

Barrington Public Schools: Fiscal Year 2018 (FY18) Budget

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

The following information from the Barrington Public Schools and the Barrington School Committee provides members of the community with additional detail about issues related to the school district's proposed budget for the 2017-2018 school year.

1. What is the FY18 Budget as recommended by the Committee on Appropriations (COA) that will be presented at the Financial Town Meeting?

Originally, the Committee on Appropriations (COA) recommended "level funding" for the school district next year, in contrast to the "level services" budget that had been proposed by the Administration and School Committee. Level funding would mean that funding for the schools would be the same next year as it is this year. At a meeting of the COA on May 16, this recommendation for level funding was revised to restore \$800,000 to the COA's recommended FY18 operating budget, for a total proposed FY18 operating budget of \$48,766,398. This amount is approximately \$402,448 lower than the level services budget proposed by the Administration and the School Committee.

2. What was the FY18 operating budget as proposed by the Administration and the School Committee?

The Administration and the School Committee submitted a budget proposal of \$49,166,398. This budget provides for "level services", meaning that it would cover the increased costs associated with maintaining all existing programs and services, with no funding for new initiatives or programs. A level services budget would require an increase of approximately \$1.2 million, including \$794,000 associated with contractual obligations for staff salaries and benefits, and an estimated \$370,000 increase in special education student support services.

This level services budget request was the result of significant work by the Administration to identify reductions in many areas where greater funding had originally been proposed in order to minimize the impact on taxpayers.

3. What would the impact of the COA's recommended budget be on the Barrington Public Schools?

In order to close the gap between the requested "level services" budget and the "level funding" budget originally recommended by the COA, the Administration proposed, and the School Committee approved, approximately \$1.2 million in cost reductions for next year.

The COA's recommended schools' budget for FY18, as revised on May 16, restored \$800,000 but is still \$402,448 less than the level services budget proposed by the Administration and School Committee. Because the COA's recommended budget does not cover the increased costs associated with a level services budget, and will not preserve all current academic, athletic and extracurricular programs, the Administration and School Committee will be required to identify \$402,448 in reductions for next year.

4. If the COA's recommended budget is approved, how will the Administration and School Committee identify areas for reduction?

The Administration will, once again, utilize a comprehensive process for the identification of possible reductions to the FY18 operating budget. The Administration will evaluate all components of the pre-K to 12 educational program, looking carefully at the impact of any potential cuts on programs and schools. State and Federal mandates, the Rhode Island Basic Education Program (BEP), and graduation requirements as defined by the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) will be prioritized. Any potential cuts have an impact on students, student enrollment distribution, student/teacher ratios, elimination of programs and course electives are all factors which will be considered. Class size in core subject areas will be reviewed again with the Barrington High School administrative team. The Athletic Director will provide information regarding the District's athletic offerings, including student participation in different programs and the cost per student by program. Once a budget has been approved at the Financial Town Meeting, all reductions, as identified by the Administration, will receive close scrutiny by the School Committee.

5. Given the proposed elimination of all middle school athletics programs and some high school athletics programs, could these expenses be covered through fees paid by families?

No. State laws and regulations prevent school districts from charging the user fees that some neighboring states impose.

6. What are the property tax levy increases associated with the COA's recommended School Budget as compared to the budget as submitted by the Administration and the School Committee?

The COA's recommended FY18 total schools operating budget including the reinstatement of \$800k, would result in a property tax levy increase of 28 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The level services budget of \$49,166,398 as submitted by the Administration and School Committee, would result in a property tax levy increase of an additional 14 cents of assessed valuation, for a total increase of 42 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. This does not include the tax increase resulting from the municipal budget, capital budget, and Middle School Bond.

7. Is it true that the Barrington Public Schools "spends down" its accounts in June?

The large increase in spending in June includes the advanced payment of teacher salaries and benefits. Article 24, Section 2 of the collective bargaining agreement with the National Education Association Barrington (NEAB) includes the following statement: "All persons on the Teachers' Salary Schedule will be paid in twenty-six (26) equal installments commencing in September, provided, however, those payments due during the months of July and August shall be paid prior to June 30."

8. Is it true that BPS ends every fiscal year with a budget surplus?

The Barrington Public Schools budget is a balanced budget, yet some expenses vary and are not as easily estimated in advance, such as support services for special education and out of district tuition. During the year, the Administration monitors all costs and makes adjustments as needed. As a result, the District has, in recent years, ended the school year within approximately 1.5% of the total approved budget. The Town and School Department have been acknowledged by bond rating agencies for their responsible fiscal management of funds. Any surplus funds at the end of the school year are used for one-time, long-term capital Improvement projects, which are eligible for 35% State Housing Aid reimbursement. The strategic use of these funds for facility repairs and improvements has allowed our community to avoid issuing bonds for many capital projects.

[Here is a link to the most recent completed projects.](#)

The following documents provide additional information about the approximately \$1.2 million in reductions proposed prior to the COA restoration of \$800,000:

- [PowerPoint: Impact report on proposed FY18 budget reductions](#), May 4, 2017
- [Memo: Superintendent's FY18 budget update to the School Committee](#), May 5, 2017
- [Link to list of Proposed Programs Impacted based on the \\$1.2m Reductions](#) May 5, 2017