Dear Community Members,

The Bellmore-Merrick Central High School District Board of Education, together with central administration, is presenting a proposed 2018-19 school budget that carries a tax levy increase of 2.65 percent. This is within the district’s tax cap. We are proud that the proposed spending plan maintains all programs, as well as enhances educational opportunities, adds staff and increases security.

Looking ahead to 2018-19, we are continuing last year’s redesign of the seventh-grade curriculum to accommodate students as they enter eighth grade. Class sizes will be maintained, as well as all current elective course options and opportunities. Additionally, three teacher positions will be added to accommodate the growing population of students with special needs.

The safety and security of our students and staff is the district’s top priority. Numerous safety improvements have been implemented districtwide, including over 600 interior and exterior cameras and 48 security staff members with law enforcement backgrounds who patrol the halls of all of our buildings and designated security vestibule entrances. Additional safety enhancements for 2018-19 will include the addition of more safety personnel, as well as extending their hours and adding staff on weekends as necessary.

The proposed budget also includes funding for additional health and wellness support and social-emotional programs for our students. We will be adding four new guidance counselor positions, making the student ratio more equitable. One-and-a-half social worker positions will be added at the high school level, as well. The planned creation of wellness centers to assist families navigating through a challenging time will be available during after-school hours. This program creates a safe haven for students and families seeking support and information for assistance on a variety of issues. These student-support initiatives provide staff with more opportunities to connect with students.

In addition to voting on the proposed budget, residents will have an opportunity to vote on a second proposition to expend monies from the district’s capital reserve fund. This would be used to complete districtwide paving and concrete work, track resurfacing, floor and ceiling tile replacement, tennis court refurbishment, turf replacement, door replacements and more. It is important to note that if Proposition No. 2 is approved by the community, there is no additional tax impact to residents.

For more information on the proposed budget, visit the district’s website at www.bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us. The district will host a budget hearing on Wednesday, May 2 at 8 p.m. at the Brookside Administration Building. All community residents are encouraged to attend. Please remember to vote on Tuesday, May 15 at your designated polling location (please see the last page for details.)

Thank you for your continued support of the district.

Regards,
The Board of Education

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Proposed Budget Within Tax Levy Cap for Sixth Straight Year; Preserves All Programs, Enhances District Security & Creates Wellness Centers

Budget Highlights

- Represents a tax levy increase of 2.65%, which is within the district’s cap for 2018-19.
- Maintains all current programs, services and class size guidelines.
- Preserves all current elective course options and opportunities.
- Adds more safety personnel.
- Funds four additional guidance counselors and 1.5 additional social workers.
- Establishes wellness centers for students and their families.
- Provides for redesign of eighth-grade curriculum.
- Proposition No. 2 calls for the expenditure of $1.53 million from the district’s capital reserve fund. There is no tax impact if this is approved.

Courtney Lange and Amelia Seabold of Calhoun were awarded research science grants earlier this year.
PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

1. Appropriated reserves of $2,142,723 (ERS), $600,000 (EBALR), $250,000 (Worker’s Comp) and $2,200,000 (Reserve for Tax Reduction) will be used to fund the budget.
2. Tax levy is an estimate at this time; the actual levy is set in August each year.
3. Year one of a three year extension of the main transportation contract valued at approximately $3,089,000.
4. Interfund transfer to capital monies – these monies will be used for concrete/asphalt work and abatements. If necessary, these monies may be used for any capital emergency project that arises during the year.
5. Debt service includes intended lease (not to exceed five years) of office equipment: postage and folding machines, copiers; technology; music instruments; TANS and BANS, bond payments and EPC lease.
ACADEMICS
• Matthew Klein and Cameron Levy, both of Kennedy High School, were recognized as 2018 Regeneron Science Talent Search Scholars.
• Kennedy sophomore David Frank earned second place in the social psychology category at the Long Island Psychology Fair.
• Courtney Lange and Amelia Seabold of Calhoun were named recipients of an NYIT grant for their advanced science research projects.
• Rebecca Scotto, an advanced science research student at Mepham, has been named as a co-author on a research paper set for publication.
• Calhoun senior Joy Ma earned National Merit semifinalist status.
• Andrew Brinton and Connor Gibson of Kennedy and Michelle Serban of Calhoun were accepted by The Institute of Creative Problem Solving for Gifted and Talented Students at SUNY College at Old Westbury.
• Calhoun senior James Caracciolo was named a 2018 Coca-Cola Scholars semifinalist.
• The Mepham Physics Team; John Berry, Anil Bradley, Ailish Egan, Srikar Indrakanti and Michael Osorio, won first place in the island-wide Physics Bowl.

ARTS
• The orchestras within the CHSD practiced ARTS and benefited from the Capital Reserve Fund. This fund was established by voters in May 2016 to finance future building renovations and potential infrastructure needs, as identified in the district’s five-year plan.
Projects include districtwide paving and concrete work, track resurfacing, floor and ceiling tile replacement, roof replacement and/or resurfacing, tennis court refurbishment, turf replacement, door replacement, abatements, electrical and plumbing upgrades, fuel tank replacement and related work, structural work (brick, concrete and steel) and ADA compliance. Please note that the money requested for expenditure ($1.53 million) will not fund all of these improvements. The Board, in conjunction with district administrators, will prioritize the projects based on greatest need.

In order to move forward, however, the proposition must be approved by the public. **Since the money is being drawn from the capital reserve funds, there will be no additional tax impact for residents if the proposition is approved.**
Q: What is the estimated tax levy increase?
A: Due to an increase in state aid, as well as allocations from the district’s fund balance, the district is able to present a budget that carries a tax levy increase of 2.65 percent. This is within the district’s allowable cap for 2018-19.

Q: What does the budget support?
A: This spending plan will support additional enhancements to district security, as well as new guidance counselors and social workers. The budget also establishes wellness centers for students and their families, and also provides for the redesign of the eighth-grade curriculum.

Q: What happens if voters do not approve the budget?
A: If voters defeat the proposed budget, the district has two options: put the same or a revised budget up for a revote, or adopt a contingency budget. If a proposed budget is defeated twice, a contingency budget must be adopted. If that were to occur, state law mandates that the tax levy increase over the current year be capped at 0 percent. The Board would have to make serious cuts in programs and services, including class size, athletics, cocurricular clubs and supplies.

Q: Are you using reserves to offset the budget?
A: Yes. The district is using $6.4 million from the fund balance, $2 million of Employees Retirement System, $600,000 of Employee Benefit Accrued Liability Reserve funds and $250,000 from Worker’s Comp to lessen the burden on our taxpayers. These monies may only be used for their stated purpose. The ERS reserve will be used to pay our required contribution to the NYS Employees Retirement System. EBALR will be used to make contractually required termination payments to employees retiring from the district and the Worker’s Comp reserve will be used to pay claims. The district will also use $2.2 million from its newly created reserve for tax reduction. This reserve will be funded with proceeds from the sale of the Jerusalem Avenue building.

Q: Have all ‘BOND’ monies been financed?
A: Yes. Due to the district’s excellent Moody’s rating (Aa1), the final BOND financing received an impressive rate of 2.117 percent, saving the district $1.7 million over 15 years.

Q: Will residents be eligible for the property tax rebate as included in the state’s budget?
A: Yes. Since the district’s proposed budget is within the tax levy cap, qualifying homeowners will be eligible for the property tax relief credit. Beginning this year, the property tax relief credit will be a percentage of a homeowner’s STAR benefit.

Q: Where can I acquire more information about the district’s proposed budget?
A: Complete copies of the 2018-19 proposed budget are available in individual schools and the district office, and can be downloaded from the district’s website, www.bellmore-merrick.k12.ny.us.