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Putnam Central School

Putnam Central School Plans Tax Cut In Proposed 1996-97 Budget

The Board of Education at Putnam Central School has proposed a budget for the 1996-97 academic year of \$1,166,119, as compared to the current budget of \$1,149,221. This represents an increase of only \$16,898, totaling 1.4 percent. In addition, the new budget, up for a vote on May 8, would *decrease* taxes for Putnam residents by approximately 1.4 percent, according to school Superintendent Susanne Fulmer.

“In building our 1996-97 proposed budget, our Board of Education has worked hard to provide for a quality education program and also maintain fiscal responsibility,” Fulmer said. “I feel they have succeeded in spite of the fact that state aid allocations are not yet determined, and significant decreases in BOCES aid, special education aids, and federal funding are predicted.”

In order to help accomplish long-term goals while maintaining stable tax rates, the Board of Education will also present to voters a budget proposition to set up a Building Reconstruction Reserve Fund which will be funded with state building aid, unappropriated fund balance, and/or future appropriations approved by the voters. Approval of this proposition does **not** entail a levy of additional taxes.

The Shared Decision-Making Team, made up of community members, parents, faculty and school officials, has developed the following mission statement: *To inspire and nurture students in the pursuit of knowledge which will enable them to make good life choices.* Many community members have expressed their support for this mission and have helped to work toward accomplishing it through active participation in school activities such as planning and fund-raising events for a new playground. These efforts are paying off, Fulmer said. Putnam students continue to perform at high levels in state testing programs and many other measures of success, such as the persistent appearance of secondary students on the middle school and high school honor rolls.

This year, Fulmer said, a grant program enabled the school to purchase computer equipment and software to link each classroom to the Internet, helping faculty to teach the children to understand, appreciate and succeed in the new information age.

In preparing the budget, board members worked to overcome a 6.2 percent increase in health insurance rates, an estimated 5 percent increase in tuition for secondary students, and increases in transportation costs of approximately 3 percent. Because of the recent retirement of three members of Putnam’s teaching staff, the district has realized savings which have translated into a return of \$38,000 to the taxpayers to reduce the 1995-1996 tax rate, as well as the accrual of reserves to build long-term stability into the budget.

The school’s annual meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 7 in the school, and residents are encouraged to attend, Fulmer said. The budget vote is scheduled for Wednesday, May 8, 1-8 p.m. in the school.

“I am delighted that the School Board’s hard work and careful planning have resulted in an estimated tax rate decrease for 1996-1997, and I am hopeful that our school district residents will bring any questions about the budget to our Annual Meeting, and turn out in strong numbers to vote,” Fulmer said.