletter. The total budget of \$20,893,690 represents a decrease of \$948,789 which is approximately a -4.34% budget to budget decrease. Due to COVID-19, there is an expected decrease in school aid from Albany. This budget to budget decrease reflects anticipated revenue shortfalls from New York State.

The budget includes a local tax levy increase of 1.9%. The local tax levy increase is under the 2% tax cap; as our tax cap limit this year was 4.7%. Again, we are well under the 2% tax cap limit.

It has never been harder to craft a budget because there are still many unknowns. This budget reflects an anticipated decrease in State Aid. The good news is that all academic programs will be maintained. Also, this budget represents adding programs such as full day Pre-Kindergarten and a Junior/Senior High School Agricultural Program. This budget proposal reflects an anticipated decrease in State Aid, enhances programs, and remains responsible to our tax payers. We are exceptionally proud of this proposed budget.

In addition to the budget there is one proposition for consideration. The proposition is to purchase two 65-passenger school buses, one small handicap accessible bus, and a stake rack pick-up truck. The stake rack pick-up truck will be replacing our 2008 truck.

It is our desire that the residents of the Cato-Meridian School District will support the 2020-2021 school budget

in order to maintain quality programming and services for the children in our community. We, the Cato-Meridian Board of Education, believe that this budget represents a balance between educational opportunities for our students as well as fiscal responsibilities to our taxpayers.

Please review the enclosed information and feel free to ask for any necessary clarification. Dr. Terry Ward, our Superintendent of Schools; Brenda Semeraro, our School Business Administrator; 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 Thursday, May 28, 2020 at 6:30 PM via online. Please go to the district webpage for the link to view the presentation. More importantly, the budget vote will be held via USPS mail. You will receive your absentee ballot through the mail. Each voting ballot will include a self-addressed postage paid envelope. Only absentee ballots received in our District Office by the United States Postal Service by June 9, 2020 will be considered a valid vote.

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

Sincerely,

Paul Byrne, Board President **Michael Lees, Board Vice President**
Kathleen Bratt, Board Member **Tim Hulbert, Board Member**
Kristin Cox, Board Member **Carol Hunter, Board Member**

Jenny Kyle, Board Member

2020-21 School Budget

Key Dates

Budget Hearing

Thursday, May 28, 2020 | 6:30 p.m.

Via Video

Please
Vote!
Budget Vote

Tuesday, June 9, 2020

**Via Absentee
Ballots Only**



School District Budget Notice Overall Budget Proposal

	Budget Adopted for the 2019-2020 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2020-2021 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2020-2021 School Year*
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	\$21,842,479	\$ 20,893,690	\$20,613,690
Increase/Decrease for the 2020-2021 School Year		(\$948,789)	(\$1,135,789)
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		(4.34%)	(5.22%)
Change in the Consumer Price Index		1.81%	
A. Proposed tax levy to support the total budgeted amount	\$ 6,012,686	\$6,128,352	
B. Levy to support library debt, if applicable	\$75,000	\$75,000	
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)	\$6,087,686	\$6,203,352	1.90%
F. Permissible exclusions to the school tax levy limit	\$348,199	\$ 496,606	
G. School tax levy limit, <u>excluding</u> levy for permissible exclusions	\$5,845,793	\$5,802,201	
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)	\$ 5,664,487	\$ 5,631,746	
I. Difference: (G - H); (Negative value requires 60.0% voter approval - See note below regarding separate propositions) **	\$181,306	\$170,445	
Administrative component	\$1,996,539	\$ 2,002,211	\$1,890,211
Program component	\$15,283,409	\$ 14,169,368	\$14,137,368
Capital component	\$4,562,531	\$4,722,111	\$4,586,111

Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings*

Under the Budget Proposed for the 2020-21 School Year, the Estimated Basic STAR Savings: **\$531**

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, Enhanced **STAR** exemptions must be renewed yearly (before March 1) for senior citizens age 65 or older whose incomes do not exceed \$86,000. For all other homeowners, the original application automatically renews as long as they own their home. **PLEASE NOTE: Senior Citizens who have not enrolled in the Income Verification Program must apply each year for the Enhanced STAR program.**



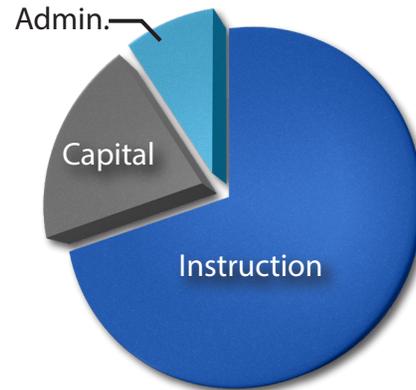
*Statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2020-21 school year should the proposed budget be defeated. Operational and financial modifications will be made to meet contingent budget requirements for administrative budget cap, elimination of equipment purchases that do not meet the test of contingent expenses and computation of a cost to be charged for all community use of Cato-Meridian Central School Facilities.

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Absentee Ballots - Qualified school district voters may vote in the Annual School District Election and Budget Vote by absentee ballot only. One ballot will be mailed to each household in our district. If you have more than one qualified school district voter in your household and would like to request more absentee ballots, you may do so by calling our District Clerk at 315-626-3439, extension 5001 or email her at gmarriam@catomeridian.org and leave your name, address and how many extra ballots you would like. All absentee ballots must be received in the District Office by 5:00 PM on Tuesday, June 9, 2020 via the United States Postal Service. You will not be allowed to deliver your ballot in person.

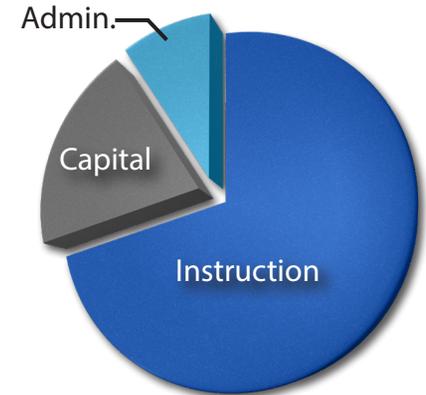
Three-Component Budget 2020-2021

Administrative Component	2019-2020	2020-2021	\$ Change	% Change
Board of Education	\$35,988	\$35,988	0	
Central Administration	\$195,000	\$236,000	\$41,000	
Finance	\$222,200	\$228,200	\$6,000	
Legal	\$37,821	\$37,821	0	
Personnel	\$34,988	41,000	\$6,012	
Public Information	\$54,400	\$54,400	0	
Central Services	\$108,700	\$108,700	0	
Special Items	\$239,400	\$268,400	\$29,000	
Supervision	\$646,699	\$598,000	(\$48,699)	
Special Programs	\$74,422	\$75,422	\$1,000	
Benefits	\$346,921	\$318,280	(\$28,641)	
ADMINISTRATIVE TOTAL	\$1,996,539	\$2,002,211	\$5,672	0.28%
Instructional Component	2019-2020	2020-2021	\$ Change	% Change
Legal/Personnel	0	0	0	
Central Services	\$63,224	\$65,000	\$1,776	
Teaching - Regular School	\$5,669,752	\$4,972,901	(\$696,851)	
Teaching - Handicapped	\$1,843,447	\$1,482,864	(\$360,583)	
Special Needs/Occ. Ed.	\$823,636	\$882,000	\$58,364	
Special Schools	\$159,000	\$166,000	\$7,000	
School Library & Audio Visual	\$894,318	\$979,426	\$85,108	
Student Services	\$67,840	\$67,840	0	
Co-Curricular Activities	\$286,752	\$293,252	\$6,500	
Interscholastic Activities	\$658,596	\$696,000	\$37,404	
Pupil Transportation	\$1,290,164	\$1,225,415	(\$64,749)	
Community Services	0	0	0	
Benefits	\$3,526,680	\$3,338,670	(\$188,010)	
INSTRUCTIONAL TOTAL	\$15,283,409	\$14,169,368	(\$1,114,041)	(7.29%)
Capital Component	2019-2020	2020-2021	\$ Change	% Change
Central Services	\$1,505,822	\$1,482,822	(\$23,000)	
Special Items	\$1,500	\$1,500	0	
Benefits	\$235,064	\$236,364	\$1,300	
Debt Service	\$2,820,145	\$3,001,425	\$ 181,280	
CAPITAL TOTAL	\$4,562,531	\$4,722,111	\$159,580	3.50%
TOTAL BUDGET	\$21,842,479	\$20,893,690	(\$948,789)	(4.34%)

2019-20 Three-Component Break Down



2020-21 Three-Component Break Down



Admin.	Instruction	Capital
9.14%	69.97%	20.89%

Admin.	Instruction	Capital
9.59%	67.81%	22.60%

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CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

2020-2021 Proposed Revenue

Description	2019-2020	2020-2021	\$ Change	% Change
Real Property Tax Levy	\$6,087,686	\$6,203,352	\$115,666	1.90%
Basic State Aid	\$6,748,919	\$6,074,027	(\$674,892)	-10.00%
Excess Cost Aid	\$1,340,996	\$1,373,287	\$32,291	2.41%
Building Aid	\$1,925,751	\$1,911,994	(\$13,757)	-0.71%
Transportation Aid	\$1,577,277	\$1,660,392	\$83,115	5.27%
Lottery Aid	\$1,655,579	\$1,229,215	(\$426,364)	-25.75%
BOCES Aid	\$1,356,271	\$1,501,423	\$145,152	10.70%
Hardware/Software/Library/Other State Aid	\$150,000	\$90,000	(\$60,000)	-40.00%
Rent/Fees/Adm/Misc/Unclass	\$250,000	\$200,000	(\$50,000)	-20.00%
Medicaid	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$0	0%
Fund Balance	\$300,000	\$300,000	\$0	0%
Debt Reserve Fund	\$150,000	\$50,000	(\$100,000)	-66.67%
Unemployment Reserve Fund	\$100,000	\$50,000	(\$50,000)	-50%
Retirement Contribution Reserve Fund	\$150,000	\$0	(\$150,000)	-100%
Insurance Reserve	\$0	\$200,000	\$200,000	100%
TOTAL BUDGET	\$ 21,842,479	\$ 20,893,690	(\$948,789)	-4.34%

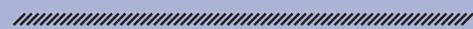
2020-21 PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1

Shall the Board of Education be authorized and directed to expend the sum of **\$20,893,690** 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) 65-passenger school buses at an estimated maximum cost of \$118,500 each, one (1) small handicapped accessible school bus at an estimated maximum cost of \$66,500, and one (1) stake rack pick-up truck at an estimated maximum cost of \$51,500, all at an estimated maximum aggregate cost of \$355,000, 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 \$355,000 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.

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, June 9, 2020, each for a three-year term commencing July 1, 2020 and concluding June 30, 2023.

Paul Byrne



As I conclude my 12th year on the Cato-Meridian Board of Education and look back at the accomplishments of the district during that span, I am extremely proud of the work we have done together. We have been through times of elation and times of sorrow. We have worked through spans of budgetary security and times of financial challenges. What has always been constant though, during these years, is the steadfast desire to give our kids the absolute best opportunities as they attend Cato-Meridian. That's what we've done and that's what I'd like to continue to be a part of. One of the reasons we have reached success working together is the diversity of our Board in our careers, stages of lives, and perspectives. With the retirement of Mrs. Hunter from the Board we will welcome at least one new Board member as we have two seats available. If I am elected to serve again we will still have four board members with fewer than three years of experience. I think it is important to have that balance of both newer and more experienced members. In regard to experience in my twelve years, I have been on the middle school SIT and Advisory Audit committees. Currently, as the BOE President, I serve on the high school SIT and Policy Committee. Beyond the Board, I have spent 20 years in the district as a proud community member and my lovely wife Lisa and I have raised our three children here. I have also worked every year with Lisa on our awesome high school drama club productions. In these current conditions of uncertainty and change, the continuity of experienced voices on the Board will be an asset to our students. With your support I'll proudly work with Dr. Ward, the administration, faculty and staff, as well as our parents, students and you, our community members, to continue to raise the bar for our district. Thank you for your continued support!

Jason Hirvela



As a Cato-Meridian alumni class of 2005, I went on to attend Cayuga Community College and Onondaga Community College studying Industrial Technology. I currently work at Tessa Plastics as an Automation Application Engineer where I get to design and implement automated manufacturing solutions. I'm an active member of the community supporting and volunteering with local clubs and events such as the Cato youth soccer program, Boy Scouts and 4H. I was previously a member of the IRA Fire Department as a firefighter/EMT and CIMVAC ambulance. I enjoy outdoor activities with my family and friends. I am married with 2 children that currently attend Cato-Meridian, my daughter is in 3rd grade and my son is in 2nd grade. Both of my kids participate in the Cato youth soccer program, my son does Boy Scouts and my daughter does 4H. As I have grown up in the area and continue to make new friends I have come to realize how special this school was and still is. Talking with other parents from surrounding school districts about their children and their schools programs, I realize how fortunate I was to have the opportunities I had and the teaching staff I had to teach and guide me into becoming the person I am today. My goal for being on the board is to preserve this for future generations and maintaining the best interests of the student body and school district as a whole, to provide future generations with the same opportunities and learning environment as I had. Thank you!

Justin Reeves



I am a lifelong community member and Cato-Meridian alumni. I am married and I have a child that is a first-grade student at Cato-Meridian. I am currently employed with SRC, Inc. in Syracuse. I am a graduate of Keuka College with a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Management. I am involved as a coach in Little League for the past two seasons, and will again if the kids get to play this summer. I am also actively involved in local Cub Scout Pack 59. I'd like to be involved as a member of the Cato-Meridian School Board to offer a more objective view of the situations as they occur in the present & future. I'd like to invest my time and effort to ensure the students get the very best chance possible for success in the future.

Nicholas Schmitt



Having grown up in Cato, my goal is to uphold and solidify the values that have made Cato-Meridian Central School District so consistently great. Currently, I work for United States Senator and Senate Minority Leader, Charles Schumer in his Syracuse, New York office as an intern. As of May 2021, I will have received a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science and a Bachelor's Degree in History from SUNY Oswego. For many years I have experienced the close-knit, proud and endearing spirit of the greater Cato-Meridian community, and ever since graduating from Cato-Meridian Central School District some time ago, I have wanted to give back to the school system and town which had given so much to me. I have the proper knowledge and skills acquired to benefit our great school and our great community. Through years of study and application of two separate liberal arts degrees and a focus on complex social, political and economic issues, that every qualified board candidate should be aware of, many of which have large impacts at such a local level as the school board; I have the facts required to confront such important matters as they may arise. Likewise, my time spent working for the people of New York State at the federal level has given me the proper logistical, practical, and communicative skills necessary to represent your interests and the interests of the faculty, alumni, and students of Cato-Meridian on the school board.