

Amherst Schools

Additional state aid among items to lower budget

by **PATRICK J. NAGY**
Reporter

The Amherst Central School District received more state aid than anticipated from the New York State 2007-08 budget.

At the April 3 Board of Education meeting, Mark Whyle, the district's director of administrative services, said Amherst has received \$858,000 of additional revenue for the next school year, which he said is by far the most significant change of projected district revenues ever from a governor's proposal.

The increased state aid is one way the district can decrease the

proposed tax levy from an increase of 7.04 percent to between 1 and 2 percent. Other proposed reductions could come from \$792,000 in health insurance, as a result of the district's adopting a self-insurance program, and a host of items from district departments totaling \$325,000.

Whyle said the district is projecting a total surplus of \$1.8 million at the end of the year. Of that amount, \$800,000 can remain unreserved and undesignated, he said.

"The remaining \$1 million must be either appropriated to support next year's budget or placed in a

reserve," Whyle said.

Whyle said the suggestion is to appropriate approximately \$750,000 to support the budget next year and to reserve the remainder to cover the self-insurance coverage.

The new figures would lower the tentative budget from \$41,008,000 to \$40,235,000 for a 3.75 percent decrease and the levy from \$26,562,200 to \$25,040,000 for a 0.91 percent reduction.

The board must adopt the budget at the April 17 meeting.

In other matters:

The board approved Read 180 for Windermere Boulevard Ele-

mentary School this fall. Read 180 is a comprehensive reading intervention program designed to help students whose reading achievement is below the proficiency level.

Scott Payne, the director of special education, said the program gives students and teachers immediate feedback on students' performances through assessments. Read 180 has already been implemented at the middle school. The Read 180 program at Windermere, which includes training, will cost \$20,700 with BOCES aid.

The board approved the ratification of the Amherst Office Per-

sonnel Association's new contract. The four-year agreement is retroactive from the 2005-06 through the 2009-10 school year. Whyle said the new contract provides a 3 percent raise to the salary schedule. Office personnel also agreed to participate in a single health insurance provider.

The board's May 1 meeting will officially start at 8 p.m. in the district office boardroom in the rear of Amherst Middle School following a presentation on the proposed capital project at 7 p.m. in the school's auditorium.

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State aid would fund renovations at Sweet Home

by **DAVID F. SHERMAN**
Managing Editor

The Sweet Home Central School District Board of Education has approved a \$60,311,708 budget for the academic year 2007-08.

The budget, adopted unanimously, represents an increase of 5.83 percent compared to the current spending plan.

District officials said an increase in state aid this year will result in the tax levy rising by 1.81 percent, although the impact on the tax rate will not be known until equalization rates are released by the State Office of Real Property.

Sweet Home officials anticipate the tax bill for a home in the Amherst portion of the district to increase between \$15 and \$25. A similar home in the Town of Tonawanda could see a tax bill change ranging from a \$21 decrease to an \$18 increase.

In addition to the budget, voters will also be asked to decide the fate of two additional propositions. The first would authorize spending \$428,100 for six school buses.

The second proposition would authorize the spending of \$3.6

million of New York State Excel aid for renovations to five of the district's six buildings.

The \$3.6 million Excel renovation project will have zero impact on the local taxpayer, according to district officials.

A total of \$1.2 million of the project will be covered by a state aid program called Excel Aid, with the remaining being covered by state building aid.

Excel Aid is a one-time fund provided by New York State for building projects. If district voters choose not to use this state aid, then the state would retain the money. If approved, the state aid reimbursement would mean no local financial impact on taxpayers of the Sweet Home Central School District.

To be eligible for Excel Aid, 75 percent of expenses for proposed building projects must fall within five categories outlined by New York State.

The categories are education technology, health and safety of school buildings including safety

measures for building occupants, accessibility for those with disabilities, physical capacity expansion or school construction, and energy cost and consumption reduction.

The proposed project at Sweet

Home centers on the health and safety and accessibility categories by making each school building a safe place for all students, visitors and community, accord-

ing to Superintendent Geoff Hicks.

Voters will also elect three members to the Board of Education. The five-year terms of Michael F. Morrow and Douglas J. Galli and the one-year term of Scott M. Johnson each expire on June 30. Morrow previously announced he will not seek re-election.

The annual district vote will take place from noon to 9 p.m. Tuesday, May 15 at Sweet Home High School, 1901 Sweet Home Road. Voting was relocated this year because of construction at the Middle School.

✓ **Sweet Home Central School District Board of Education adopts \$60,311,708 budget for the academic year 2007-08 — an increase of 5.83 percent.**



St. Gregory the Great's quiz bowl champion team is honored by Cardinal O'Hara High School Principal Michael Powers, right. From St. Greg's moderator Monica Pusatier and her team (from left to right) Joseph Schnitter, Timothy Hartigan and Michael Agostinelli, accept the first place trophy on March 28.

St. Greg's wins quiz bowl

St. Gregory the Great School in Williamsville placed first among a field of competitors in the annual quiz bowl for Catholic elementary schools on March 28.

St. Greg's Quiz Bowl Moderator was Monica Pusatier and the winning team was Joseph Schnitter, Timothy Hartigan and Michael Agostinelli.

Cardinal O'Hara High School, host of the competition, was the setting as seven schools faced off in an academic competition.

"The schools compete in two rounds with three parts to each round, the top three scoring teams go on to the final round to compete for the top quiz bowl honors," said Joan Mullin, Cardinal O'Hara's chapter of the National Honor Society moderator.

The NHS members write and research the questions. Categories included, American history, religion, fine arts, current events, math and geography.

The teams that participated this year were: St. Paul's School, St. Joseph University, St. John the Baptist (Alden), St. Gregory the Great, St. Andrew Country Day School, St. John the Baptist (Kenmore), and Catholic Academy of West Buffalo.

In addition to St. Greg's placing first, St. Paul's came in second and St. John the Baptist from Kenmore placed third.

School News

Philip Limina, a Williamsville South High School senior and culinary student at Erie 1 BOCES Harkness Career and Technical Center, won a \$1,500 per year scholarship to Paul Smith's College for his second place win in their culinary competition. He is a sous chef at Trattoria Aroma.

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There were times I was up all night long working, but it paid off... The art program is great, it's a lot of work, but a lot of fun.

— Michael Krukowski
Graphic Design

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School News

Cynthia McNamara and Victoria Milona, both of Williamsville and Erie Community College students, have been named as recipients of the prestigious SUNY Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence. They will be honored at an awards ceremony Wednesday, April 18 at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in Albany. The students will also be honored at ECC's 59th annual commencement ceremony on Wednesday, May 23 at Kleinhans Music Hall.

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