



Rambling Reporter

Budget Edition

May 2019

Residents to vote on 2019/20 proposed budget May 21

Southern Cayuga Central School District residents will vote on a \$17,790,648 budget proposal for the 2019-20 school year on Tuesday, **May 21**, from **7 am to 9 pm** in the **District Office**. Voters will also select from three candidates for three open seats on the Board of Education and consider three additional propositions: the creation of a capital reserve, the purchase of transportation vehicles, and taxpayer support for the Aurora Free Library and the Hazard Library Association.

The Board of Education proposes a projected tax levy increase of 1%. The increase is the second lowest increase in more than 25 years. The proposed budget strikes a balance between maintaining student programming with a nominal and prudent tax levy increase. Fortunately, contractual cost increases will be largely offset by savings in employee benefits.

District voters will also be asked to approve the continuation of the annual bus replacement plan, maximizing state aid and trade-in value by replacing older buses.



Proposition #1: 2019-20 Budget

Proposed Budget	\$17,790,648
Budget Change	\$278,491
Tax Levy Increase	+ \$79,926 + 1.0%

Vote Day Details

Tuesday, May 21
7:00 am to 9:00 pm
District Office

PLEASE NOTE

Voting May 21
7:00 am to 9:00 pm
in the
**DISTRICT
OFFICE**

(enter at door near greenhouse)

A Look Inside

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Proposition #2: Capital Reserve

The Southern Cayuga Central Schools' Board of Education proposes a proposition to create a new Capital Reserve Fund to be used to help finance the cost of future capital projects in the district. The purpose of this fund will be to offset the local share of capital construction costs so the projects do not lead to increased taxes.

The intention of the Board of Education is to prepare for upcoming capital projects that will include high school kitchen updates, driveway repairs, sidewalk replacements and other needed repairs to the buildings and grounds. This fund will have a maximum term of ten (10) years and will be funded yearly by the amounts determined appropriate by the Board of Education using savings the District may realize at the end of the fiscal year.

Voters will consider authorizing the district to create this fund, which may be funded up to \$5,000,000 over the course of the next ten years. This reserve fund will allow the Board of Education to plan necessary future capital projects with the ability to reduce the amount of borrowing. Reduced borrowing will keep debt service stabilized and not add to the tax levy.

See more on page 7.

Proposition #4: Libraries

The Trustees of the Aurora Free Library are seeking a \$6,000 increase, to help support the library's annual operation and maintenance, as well as capital property improvements. The Hazard Library Association is not requesting an increase.

With taxpayer approval, the annual library tax levy will increase from \$110,150 to \$116,150 per year for the support of both the Aurora Free Library (\$66,150) and the Hazard Library Association (\$50,000). The school district has a legal obligation to put the proposal before the voters when an increase is requested. It is separate from the school budget proposal.

Propositions #3: School Vehicles

On May 21, voters will consider a proposition for the purchase of school buses.

If Proposition #3 is approved, the district will borrow \$213,656 to purchase two 66-passenger buses and one Dodge Durango for student transport. The original purchase price is \$283,656; the trade-in discounts for older, higher mileage buses will reduce the cost. This purchase is eligible for approximately \$121,783 in state aid, which is more than half of the purchase price. This cost is included in the debt service calculation for 2019/20, which does not increase the proposed budget.



This purchase is part of an on-going five-year bus replacement plan to preserve the resale value of bus trade-ins and provide coverage under a five-year/150,000-mile warranty for parts and service, reducing expenses.





Board of Education Candidates

On May 21 voters will cast their ballots for candidates to fill three open seats on the Southern Cayuga Central School District Board of Education. Candidates are Bruce Kopp, Matthew Bennett and Susan Gloss.

The school board is made up of seven non-paid citizens elected to serve overlapping terms of three years each. Together they establish district policies, develop an annual budget proposal, approve or disapprove the superintendent's recommendations on personnel matters and contracts and act as a communication link between residents and the superintendent.

To learn more about the school board, visit www.southerncayuga.org, click on District in the drop-down menu and then click on Board of Education.



Bruce Kopp of King Ferry is retired from IBM, Fujitsu and Honeywell. He and his wife Carin have three daughters, two in college and one in SCCS high school. Bruce is a graduate of SCCS, SUNY Oneonta and has an MBA in finance from Babson College in Massachusetts. As a past member of the school board, Bruce served as President, Vice President and was a member of the Audit, Budget and Athletic committees. He has been a volunteer for CCYO youth basketball and King Ferry Food Pantry. He was born, raised and educated in the SCCS district and owns a business in King Ferry.

"I look forward to serving on the board to promote student education in both the classroom and in extra-curricular activities. We have outstanding resources in people and facilities and I believe we can continue to grow and prosper for the benefit of all."

Matthew Bennett of Aurora is seeking a second term on the board. He is employed by NYSEG as a substation construction and maintenance person. He and his wife Jodi have three children in the SCCS schools; Conner in 12th grade, Sophia in 9th grade and Charli in 6th grade. Matthew is a graduate of SCCS and attended Morrisville State College. He is involved with the Southern Cayuga youth basketball league on the steering committee. His board commitments have included Athletics, Audit and Directions committee.

"After completing my first term as a board member, I have learned so much. The experience gained from the past three years will assist me in my duties as a board member. As a lifetime Southern Cayuga community member, I want to help our students have the best education possible. We all benefit from a strong school district and I enjoy helping to achieve this."



Board candidates continued on next page.

Board candidates continued.



Susan Gloss of King Ferry is running for a fourth term on the board. She is employed by Wells College as an Electronic Resources Librarian. Susan and her husband John have three children attending SCCS; daughters Betsy in 11th grade, Julia in 9th grade and son Charlie in 4th grade. Susan has a master's degree in library science. As a member of the school board, Susan has served as President & Vice President and as a member of the Athletics, Facilities, Policy, Safety, Transportation and Directions committees.

"I am running for the board because I am intensely interested in offering an excellent education to the children in our community. We are fortunate that the school is able to offer a wide variety of learning and extra-curricular opportunities for our students. I will continue to support innovative initiatives and work to continue excellence in teaching and learning. I am particularly interested in the upkeep of our facilities and look forward to working to see the solar project completed and offering another financial stream to help support the finances of the school. One of the most challenging aspects of being a school board member is funding programming while balancing the budget. If elected, I will continue to work with other members of the board to plan responsibly to continue to offer our students an outstanding education."

HELP WANTED

The Southern Cayuga School District is seeking applicants for school bus drivers. Full-time bus drivers receive a competitive wage and benefit package, including health and dental insurance.

SCCS also continually recruits applicants for various substitute positions; school bus drivers; food service helpers; cleaners; teacher aides; teachers; teaching assistants.

We offer competitive wages for substitute bus drivers (\$19 per hour) and bus driver trainees (\$12 per hour).

Apply online. Go to southerncayuga.org/644, click on the application in the right column.

Support Staff Applicants: use the [Support Staff Application](#)

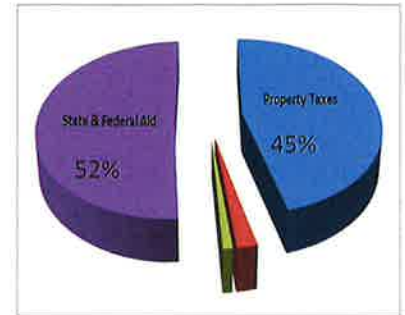
Teacher and Teaching Assistants Applicants: use the [Professional Employment Application](#)

Southern Cayuga Central School, 2384 Route 34B, Aurora NY 13026. SCCS EOE.



Where does the money come from?

	Approved	Proposed	Percent
	2018-19	2019-20	Change
State and Federal Aid	\$8,926,323	\$9,169,271	2.72%
Appropriated Fund Balance	\$ 357,368	\$ 357,368	0.00%
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$ 235,834	\$ 191,451	-18.82%
Property Tax Levy	\$7,992,632	\$8,072,558	1.00%
Total Revenue	\$17,512,157	\$17,790,648	



■ Appropriated Fund Balance 2.0%
■ Miscellaneous: 1.0%



Under contingency, there would be \$177,077 worth of reductions in programs and services

If the proposed budget is defeated by voters, the SCCS Board of Education, as in the past, will have the option of putting the same or a revised budget up for a revote, or adopting a contingent budget. If voters reject the budget twice, the district must adopt a contingent budget.

More significantly, under the law, if SCCS adopts a contingent budget, the district would have to keep its 2019/20 tax levy the same as or less than its 2018/19 tax levy; in effect a 0% tax levy increase. In other words, the district would have to levy the same amount of taxes as in 2018/19 or less without any adjustments for contractual obligations or other costs, whether or not they are mandated.

Adopting a contingent budget would prohibit SCCS from spending any money in certain areas, including community use of school facilities (unless all costs are reimbursed to the district); new equipment purchases; non-essential maintenance; capital expenditures (except in emergencies); salary increases for non-instructional, non-unionized employees; and certain field trips and student supplies. Contingency rules also cap the growth of the administrative component of the budget.

Where does the \$17,790,648 go?

INSTRUCTION: 51.21% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Teaching, Regular School	\$4,210,662	\$4,291,562
Occupational Education	\$591,027	\$420,903
Special Education	\$2,338,887	\$2,435,277
Staff Development	\$17,000	\$17,000
Teaching, Administration	\$444,196	\$473,713
Library	\$140,060	\$143,206
Technology	\$603,979	\$608,504
Guidance	\$256,300	\$260,585
Health Services	\$93,200	\$103,400
Psychological Services	\$33,325	\$33,325
Co-curricular Activities	\$95,000	\$100,000
Athletics	\$161,592	\$202,704
Community	\$16,200	\$20,200
Total	\$9,001,974	\$9,110,379
Percent Change		1.20%

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS: 22.11% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Health Insurance	\$2,179,262	\$2,164,262
Teachers' Retirement	\$650,000	\$650,000
Employees' Retirement	\$250,000	\$250,000
Social Security	\$513,080	\$513,080
Workers' Compensation	\$121,000	\$121,000
Unemployment	\$15,000	\$15,000
Dental & Vision	\$15,500	\$20,000
Other Benefits	\$200,000	\$200,000
Total	\$3,943,842	\$3,933,342
Percent Change		-0.27%

OPERATIONS/MAINTENANCE: 6.33% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Custodial Services	\$743,530	\$770,530
Maintenance	\$348,950	\$355,721
Total	\$1,092,480	\$1,126,251
Percent Change		3.09%

DEBT SERVICE/TRANSFERS: 9.33% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Construction	\$1,176,050	\$1,269,350
Buses	\$261,750	\$280,218
Interfund Transfer*	\$110,500	\$110,500
Total	\$1,548,300	\$1,660,068
Percent Change		7.22%

* includes proposed \$100K Capital Outlay Project

TRANSPORTATION: 5.66% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Transportation	\$966,782	\$974,796
Garage	\$28,800	\$32,700
Total	\$995,582	\$1,007,496
Percent Change		1.20%

DISTRICT SUPPORT: 5.36% of proposed budget

	<u>2018/19</u>	<u>2019/20</u>
Board of Education	\$24,201	\$24,251
Central Administration	\$216,105	\$219,888
Business Administration	\$318,454	\$328,404
Auditing	\$18,355	\$18,355
Treasurer	\$59,337	\$61,068
Tax Collection	\$4,000	\$4,000
Legal Services	\$70,000	\$70,000
Personnel	\$30,740	\$30,740
Insurance	\$80,500	\$83,500
BOCES Administration/Capital	\$108,287	\$112,906
Total	\$929,979	\$953,112
Percent Change		2.49%





Capital Reserve Fund

What is a capital reserve fund?

A capital reserve fund allows the district to set aside money for future construction projects and major purchases. It can be likened to a savings account. The capital reserve fund is established with voter approval.

Will my taxes go up due to the establishment of a capital reserve fund?

No, your taxes will not increase due to the establishment of a capital reserve fund.

Why establish a capital reserve fund now?

The fund can only be established with voter approval; therefore, its establishment must be placed on a ballot. Asking the voters to decide on this proposition during the May 21 election saves the district and taxpayers from having to finance a separate referendum at a later time. When the district needs to fund a major construction project in the future, it will be better prepared to do so.

Didn't the district just approve a building project? Why would we need to build more?

There are still areas within the district that need to be renovated and/or will need replacement in the future, such as high school kitchen updates, driveway repairs, sidewalk replacements and other needed repairs to the buildings and grounds. Saving for such projects now will help to offset any required funding in the future.

Didn't the district already create a capital reserve fund?

The district did create a capital reserve in 2016 for the very specific purpose of the roof replacement on the Emily Howland Elementary side of the building. This project has been completed and closed out, and we will transfer any monies remaining from this reserve into the newly created capital reserve.

How will it be funded?

Once the reserve is created, the Board of Education will direct funds into the reserve by resolution at a regularly scheduled public meeting, due to realized savings throughout the year, or through the transfer of unexpended funds from other reserve accounts.

Why do we need this?

- A capital reserve is a savings account for monies to be used only for capital project costs.
- Voters must approve its establishment, its capacity, its duration and the future distribution of funds.
- The term of the fund will be ten years, with a maximum amount not to exceed \$5M dollars.
- Through responsible, conservative fiscal management, we will be able to direct funds into this reserve over the course of its ten-year duration to offset the local share of capital construction costs so such projects do not lead to increased taxes.
- With this vote, voters are authorizing the Southern Cayuga Central Schools to create the fund, defining the amount of money that may be placed into it over the course of its term, and defining the term of the fund.



What is a “tax levy limit” and is SCCS below its limit?

The tax levy limit is the highest allowable tax levy a school district can propose for which only the approval of a simple majority of voters (50 percent plus one) is required. The limit is calculated using a multi-step formula that takes into account any allowable exclusions (such as pension costs and capital expenditures). Any proposed tax levy above this limit requires budget approval by a super majority of voters (60 percent). The 2019/20 budget includes a tax levy increase below the limit. This year’s levy requires passage by a simple majority of voters.

How is the tax levy different from a tax rate?

The tax levy is the total amount of money raised from local taxpayers; the tax rate is the amount of tax residents pay per \$1,000 of property value. In 2019/20 the school tax levy would increase by 1.0 percent if passed by voters.

What happens if the budget is defeated?

If the proposed budget is defeated in May, the SCCS Board of Education can put another budget -- revised or not -- up for a vote in June or immediately adopt a contingency budget. If the budget is defeated twice, SCCS would have to adopt a contingency budget, with a 0% tax levy increase, which would mean \$177,077 in reductions to programs and services (see page 5).

What is a STAR exemption and how does it reduce my school taxes?

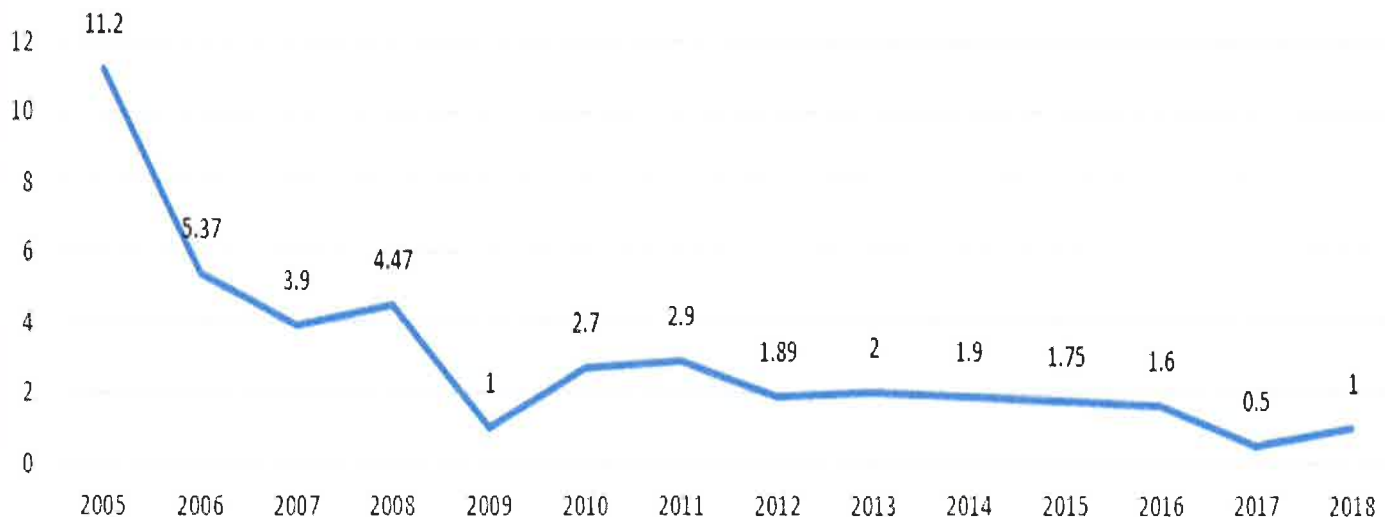
Community members who own a home can significantly reduce their school property taxes through a School Tax Relief (STAR) exemption, which is paid for through state taxes. Homeowners must apply through their town assessor’s office to be eligible for this tax break. Learn more at www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/index.htm.

How is my tax bill calculated?

Individual tax bills are calculated using:

- The assessed value of each property,
- Any applicable exemptions (e.g. STAR),
- The current school tax rate.

Historical Tax Levy Increases





What exactly will I see on the ballot on May 21?

Proposition #1 — School Budget

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to-wit:

RESOLVED that the Board of Education of the Southern Cayuga Central School District, Counties of Cayuga and Tompkins, New York, be and hereby is authorized to expend the sum of \$17,790,648 and levy the necessary tax therefore.

Proposition #2 — Capital Reserve

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to-wit:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Southern Cayuga Central School District, Cayuga and Tompkins Counties, New York, is hereby authorized to establish a capital reserve fund for (a) the construction of improvements to and reconstruction of School District buildings and facilities, including site improvements and original furnishings, equipment, machinery, apparatus, appurtenances, and incidental improvements and expenses in connection therewith, and (b) the purchase of school buses and other student transport vehicles, including incidental equipment and expenses in connection therewith, at an ultimate amount of \$5,000,000, plus accrued interest and investment earnings, with a probable term of ten (10) years, the source of funding to be surplus dollars and/or legally available funds available to the District when it closes its books every June 30.

Proposition #3 — Bus Purchases

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to-wit:

RESOLVED, that the Board of Education of the Southern Cayuga Central School District, Cayuga and Tompkins Counties, New York, is hereby authorized to pay the cost of the purchase of school buses at an aggregate maximum estimated cost of \$283,656, and said amount, or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall 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 shall be issued.

Proposition #4 — Local Libraries

Shall the following resolution be adopted, to-wit:

RESOLVED that the Board of Education for the Southern Cayuga Central School District is hereby authorized to raise the tax levy from \$110,150 to \$116,150 for the support and operation of the Aurora Free Library (\$66,150) and the Hazard Library Association (\$50,000). If not approved by the voters, the amount raised will remain at the current annual level of \$110,150.

Board of Education Election: Vote for up to three of the three candidates.

IMPORTANT — *Changes coming to the STAR program*

If you currently receive your STAR benefit as a reduction on your school tax bill (the STAR exemption), you may receive a greater benefit if you switch to the STAR credit to receive a check instead.

Recent changes in the law beginning this year:

The value of the STAR credit savings may increase by as much as 2 percent each year, but the value of the **STAR exemption savings will not increase**. The income limit for the Basic STAR is now \$250,000. If your income is more than \$250,000, you must switch to the STAR credit to continue receiving a STAR benefit. If your income is \$250,000 or less, you have the option to switch. To switch to the STAR credit, notify your assessor to withdraw from the STAR exemption.

Changes to STAR and Maximum Exemptions for 2019-20

The 2019-20 Enacted State Budget makes several changes to the STAR program, which went into effect immediately. The changes are intended to encourage home owners to switch from the STAR exemption to the STAR credit. The income limit for the exemption has been lowered to \$250,000, compared with a \$500,000 limit for the credit. The amount received for the exemption will remain the same each year, while the credit can increase up to two percent annually.

The switch from the exemption to the credit is final. There is no fee for switching from the exemption to the credit. If someone wants to renounce the exemption to receive the credit, they have to do so prior to December 31 of the relevant year. If the switch doesn't affect any rolls that have already been filed, property owners can simply submit a request in writing, signed by all owners, stating they no longer wish to receive the STAR Exemption on their property. For renunciations after taxes are levied, property owners need to complete and submit Form RP-496. The STAR exemption and removal site has more information on the process: <https://www.tax.ny.gov/pit/property/star/star-renunciation.htm>.

Please continually check the NYS taxation and finance website for updated information as it becomes available.

ABSENTEE BALLOTS

How do I vote by absentee ballot?

Qualified district residents can vote by absentee ballot if they will be unable to appear in person on the day of the school district election. Reasons listed on the application that qualify to vote by absentee ballot include being hospitalized, being out of the area on business, being on vacation, being detained in jail.

To vote by absentee ballot, one must first fill out an absentee ballot application with qualified reason. An application can be obtained from the district clerk in the district office or by calling 315-364-7211. Completed applications must be received by the district clerk at least seven (7) days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter or the day before the election if the ballot is to be delivered personally to the voter. The sooner an application is requested, the sooner a ballot can be mailed back to the voter and received by the district in time to be counted. Absentee ballots must be returned no later than 5:00 pm on May 21.

Residents who are listed by Cayuga County Board of Elections as permanently disabled will automatically receive an absentee ballot sent to them in the US mail. If you think you qualify for a permanent absentee ballot and are not already receiving one, please contact the Board of Elections. 315-253-1285





School districts are required by state law to mail this information to all households within the district. For more budget information, call the District Office at 315 364-7211.

DEFINITIONS

The state requires school districts to present their annual budgets in three parts: program, administrative and capital.

ADMINISTRATIVE: The administrative portion of the budget provides for the majority of the instructional support services in the district. It includes salaries and benefits of all professional staff members who spend 50 percent or more of their time in administration and supervision; salaries and benefits of clerical staff for administrators; curriculum development and supervision; research, planning and evaluation; central data processing; tax collection; most legal services; and school board costs.

PROGRAM: The program portion of the budget is associated with providing instruction and support services to 700 SCCS students. It includes salaries and benefits of all teachers, guidance counselors, nurses, aides and monitors. It also includes costs for transportation, co-curricular and interscholastic athletics, in-service training, library and health.

CAPITAL: The capital portion of the budget is associated with operating and maintaining the district's 191,400 square feet of buildings and 104.6 acres of grounds. It includes debt service on buildings; school bus purchases; tax certiorari and court-ordered costs; and salaries and benefits of all custodial staff.

SCHOOL BUDGET NOTICE	Budget Adopted for the 2018/19 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2019/20 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2019/20 School Year*
Total budgeted amount, not including separate propositions	\$17,512,157	\$17,790,648	\$17,613,571
Increase or decrease for 2019/20 school year		\$278,491	-\$177,077
Percentage increase/decrease in proposed budget		1.6%	-1.0%
Change in the consumer price index		2.44%	
A. Proposed tax levy to support the total budgeted amount	\$7,992,632	\$8,072,558	
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)	\$7,992,632	\$8,072,558	
F. Permissible exclusions to the school tax levy limit	\$511,665	\$445,302	
G. School tax levy limit, excluding levy for permissible exclusions	\$7,500,219	\$7,680,813	
H. Total proposed tax levy for school purposes, excluding permissible exclusions and levy for library debt, plus prior year tax cap reserve (E-B-F+D)	\$7,480,967	\$7,627,256	
I. Difference (G-H); negative value requires 60% voter approval; see note below regarding separate propositions**	\$19,252	\$53,557	
1. Administrative Component	\$1,459,381	\$1,594,344	\$1,582,234
2. Program Component	\$13,169,909	\$13,223,068	\$13,170,161
3. Capital Component	\$2,882,867	\$2,973,236	\$2,861,176

* Pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law, if the proposed budget is defeated in May, the SCCS Board of Education can put another budget – the same or revised – up for a vote in June or immediately adopt a contingent budget. After two unsuccessful votes, the district must adopt a contingent budget. Contingency would mean further reducing the proposed budget by \$177,077, resulting in additional reductions for programs and services.

Separate Propositions that are not included in the Total Budgeted Amount: (Tax Levy associated with educational or transportation services propositions are not eligible for exclusion and may affect voter approval requirements.)

Description	Amount
Capital Reserve Creation	\$5,000,000
Bus Purchases	\$283,656
Library Support	\$116,150

Under the budget proposed for the 2019/20 school year:
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings

\$404

¹ The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2019/20 by the qualified voters of the Southern Cayuga Central School District, Cayuga and Tompkins Counties, New York, will be held on Tuesday, May 21, 2019, between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, prevailing time, **in the district office** at the Poplar Ridge campus, 2384 State Route 34B, Aurora, at which time the polls will be open to vote by voting machine.



2384 Route 34B
Aurora, NY 13026

**Box Holder or
Rural Route**

Non-Profit
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Poplar Ridge, NY
13139



Rambling Reporter

Vote Day Details

What exactly will I be voting on?

- * Budget; \$17,790,648
- * New Capital Reserve
- * Buses; \$283,656
- * Libraries; \$116,150

When and where is the vote?

Tuesday, May 21, from 7:00 am till 9:00 pm in the SCCS district office.

Who is eligible to vote?

American citizens at least 18 years of age and who have lived in the district for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

Do I need to pre-register to vote?

No pre-registration is required.

How do I vote by absentee ballot?

Obtain an application at the district office or by calling 315-364-7211. Completed applications must be received by the district clerk at least seven (7) days before the election if the ballot is to be mailed to the voter or the day before the election if the ballot is to be delivered personally to the voter. Absentee ballots must be returned no later than 5:00 pm on May 21.

**The Budget Hearing is
Monday, May 13, 7:00 pm,
HS Library.**

