



Budget Message from Board of Education 2020

Dear Neighbor,

The Board of Education and Administration have worked hard during these challenging times to develop a 2020-2021 annual budget that will support the needs of our students while maintaining fiscal responsibility to our community. Given the fiscal impact of the global COVID-19 pandemic and the steep cuts to state aid, this has been an especially trying year to formulate a budget.

For the past five consecutive years, and seven out of the past 12 years, the district has been able to decrease the tax levy. This year, we are able to present a 2020-2021 budget that maintains our current programs and services while carrying a tax levy increase of 2.92%, which is well within the allowable tax levy cap. Due to COVID-19, there have been many changes to our budget vote and board trustee election process this year. With the closure of schools and businesses, the original budget vote and trustee election timelines were suspended. Prior to this, Governor Cuomo had already announced there would be cuts to education aid for the 2020-2021 school year. As you know, the fiscal impact of COVID-19 has been enormous and the governor has been forced to reduce state aid, with potential future reductions later in the school year.

Freeport has lost \$2.62 million in state aid for this year. Without Federal Cares Restoration money, the actual loss is \$4.3 million from the governor's original proposal. The proposed expenditures from the March 2020 budget presentation have been reduced by \$2.85 million. The budget-to-budget increase was reduced from 3.39% to 1.85%. A careful analysis of our expenditures and revenues was made to create a budget that will maintain our programs and facilities while accounting for this loss.

Although we made cuts to the proposed budget and cannot enhance our programs, Freeport Public Schools is grateful to be able to maintain our programs and continue to provide excellent educational opportunities to our students. Our focus remains on our amazing students, who continue to impress us with their award-winning performances in academics, athletics and the arts. We will maintain our focus on the whole child and enhance our services for the physical

and mental well-being of our students, staff and families, especially given the amount of trauma and stress we are facing with the current pandemic.

We have numerous plans for capital improvement and special maintenance projects. Complete details of the proposed budget and proposition to approve capital spending from the Capital Reserve Fund, **which would be done at no additional cost to taxpayers**, are available on the district's website at www.freeportschools.org.

We are pleased to present a fiscally responsible budget, within the tax levy cap, with a 2.92% tax levy increase and a budget-to-budget increase of 1.85%. Please learn more about the proposed budget and the proposition to approve spending from the Capital Reserve Fund. Thank you for your support. Please remember to submit your absentee ballot by 5 p.m. on June 9, 2020.

Regards,

The Freeport Board of Education

Ernest J. Kight, Jr., President

Vilma I. Lancaster, Vice President

Ronald J. Ellerbe, Trustee

Maria Jordan Awalom, Trustee

Gabriela Castillo, Trustee