

Budget Clarification # 1

Misleading Assertion: District ignores 2% tax cap.

Fact: The allowable tax levy increase for Manhasset's 2013-2014 School Budget is 0.15%, not the often touted 2%. Simply put, if the District were to comply with the tax cap, the 2013-2014 tax levy could only be \$118,923 higher than the 2012-2013 tax levy. Given that state-mandated benefit expenditures, alone, increase costs totaling approximately \$1.5 million, the District must pierce the cap to maintain programming in the 4 A's: academics, athletics, arts and activities (co-curricular programs).

Budget Clarification #2

Misleading Assertion: Surrounding Districts are meeting their tax cap.

Fact: There is not a school district in Nassau County who has stayed within the parameters of the tax cap without using reserves and/or making cuts.

Using Garden City as an example, their maximum allowable tax levy increase is 3.91% while Manhasset's allowable tax levy increase is 0.15%. To stay within a tax cap limit that is almost 4 times higher than Manhasset, Garden City is using over \$3 million of reserves to lower their tax levy. Responding to community pressure, Manhasset has returned \$8.4 million to the taxpayers over the last 4 years, so all funds of this type have now been exhausted.

Other districts in Nassau County have cut hundreds of teaching positions, eliminated after-school inter-scholastic sports at the middle school level, cut elective courses, closed schools, reduced AP course offerings and deferred textbook purchases, among other impactful cuts, to stay within the parameters of the tax cap.

For Manhasset to stay within the calculated limit, the district would have to make over \$4.5 million in cuts, which would severely undermine Manhasset's nationally renowned educational program.

Budget Clarification # 3

Misleading Assertion: Teacher salaries increase, on average, 6% a year.

Fact: The percentage cited is incorrect. The current 2-year contract includes a 0% raise for 2012-13 and a 1% raise for 2013-14. The teachers agreed to take only half a contractually mandated "step increase," resulting in average total increases of under 1% in 2012-13 and 1.83% for 2013-14.

Budget Clarification #4

Misleading Assertion: The preliminary working budget proposed a 4.61% budget-to-budget and 8.78% tax levy increase but was reduced to 2.56% and 5.98%, respectively, in the final version. Clearly, there is fat in the budget.

Fact: The preliminary working 4.61% budget-to-budget increase reflected a 1.67% savings resulting from the debt roll-off. The primary reason for additional reductions in the budget and tax levy was the pension stabilization program adopted by NYS in late March resulting in a reduction of \$1.26 million or 1.45%.

Additionally, the Preliminary Working Budget had added regular and special education staff that the administration felt was necessary to maintain the 4 A's for all students in the District.

As information developed on enrollment and student needs, the District adjusted downward its staff as appropriate. In addition, while the District strongly desired to retain the teacher assistant positions for the libraries and computer labs included in the preliminary budget, the 3 positions were eliminated in response to community pressure.

As such, the District did not cut superfluous "fat" from the budget.

Budget Clarification #5

Misleading Assertion: The current median compensation for educators is approximately \$150,000.

Fact: The dollar figure cited is incorrect. The budgeted average teacher salary for 2013-2014 is \$109,874.

Budget Clarification #6

Misleading Assertion: Our Superintendent's salary is \$265,000.

Fact: The dollar figure cited is incorrect. Our superintendent's salary is \$260,000. The Superintendent's salary has been frozen for 5 years and the Superintendent came to Manhasset at a salary lower than his predecessor.

Budget Clarification #7

Misleading Assertion: The Manhasset Public School District should eliminate unlimited sick days as a means of controlling excessive absences.

Fact: In the 2011-2012 school year, the average number of sick days, including those related to maternity and extended illnesses, was 7.68 days.

Excluding maternity and extended illnesses, the average number of sick days was 4.

Many Districts use an alternative model, wherein teachers are compensated upon retirement for unused sick time. This can run into the tens of thousands of dollars per teacher and is a very costly alternative.

Budget Clarification #8

Assertion: Enrollment declines by 26 students but staff increases.

Fact: While enrollment district-wide is decreasing by approximately 2 students per grade, the number of special education students is actually increasing. The final budget adopted on April 17, includes an additional 3.7 FTE's, 2.7 to cover increased special education needs.

Furthermore, an examination of the district's school budgets for the last 5 years reveals an impressive record of addressing enrollment growth with almost no headcount increase. Over that time span, the District's budgeted headcount increased by only 1.59 FTE's, despite enrollment increases of 7.3%, or approximately 200 students.

Budget Clarification #9

Misleading Assertion: State Aid has always been a minor resource for the Manhasset School District accounting for less than 1/5 of 1% of its entire budget.

Fact: The percentage cited is incorrect. State Aid is 3.99% of the budget. More importantly, every dollar lost in State Aid must be made up by Manhasset taxpayers. State Aid lost in the last several years totals more than \$760,000, which is almost a full percentage point on the tax levy.

Budget Clarification #10

Misleading Assertion: The District is using taxpayer dollars on a Public Relations company to bring out the YES vote.

Fact: The Manhasset Public School District has not used the services of a Public Relations firm in 5 years and is keenly aware of the prohibition against the use of district resources to promote a "yes" vote and its responsibility to avoid engaging in activities that could be deemed to be improper advocacy.

Budget Clarification #11

Misleading Assertion: All votes are created equal.

Fact: Now that the law requires at least 60% of the qualified voters present and voting to approve the budget, the “supermajority” provision weights each “no” vote as worth 1.5 votes, while each “yes” vote counts as 1 vote.

If the 60% “supermajority” is not obtained, the permitted tax levy increase will be 0%. In other words, no greater than the year before. If the budget were to fail twice, the administration would be forced to reduce the budget by \$4.5 million.

Let's work together to carry on the tradition of educational excellence in Manhasset. **VOTE TODAY. ONE AND DONE!**