

Clarence Bee Article – February 2018

Geoffrey Hicks, Ed.D.

Clarence Superintendent of Schools

Crafting the 2018-19 School Budget

The Board of Education started the budget construction process for the 2018-19 school year with two goals; to protect the core programs of the district and to exhibit fiscal responsibility with our community's tax dollars. The second public budget study session was conducted on February 26, 2018. The second draft of the budget proposed at that session met both of those goals.

On the expense side of the budget, the current draft increases spending year over year by 3.6 percent. Over seventy-five percent of expenses in the budget are for salaries and benefits, and as expected, those areas represent the majority of the increase. Spending increases in Clarence have traditionally been lower than other school districts. There have been a number of factors that have mitigated spending increases over the years. This year, the district negotiated a retirement incentive with the Clarence Teachers' Association, which will result in twenty-two retirements and reduced spending on salaries for 2018-19. Our plan is to replace all of the retiring teachers. Also, we are recommending that Board of Education consider adding a guidance counselor and additional dollars to the general fund for curriculum and staff development and technology.

There are two major sources of school funding on the revenue side of the budget, property taxes and state school aid. The recommended tax levy increase for 2018-19 is 3.9 percent, which is significantly lower than the property tax cap number. Tax levy increases in Clarence have been traditionally very low and the estimated increase for 2018-19 on a home valued at \$200,000 is \$72, if that home has undergone a revaluation in assessment. If the home has not been re-assessed, the estimated increase would be much lower.

Unfortunately, New York State has not provided adequate funding to Clarence for the past ten years and the Governor's proposed school aid for 2018-19 is no different. The Executive Budget does not provide enough funding to keep Clarence operating at last year's level and it would essentially change the existing Foundation Aid formula, leaving districts with no basis for forecasting potential future aid. The Governor also proposes to spend over \$100 million on new programs, which Clarence does not qualify for.

We encourage the community to give us feedback on the budget process. All budget information can be found on our website. The third budget study session is scheduled for March 26th and will be held in the Clarence High School Lecture Hall.