

An Open Letter to the Romulus School Community

On **Tuesday May 18, from 2 - 9 PM**, Romulus will join every other school in New York State for the second annual **State-wide School Budget Vote Day**. Inside this special edition of the Romulus Bulletin, you will find details about the spending plan we propose for 1999-2000. You will also find information about the re-election of Board members whose current three year terms have expired, and about our school's performance in terms of student achievement.

We hope you will find our proposed budget one which promotes educational excellence while being responsible to the local taxpayer. We have worked over four months on the proposal with time spent at each of over a dozen meetings devoted to revision and comment on the spending plan. You will find that we propose spending 3.7 % more next year than we are currently spending when the costs of borrowing and the offsetting revenues for the capital project approved in November are taken into account. Given the information we have so far about a State budget and a potential school aid increase, we believe this will require a **1.95% tax levy increase**. Despite that, **most taxpayers will see a reduction in their school tax bill** thanks to the Legislature and STAR.

For several years Romulus has been playing catch-up with its neighbors after the loss of Federal Impact Aid associated with the downsizing of the Depot. Those days of playing catch-up may be over. We believe the budget described herein allows us to continue to offer a high quality of educational service at a good value for the tax dollar. The **estimated \$15.92 per thousand tax rate** is lower than the average in the Finger Lakes area, and yet our achievement results according to the School Report Card are above average. An analysis of Approved Operating Expense per Pupil shows us to spend less than many of our neighbors as well.

We will hold a **Budget Hearing on Tuesday, May 11, 1999 at 7:30 PM** in the auditorium, as well as a "**Meet the Candidates**" session, as part of our regular Board meeting that evening. Please plan to attend to hear more details and/or to ask any questions you may have about our budget proposal. We encourage you to come to the polls to **vote on May 18th** on the budget we believe will allow Romulus to continue its tradition of excellent value and performance.

Sincerely, The Romulus Central School District Board of Education

Mike Karlsen, President

Tom Riley, Vice- President

Laurie Asermily

Rhonda Dickenson

Norm Hollenbeck

Cornelia Johnson

Anne Morgan

Budget Highlights

The 1999-2000 budget for Romulus Central School involves a proposed expenditure of \$6,104,058. This represents a total expenditure increase of \$508,736 or 9.1% over the approved 1998-99 budget. The bulk of that increase, however, is in costs for the construction borrowing for the capital project approved by voters in November. Funding for that project will be borne by reserves and allocations from this year coupled with 87.4% State Aid on borrowing, and will allow the project to pay for itself. Without those building costs (and their associated aid), the proposed spending plan is up \$249,826, or 4.5%.

The largest dollar increase within the spending plan is in the area of Operations and Maintenance, where the Board hopes to buy a replacement truck and snow plow (aided at transportation ratio of 80%), and to replace the white storage building near the bus garage used to house our grounds equipment and supplies. This building was cited by OSHA during an inspection this winter and its use as is must be curtailed. Plans call for replacing it with a garage-doored pole barn at under \$20,000 with 75% of that cost eligible for OSHA reimbursement. Additionally, we plan to replace univents and windows in the elementary wing with categorical aid for small structural repairs. Overall costs in this area are up \$91,632 with the bulk of that in the truck (\$30K) and storage building costs (\$20K). Additional costs for univent replacement and double pane windows will come from a specially aided category for minor maintenance.

The next largest dollar increase within the spending plan is in Employee Benefits. Costs here are up \$46,578. Many of you may recall the headlines in papers this winter when medical insurance rates were projected to climb more than 13%. As a major employer, the school is obligated to provide group medical insurance. By contract we pay 85% of the costs of such coverage. When a family plan costs almost \$5,500 and you employ over 100 people, a 13% increase in these costs shows up quickly.

The third largest dollar increase in the spending plan is in Finance. Costs here appear to increase by \$43,872. This is misleading, though, because costs from other areas of the budget are shifted to this line as we enter into the BOCES-run Consolidated Business Office we will share next year with Waterloo and Seneca Falls. Start up costs for this operation appear higher than existing costs, but will actually save the District money after BOCES aid is applied. Approximately 65% of our Finance costs will generate BOCES aid next year, allowing us to net out at @ \$46,000 after aid, compared to the \$88,000 we currently spend in this area. The resultant "savings" of over \$42,000 will show up in the 2000-20001 budget. Costs are shifted from Employee Benefits and Computer Services to the BOCES line under Finance as the BOCES will run the office for us and pay our current employee costs, then bill us accordingly. In this way we bring State dollars to Romulus instead of spending local property tax dollars on these common payroll, purchasing, and accounting services. The CBO is a result of two years of planning funded by a State Efficiency Study Grant which Romulus wrote. It will be housed at the County Office Building, allowing the County to gain BOCES aided rent dollars as well. We believe this is a win-win situation for all concerned - more efficient operation for all three schools, increased State aid for all three schools and revenue for the county from BOCES rent.

The fourth largest area of increase in the budget is \$33,078 in pupil services. The bulk of this increase is for salary for a part-time school social worker. With the loss of our Pre-K funded home school coordinator, the Board looks to add a portion of such a position to the regular budget. Recent results of substance abuse surveys and a growing concern for student violence prevention dictate a need for additional help in student services. This position would be half-time, shared through the county or BOCES. If done through BOCES that would generate additional aid next year as well.

The fifth highest dollar increase in the budget is in transportation, where we hope to replace the school station wagon with another minivan. Such a \$20,000 purchase will draw 80% transportation aid, for a net cost of \$4000, about what we hope to sell the old wagon for.

All other areas of the budget reflect relatively low increases, or in some cases actual decreases in expenditure. Salary breakage from retirement incentives offered last year allow teaching costs to remain low despite adding a part-time math teacher, a remedial teacher for grades 7-12, and a teacher aide in special education. Some additional costs, also BOCES aidable, are included for the new Distance Learning Lab as well, with which we will be able to expand programs in foreign language and other areas.

The Board believes the proposed spending plan is reasonable and reflects their interests in program improvement and tax levy stabilization. Attached is a cost comparison using the three-part budget format now required by the State showing Administrative, Program and Capital costs.

Revenues

Once again the State budget is late, and the best schools can do is guess at the amount of State Aid they are likely to receive. We have opted to use the Governor's proposal for school aid (the lowest of the figures offered to date) PLUS the restoration of BOCES aid (reduced by 25% in the Governor's Proposal) as the basis for our revenue planning. This is on the advice of the Chairman of the Senate Education Committee, local Senator Randy Kuhl. We are able to use an estimate of \$340,128 in building aid based on the borrowing for the \$1.5 million dollar project awaiting Albany's approval of plans. Additionally, we will generate BOCES aid on a major computer purchase we did this year, upping our

estimated BOCES aid to \$313,394. This, coupled with an estimated \$38584 in interest earnings on the Capital Project borrowing plus a \$30,000 interfund transfer for debt service, will require us to raise the tax levy only an estimated \$41,343 or 1.95%. Additionally, resident homeowners should see a reduction in the assessed value upon which their school taxes are based thanks to the STAR program. That is worth a \$10,000 exemption this year (\$20,000 and \$30,000 exemptions in the next two years respectively), equally an average savings of \$150 off the school tax bill on your primary residence. The Revenue Picture looks like this:

	<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-2000</u>	
State Aid	\$2, 682, 701	\$ 2, 865, 576	
Building Aid	\$77,944	\$340,128	
BOCES Aid	\$199,644	\$313,394	
Local Sources	\$115,000	\$123, 584	
<u>Fund Balance</u>	<u>\$399,000</u>	<u>\$299,000</u>	
Tax Levy	\$ 2,121,033	\$2, 162, 376	Up \$41,343 or 1.95%

Expenditures

Major Categories of Proposed Budget Expenditures for 1999-2000 in required 3-Part Format

	Current		Proposed			Notes
	(Adjusted)	Original				
	Budget	Budget				
	<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1998-99</u>	<u>1999-2000</u>	<u>Compared to Original</u>	<u>Budget</u>	
				%	\$	
1099 Board of Education	16,481	14,620	17,200	17.65%	2,580	Joining New York State School Boards
1299 Central		113,890	116,846	2.60%	2,956	Cost of Living Increase
Admin	113,160					
1399 Finance	87,603	87,646		50.06%	43,872	Major Shift of Dollars to BOCES aided CBO
1420 Staff	16,450	16,750	131,518			
1699 Other Central Services	116,253	114,740	16,450	-1.79%	(300)	No Increase anticipated here
1998 Other Special Items	65,434	79,795	109,614	-4.47%	(5,126)	
2010 Curr Dev & Supervision	4,009	2,500	67,200	-15.78%	(12,595)	Shifted Assessment on Property to Capital
2020 Sup. Reg. School	170,250	171,754	4,000	60.00%	1,500	
9098 Employee Benefits	89,232	90,932	176,373	2.69%	4,619	Cost of Living Increases here
			73,750	-18.90%	(17,182)	Overestimated in last year's budget
SubTotal Admin	\$ 678,872	\$ 692,627	\$ 712,951	2.93%	20,324	Total Administrative Cost Up less than 3%
<i>Administrative Portion =</i>	<i>12.0%</i>	<i>12.4%</i>	<i>11.7%</i>			
2999 Instruction						Instruction is broken into 4 main areas
Teaching - Regular	1,906,563	1,902,518	1,916,538	0.74%	14,020	Salary Breakage from retirements
Teaching - Special	1,032,288	1,025,622	1,015,922	-0.95%	(9,700)	Reduced BOCES costs for placements
Instructional Media	184,232	184,319	200,161	8.59%	15,842	Added Distance Learning Lab costs
Pupil Services	287,278	280,960	314,038	11.77%	33,078	Added .5 FTE School Social Worker
5510 District Transp.	310,158	310,209	309,679	-0.17%	(530)	
8998 Community Service	4,500	4,500	4,900	8.89%	400	
9098 Employee Benefits	588,089	586,089	629,343	7.38%	43,254	Health Insurance Premiums Up
SubTotal Program	\$ 4,313,108	\$ 4,294,217	\$ 4,390,581	2.24%	96,364	Total Program Costs up only 2.24%
<i>Program Portion =</i>	<i>76.5%</i>	<i>76.7%</i>	<i>71.9%</i>			
1620 Operations and Maintenance	391,210	357,121	448,753	25.66%	91,632	Truck & Plow, Shed, Univents and Windows
1964 Refund of Taxes	2,000	2,000	2,500	25.00%	500	STAR program creates more need here
5510 Purchase of Buses	66,500	65,000	85,500	31.54%	20,500	Replace one bus and school car

9098 Employee Benefits	42,494	42,494	63,000	48.26%	Health Insurance Premiums Up
9898 Debt Service	141,863	141,863	400,773	182.51%	20,506
SubTotal Capital	\$ 644,067	\$ 608,478	\$ 1,000,526	64.43%	258,910 Approved Capital Project costs
<i>Capital Portion =</i>	<i>11.4%</i>	<i>10.9%</i>	<i>16.4%</i>		(offset by building aid and interest earnings)
Without Capital Debt Service	\$ 5,636,047	\$ 5,595,322	\$ 6,104,058	9.09%	392,048 Capital Costs Up 64%, BUT offset by aid
	\$ 5,494,184	\$ 5,453,459	\$ 5,845,148	4.5%	508,736 Overall costs are up 4.5% exclusive of Capital Project
				3.7%	\$ 249,826 with Highlighted areas accounting for the bulk of the
					(Proposed Budget to Proposed Budget)
					\$ 209,101 Increase w/out capital Project over current spending
					\$ 41,343 Estimated Tax Levy Increase of 1.95%

The Vote:

Residents of the Romulus Central School are asked to vote on the proposed budget on Tuesday, May 18, 1999 from 2- 9 PM in the Elementary Gymnasium. Proof of residency is required.

Absentee Ballots are available for those unable to attend the vote in person, and may be obtained by contacting the District Office, extension 315. Certain requirements for timing of requests and returns must be met, and are explained in detail in the application for absentee ballot.

Any resident may vote in a school district election provided they:

- Are a U. S. Citizen
- Are over the age of 18
- Have been a resident of the District for at least 30 days prior to the vote
- Provide Proof of Residency in the form of a driver's license, non-driver ID or copy of their State or Federal Income tax form indicating residence within the District

No one may legally vote in more than one School District Election by virtue of owning property only. Legal residence is required in order to vote in a school district election, and Romulus enforces this portion of Education Law faithfully.

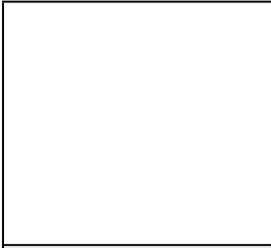
Residents will be asked to vote yea or nay on the following:

RESOLVED that the Board of education of Romulus Central School District, Seneca County, is hereby authorized to expend a total of \$6, 104, 058 for the operation of the school of said District for the school year 1999-2000, and that said sum be raised by tax upon the taxable property of said School District after first deducting the estimated money available from State Aid and other sources.

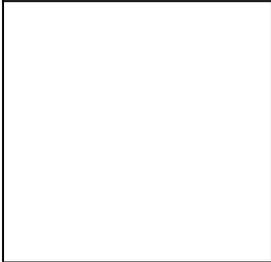
In addition to the budget question, residents will be asked to elect four representatives to serve a three year term each on the Board of Education. Four residents have submitted petitions for those seats in a timely manner, namely Rhonda Dickenson, Cornelia Johnson, Michael Karlsen and Anne Morgan. All four are incumbents.

The Candidates:

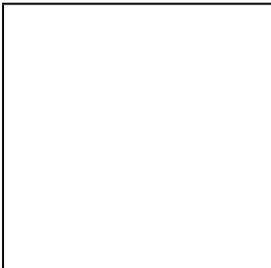
By virtue of the expiration of the three year term of office of four of the current Board of Education members, there are four vacancies on the Board to be filled by election also this May 18th. The candidates for these offices are as follows:



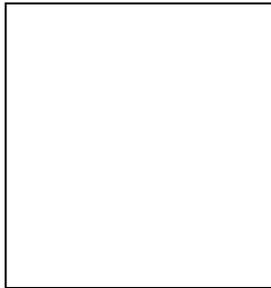
Rhonda Dickenson: A 1985 graduate of Waterloo with a diploma from the Arcadia School of Commerce and an Associates degree from FLCC in accounting, Rhonda resides on Ogden Road in Fayette with her husband John, and children Sarah (8) and Samuel (3). A Computer Services Assistant at WFL BOCES, Rhonda’s technical expertise has been an asset to the Board in its computer and distance learning initiatives. Regarding her Board service, Rhonda states, “ I would like to be able to help keep costs low, but still keep our District on the cutting edge.” Rhonda is a member of the Waterloo Sportsman’s and Conservation Club Auxiliary and the Wellness Committee at BOCES.



Cornelia Johnson: A Foreign Language Teacher in Seneca Falls, Cornelia holds a BA from Wallace College and an MA from Middlebury College in French. Cornelia and her husband, Phil, also a teacher at Geneva, reside in West Fayette, and have two sons who are at college having recently graduated from RCS, J.C. and William. Cornelia is involved in many community organizations including chairing the trustees at her church, community band in Seneca Falls and at Hobart - William Smith, and Romulus Community Sports. Her two goals as a Board member are to support a quality educational program, and to support staff development to enhance the RCS faculty.



Michael D. Karlsen: A professional land surveyor and part-time county tax map technician, Mike is a graduate of RCS (‘76) and Alfred State. He resides on East Lake Road with his wife Diane (Schaffner), and two daughters Jessica (14) and Abby (11). Mike is very active in the community, having served on the RCS Board of Education for 5 years, 3 as President. Mike also was on the RCS@60 committee, chairing the Schoolhouse move, and is active at church and with Youth Basketball. Mike cites his experience as an independent businessman with an awareness of taxes, spending and accountability. As a life-long resident of the area he feels he knows well the concerns and issues people have which affect the community and its children.

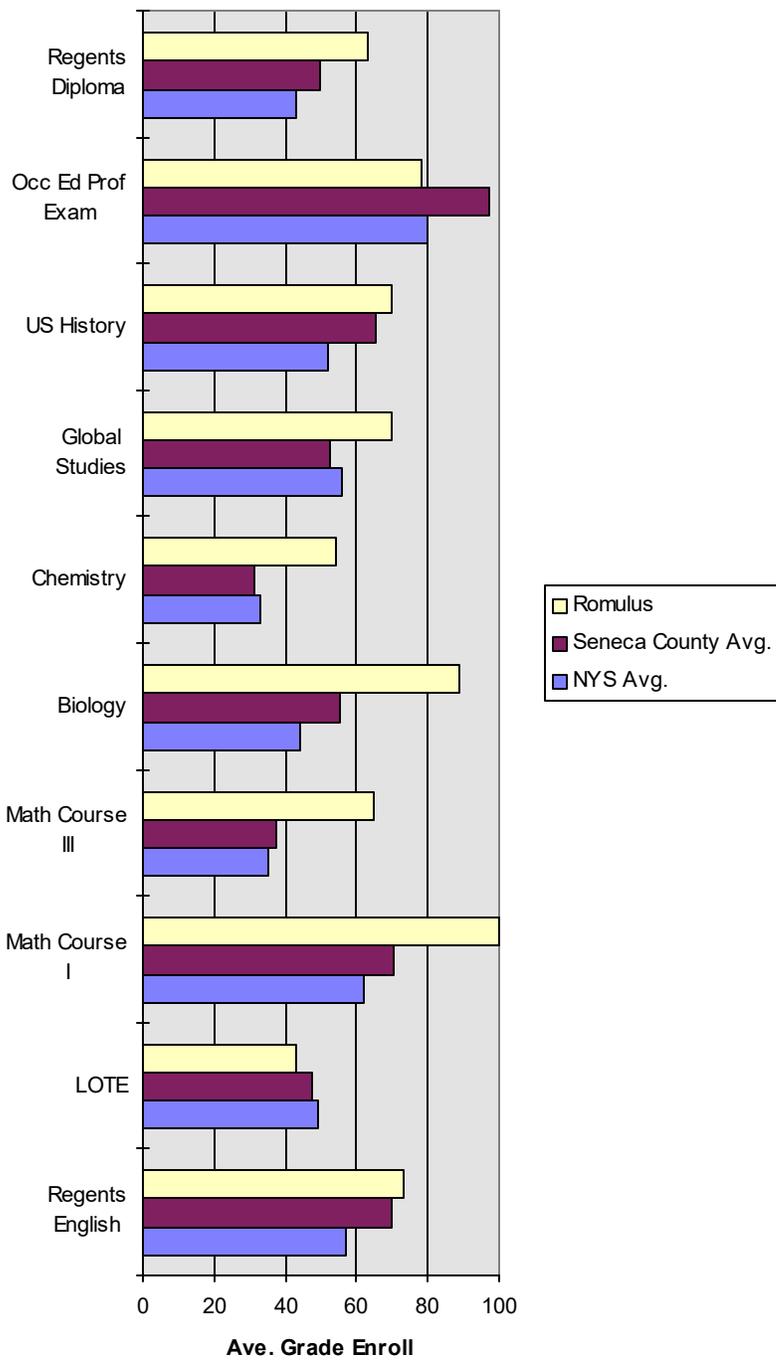


Anne Morgan: Also an RCS alum (‘68), Anne is the sole assessor for the Four Town Assessment Program for Romulus, Ovid, Lodi and Covert. She and her husband of 22 years, Charlie, live in the Maleski homestead on Bromka Road. Anne is the President of the County Assessor’s Association, volunteers to advise the South Seneca Color Guard and Twirlers, and is the Founder of Wine Country Players, the summer theatre troupe at Romulus. Of her candidacy Anne states, “ I will continue to explore shared services and ways to use our school property for the whole community. I believe that our “small” school can and will thrive as long as the school and taxpayer can work together toward the common goal of the BEST education our money can buy for OUR children.”

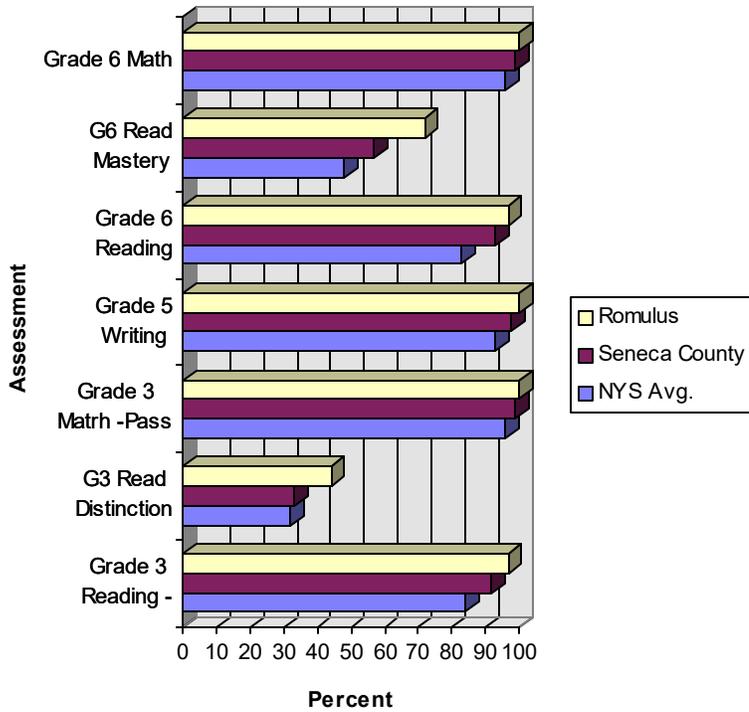
School Report Card Results

The State requires that the performance of a school be reflected in its budget documents as well. In the last issue of the Bulletin, we highlighted our student performance on State Examinations. That data is presented again below, in order to convince local taxpayers that they do get a good bargain for their money in support of public education here in Romulus.

Secondary Results



Elementary results



Vote

Tuesday May 18, 1999

2 - 9 PM

Elementary Gym

Budget Hearing and
Meet the Candidates Night

Tuesday May 11, 1999

7:30 PM

RCS Auditorium