

Garden City Public Schools  
56 Cathedral Avenue  
Garden City, NY 11530

## School District Budget FYIs

**1. Who is eligible to vote in school elections? Does each household qualify for only one vote? What about renters? How can a registered voter cast a ballot if he/she will be out of town on Vote Day?**

Garden City School District residents who are registered voters may vote in the school board and budget election. In New York State, the vote takes place on the third Tuesday in May. All residents of a single household who meet the criteria below can vote. Likewise, renters who meet the voter registration criteria can vote.

Only residents who have not registered or not voted in a school district election in the last four years must register. Garden City School District residents can register in-person in the District Clerk's Office, 56 Cathedral Avenue, Garden City, Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The application for an absentee ballot is available online ([www.gardencityk12.ny.us](http://www.gardencityk12.ny.us)) or in-person in the Business Office, 56 Cathedral Avenue, for those who anticipate being out of town on vote day. Absentee ballots are mailed to residents certified as permanently disabled by the Nassau County Board of Elections.

Completed absentee ballots must be received by the District Clerk no later than 5 p.m. on Budget Vote Day.

Voting takes place in the gymnasium at Garden City High School, 170 Rockaway Avenue, Garden City.

To register to vote, a resident must be:

1. A U.S. citizen;
2. 18 years of age by May 15<sup>th</sup>;
3. A resident of Garden City School District for a period of 30 days prior to the May vote;
4. Registered with Garden City Public Schools, or Nassau County.

**2. Under New York State's tax cap legislation, is the school district's tax levy increase the same as the County's or the Village's?**

No. Due to exemptions, the specific nature of programs and services, and other sources of revenue available, each level of government is effected somewhat differently.

### **3. How do the budgets and the budget voting of school districts and municipalities differ?**

Garden City Public School's budget is separate from the Village of Garden City's budget.

A public school district's budget is broad in scope, governed by strict regulations, audited by three separate auditors, and impacted by many factors outside of its control. And much of the information needed to formulate the school budget, such as the amount of state aid the district will receive, total student enrollment, the number of special needs students for the upcoming school year, and the cost of unfunded mandates, may be unknown during the budget-building process.

A municipality can raise additional revenue by initiating special fees, such as for parking. A public school district in New York State is prohibited from doing so.

The annual budget approval process is very different between the school district and the local municipality. Registered voters annually decide to approve or not approve Garden City Public School's budget, any Board of Education Trustees on the ballot, and any special propositions on budget vote day – the third Tuesday in May. If the proposed school district budget is at or below New York State's tax levy limit for the district that year, a simple majority of the vote is required for passage.

For a municipality, like the Village of Garden City, a majority of the board trustees is required to approve the proposed budget.

Additionally, while Garden City Public Schools needs a "supermajority," or 60% voter approval to pierce its annual tax levy limit – an allowable option under New York State's tax levy limit law - the Village government only needs the approval of 5 of the 8 Village Trustees to constitute a 60% "supermajority" to pass its budget.

### **4. Under New York State's tax levy law, what happens if the school district budget is defeated?**

Under the tax levy law, registered school district voters still vote on the following year's budget referendum. If the annual budget is defeated, the Board of Education has two choices:

1. Adopt the budget with a 0% percent tax levy increase.
2. Place the same budget or a revised budget before the voters again in June.

A failure to achieve the required passing rate in June will mean that the tax levy increase will automatically be set at 0%, and the allowances for bond interest, or loss of PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes) revenue will no longer apply. A 0% tax levy increase budget will require the school district to make significant reductions in the budget.

In addition, school districts that do not receive approval from the voters for their budgets are required to develop "contingent" or "austerity" budgets that strictly limit the types of activities, programs, services and purchases that may be funded.

### **5. *What are unfunded mandates?***

Mandates applicable to school districts are designed and approved by the legislature to address a perceived and/or demonstrated need. School districts cannot “opt-out” of mandates. Mandates typically have little or no dollars in aid attached to them. Many mandates are helpful in improving public schools, such as requiring defibrillators in school buildings. Others carry a heavy burden of time such as the detailed data reporting that has been required by the state in the past few years. District demographic data, in-district student data, such as attendance and grades, and out-of district private school student data (including for district-of-residence and district-of-attendance students); teacher data required for the Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR), course descriptions, and graduation statistics, just to name a few, all require the time of trained and certified personnel with the oversight of building and district administrators.