INSIDE THIS ISSUE:
- 2026 Valedictorian & Salutatorian
- Science Research Symposium
- Detailed Budget Information

Titan Herald

TACONIC HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.taconichills.k12.ny.us MAY 2026

VOTE

Tuesday
May 19, 2026

12:00PM - 9:00PM

Taconic Hills
Veterans Community Room

2026-2027 BUDGET SUMMARY

Proposed Budget:
$44,017,406

Budget to Budget Increase:
$795,170

Estimated Tax Levy Increase:
3.0083%

WHY YOUR VOTE MATTERS

Impact on Students: Your vote determines class sizes, funding for program and course offerings, sports and extracurricular activities.

Protects Stability and Property Values: Financially stable schools connect to home values, long term economic health and a strong school community.

Local Control over Tax Dollars: Investing in our school district and children is a way to directly impact their current and future learning needs and opportunities.

Follow us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/TaconicHillsCSD

Building on Strength: A Budget Focused on Students, Stability, and the Future

On Tuesday, May 19, 2026, voters in the Taconic Hills Central School District will consider the proposed budget for the 2026–2027 school year. Residents will elect members of the Board of Education and vote on propositions that support district operations and long-term planning.

The proposed $44,017,406 budget reflects a 1.84% increase from the current year. This plan continues the district's focus on supporting students, maintaining strong programs, and planning responsibly for the future.

A large portion of the budget is dedicated to classroom instruction and student support. This includes ongoing efforts to strengthen literacy across all grade levels, expand academic support services, and enhance curriculum resources. The district also continues to invest in professional development to ensure high-quality, consistent instruction in every classroom.

The budget also supports continued improvements in technology and operations. Upgrades to instructional technology, BOCES-supported systems, and internal processes will help improve both learning and day-to-day efficiency.

Maintaining safe and well-kept facilities remains a priority. Like many districts, Taconic Hills is facing rising costs in utilities, fuel, and maintenance. In addition, increasing expenses related to salaries, services, and employee health insurance continue to impact the budget.

To manage these pressures while maintaining programs, the district will use a portion of its fund balance in a thoughtful and strategic way. The district is also working with a financial advisor to develop a long-range financial plan that supports stability and responsible decision-making in the years ahead.

The proposed budget includes a tax levy increase of 3.0083%, which remains within the allowable limit. Throughout the budget development process, the district has worked to balance student needs, long-term financial planning, and the overall impact on the community.

Make Your Voice Heard

We strongly encourage all community members to participate in the budget vote. Voting can be done in person at the District on the day of the election or by absentee ballot. Increasing voter participation is important to ensure the community's voice is represented in decisions that impact our schools and students.

Your participation plays an important role in shaping the future of our schools. Thank you for your continued support of the Taconic Hills Central School District.

Sincerely,
Lynnette Brunger, Superintendent of Schools

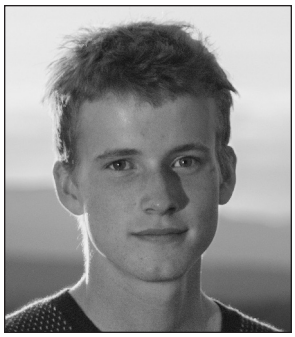


Students recently enjoyed a 100% New York State sourced meal featuring cheese stromboli as part of April's Harvest of the Month, tomato, and it was a big hit with students. The meal was made entirely with New York ingredients, including whole grain pizza dough from Argyle Cheese Farmer, mozzarella from BelGioioso Cheese, pizza sauce from Casa Visco, and peas from Headwater Food Hub.

LEADING THE WAY:

Class of 2026 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

Taconic Hills Jr./Sr. High School is proud to announce Clyde Drake and Maia Hamann as Valedictorian and Salutatorian for the graduating Class of 2026.



CLYDE DRAKE

Clyde Drake, the son of Margaret Hallisey and Nathaniel Drake of Philmont, has been named the Valedictorian of the Taconic Hills Class of 2026. Clyde has always loved sports and has participated in soccer, basketball, volleyball, and track and field throughout his high school career. Of these he enjoys soccer and track and field the most. Clyde is also part of the National Honor Society where he serves as Vice President. In school, his favorite subjects are Math and Science where he excels the most. He also serves as an ex-officio member of the Board of Education. Clyde credits his academic success to the many dedicated teachers he has had during his time at Taconic Hills. Outside of school, Clyde loves outdoor activities and spending time with his family. Next year, Clyde will attend Wesleyan University, where he has been recruited to run track & field, and will pursue either mathematics or engineering in his studies.



MAIA HAMANN

Maia Hamann, daughter of David & Molly Hamann of Hudson, has been named Taconic Hills Class of 2026 Salutatorian.Throughout her high school career, Maia has been an active athlete, participating in soccer, cross country, swimming, and track, where she embraced the dynamics of competition and sociability found in the collaborative environment of the team. She is a member of the National Honor Society and values the opportunities it provides to give back to her community. She was especially moved by her time volunteering at the Salvation Army food pantry in Hudson. Outside of school, Maia enjoys spending time outdoors, hiking, painting, listening to music, cooking, and connecting with her family and friends. With a passion for science, art, and language, Maia plans to attend Sarah Lawrence College, where she can further immerse herself in these subjects and cultivate the knowledge needed to make a meaningful impact in the future.



Showcasing Creativity: Spring Art Show & Makers Night

On May 19th, Taconic Hills will welcome families and community members for an evening filled with learning, creativity, and student talent. On the night of the budget vote, the district will host its first-ever Spring Art Show and Makers Night from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM, a district-wide celebration showcasing the incredible work happening across our schools.

The main feature of the evening will be the Spring Art Show, displaying artwork from students in every grade level. From our youngest elementary artists to our emerging high school creators, the exhibit will highlight the imagination, growth, and unique voices being developed through our art programs. The Technology, Agriculture, and Family and Consumer Sciences departments will also feature student projects, giving visitors a look at the hands-on innovation happening throughout the district. A special appearance by our Music Department will round out the evening and make it a true celebration of the artists and makers at Taconic Hills.

In addition, the Elementary Library will be hosting its Learning Fair from 4:30 PM to 6:30 PM, where students in grades K–6 will showcase their student-led experiments and research projects.

We invite everyone to stop by, explore the displays, and celebrate our students' accomplishments before or after casting their vote.

Summer Facilities Renovations and Construction Projects

This summer, Taconic Hills CSD will be completing several facility improvement projects across the district, including the installation of new turf, roof repairs, and other renovations. During this time, access to the building and certain outdoor areas will be limited or temporarily restricted.

We will continue to share updates as projects progress. Please check the district website throughout the summer for the most current information before coming to campus.

Calling All Local Businesses and Trade Professionals

Taconic Hills CSD is excited to invite local businesses, trade professionals, and community agencies to participate in our upcoming Career & Trades Fair on Thursday, June 4th. This event is part of the district's expanding Work-Based Learning Program, designed to connect students with real-world career experiences and future opportunities.

This engaging fair gives our 7th–12th grade students the chance to explore career pathways and interact directly with professionals from a wide range of industries and trades. Hands-on activities, interactive displays, and demonstrations are strongly encouraged to help students gain a better understanding of what a "day in the life" looks like in your field.

EVENT DETAILS:
DATE: THURSDAY, JUNE 4TH
TIME: 10:30 A.M. – 1:30 P.M.
LOCATION: TACONIC HILLS JR/SR HIGH SCHOOL, MAIN ATRIUM

Businesses and agencies interested in attending should scan the QR code to register by May 22nd.

Thank you for supporting our students and helping strengthen the future workforce of our community!



A Step Toward Sustainability with Vermicomposting

In March, Tony Schifano of Antos Environmental generously donated three red wiggler worm farms to our Agriculture, STREAM department, and Food Services department for vermicomposting. This is a natural way to turn food scraps into nutrient rich soil with the help of worms.

Student and FFA Club Member Alex Baird is taking on this project as a Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE), a student-led, instructor-supervised, work-based learning project required in agricultural education. Alex, along with fellow Agriculture classmates, Annabelle Stalker and Axel Dwy, set up the three worm farms when they arrived.

The district is proud to take one more step toward sustainability while also giving our students a unique hands-on learning opportunity that brings science, agriculture, and environmental stewardship to life.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

5/4-5/15..... AP Exams
5/19..... Elementary Learning Fair
5/19..... District Wide Art Show
5/19..... Budget Vote & Board Member Election
5/25..... District Closed: Memorial Day
6/1 ..... 20th Annual Science Research Symposium
6/3..... Elementary Band & 6th Grade Chorus Concert
6/5..... 5th Grade D.A.R.E. Graduation
6/9, 6/10, 6/17, 6/18, 6/22 - 6/25
..... NYS Regents Exams
6/12..... Elementary Flag Day Assembly
6/18..... Elementary Field Day
6/18..... Pre-Kindergarten Moving Up Ceremony
6/18..... 8th Grade Moving Up Ceremony
6/19..... District Closed: Juneteenth
6/23..... 6th Grade Moving Up Ceremony
6/24..... Kindergarten Moving Up Ceremony
6/25..... Last Day of School Grades PreK-8 - Half Day
6/26..... Class of 2026 Graduation

Supporting Every Student, Every Day

As we plan for the upcoming school year, we are making thoughtful updates to our administrative structure to better serve our students and community. Our goal is simple: ensure every student is supported academically, physically, and emotionally each day.

To do this, both school buildings will follow the same leadership model, creating consistency and clarity for students, staff, and families.

What this means for our district:

- **Consistent leadership in both buildings:** Each school will have a Principal and an Assistant Principal, creating a balanced and aligned approach across the district.
- **Aligned programs across both schools:** An Assistant Superintendent will help ensure consistency in programs and learning experiences district-wide.
- **A team-based approach:** Our administrative team is intentionally structured to bring together individuals with different strengths, working collaboratively to support students and staff with a clear, purposeful direction for the district.

A Meaningful Route Starts Here

Looking for a career and lifestyle that helps you make a difference in your community? Becoming a school bus driver offers a flexible schedule, steady work, and the chance to be part of students' everyday lives.

This is a great opportunity for parents, grandparents, retirees, or anyone looking for reliable hours with weekends and holidays off. Drivers receive competitive pay, benefits such as health/dental insurance and paid time off, and a NYS retirement plan. There are also opportunities to earn extra through overtime, including weekend field trips, athletic events, and more. If you do not have a CDL yet, training is provided so you are able to get started with confidence.

As a school bus driver, you play a much bigger role than transportation to and from school. You are often the first smiling face students see in the morning, and the last one they see in the afternoon. You help create a safe, welcoming space and become someone students recognize and trust each day.

Getting started is simple. Applicants must be at least 21 years old and complete the required licensing, training, and safety certifications for the position.



If you are looking for meaningful work with flexibility and purpose, this could be the right fit for you. Join a team that takes pride in what they do and makes a difference every single day.

Meet the Candidate
for the Board of Education

This year, there are two (2) five-year terms commencing on July 1, 2026 and expiring on June 30, 2031, to succeed Board Members Bonnie Torchia and Margaret Hallisey, whose terms will expire on June 30, 2026. There is also one (1) unexpired one-year term commencing on May 20, 2026 and expiring on June 30, 2027, to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Board Member Kevin Maisenbacher.

At this time, one candidate has formally applied for a position on the Board of Education and has provided a brief biography and statement of goals. Two additional seats remain available.

Community members interested in serving on the Board of Education are encouraged to review the roles and responsibilities of board members on the district website and may choose to run as a write-in candidate.

We encourage community members to attend a meet-and-greet on Wednesday, May 6 to learn more and connect.

BILL MULREIN

I grew up in Craryville, and currently live in Ghent with my wife, Erin, and our two children, Tyler and Madelyn. My parents, sister, wife, children and I have all attended Taconic Hills Central School District, giving me a lifelong connection to this district and a strong appreciation for what it means to our community.

I am running for the school board because I believe in meaningful civic service, and the vital role that our school district plays as a cornerstone of our community's strength and success. Every child that attends Taconic Hills deserves a school board that is devoted to their success, not only in the classroom but also in athletics, language, music, and arts.

If elected, I look forward to working with community members to strengthen the relationship between the school district and the families it serves, while ensuring that every student has the opportunity and support to achieve their goals.



Where Questions Become Conclusions: Student Research at Taconic Hills

At Taconic Hills High School, students are doing more than learning science, they are experiencing what it truly means to be a researcher. Through the District's three-year Science Research Program, students design and carry out their own original research, gaining hands-on experience that often reflects the work done at the college level.

Dr. William Cook, retired biology professor from Columbia-Greene Community College, praised the program, sharing, "I don't see work like this until students reach graduate school."

Led by instructor Linda Hopkins and affiliated with the University at Albany, the program walks students through every step of the scientific process. Sophomores begin by exploring scientific literature and developing their own research questions. Juniors take the next step by designing and conducting experiments, often with guidance from professional mentors. By senior year, students analyze their data, write formal research papers, and present their findings at regional symposia.

Real Research, Real Skills

Students in the program explore a wide range of topics, including environmental science, psychology, biology, and public health. They collaborate with organizations such as the Cary Institute, Taconic Biosciences, and Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program, gaining real-world insight and mentorship.

The impact of this experience extends far beyond high school. One graduate shared, "Science Research was very helpful to me. I learned how to research and write effectively, which is something many people struggle with."

Mrs. Hopkins emphasizes the importance of community support: "We couldn't do this alone. The Taconic Hills community has been incredibly generous with their time and expertise."

A Community Effort

The success of the program is truly a team effort. Students work closely with expert advisors, and the Taconic Hills Science Review Committee, made up of educators and community professionals, helps guide each project from proposal to completion.

Taconic Hills has also grown into a regional leader in student research. Each year, the district hosts an invitational symposium that brings together students from more than 20 schools to share their work, learn from one another, and celebrate their accomplishments.

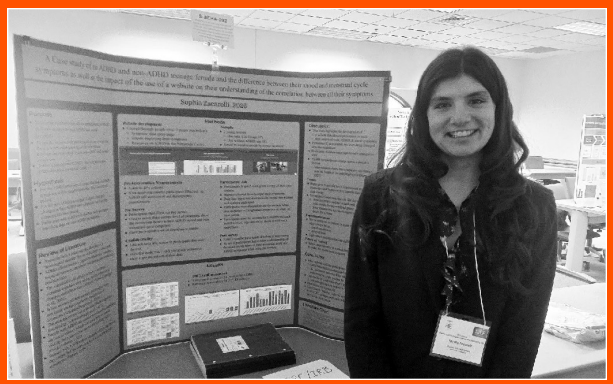
You're Invited

The community is invited to attend the Taconic Hills Science Research Symposium and see this work firsthand.

- Monday, June 1
- 6:00 PM
- Taconic Hills High School
- Free and open to the public (light refreshments served)

Come explore student projects, hear their findings, and see the curiosity and dedication driving the next generation of researchers.

Seniors Sophia Zacarolli and Francesca Schifano represented Taconic Hills at the Greater Capital Region Science and Engineering Fair at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI) in March.



Sophia Zacarolli presented her research on ADHD and mood-related menstrual cycle differences in teenage females.



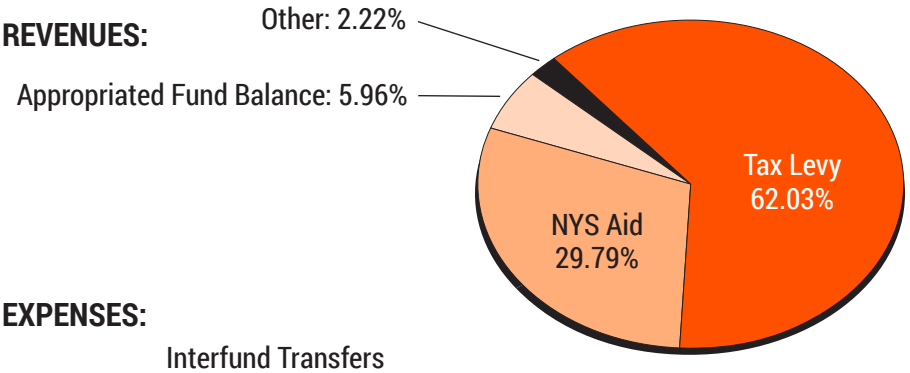
Francesca Schifano presented her research on how nature exposure and movement impact high school students' creativity and productivity, and received an award from the American Psychological Association.

REVENUES:

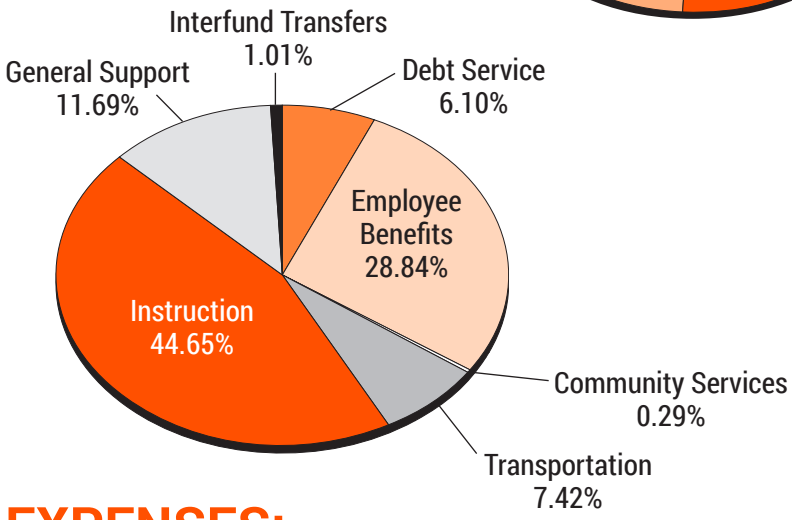
Where does the money come from to support the Taconic Hills budget?

Revenue Source	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Proposed	Change ($)	Change (%)
Tax Levy	$26,506,443	$27,303,836	$797,393	3.01%
Projected NYS Aid	$12,914,812	$13,111,246	$196,434	1.52%
Other: Interest, Tuition, Savings, etc.	$750,000	$977,989	$227,989	30.40%
Appropriated Fund Balance	$3,050,981	$2,624,335	$(426,646)	-13.98%
Total	**$43,222,236**	**$44,017,406**	**$795,170**	**1.84%**

REVENUES:



EXPENSES:



EXPENSES:

How is money spent at Taconic Hills?

Expense Category	2025-2026 Budget	2026-2027 Proposed	Change ($)	Change (%)
General Support	$5,004,373	$5,143,813	$139,440	2.79%
Instruction	$19,883,920	$19,654,463	$(229,457)	-1.15%
Transportation	$3,059,896	$3,265,238	$205,342	6.71%
Community Services	$120,245	$128,300	$8,055	6.70%
Employee Benefits	$11,812,646	$12,695,229	$882,583	7.47%
Debt Service	$2,789,156	$2,684,363	$(104,793)	-3.76%
Interfund Transfers	$552,000	$446,000	$(106,000)	-19.20%
Grand Totals	**$43,222,236**	**$44,017,406**	**$795,170**	**1.84%**

THREE-PART BUDGET

By law, school districts are required to organize their budgets into three components: Administrative, Program, and Capital. The Taconic Hills Central School District's budget is structured as follows:

Program	2025-2026	2026-2027
Amount	$32,378,456	$33,073,914
% of total	74.91%	75.14%

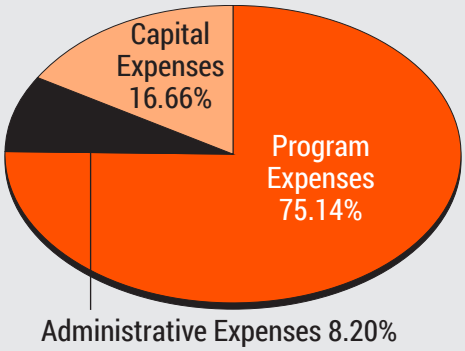
Program costs support all aspects of student learning and services. This includes salaries and benefits for teachers and staff who provide instructional and support services such as special education, intervention, library, counseling, health, social work, speech therapy, technology, and athletics. Program expenses also cover textbooks, supplies, equipment, extracurricular activities, BOCES services, student transportation, and the Community Eligibility Program, which provides meals for all students.

Administrative	2025-2026	2026-2027
Amount	$3,532,224	$3,616,782
% of total	8.17%	8.20%

Administrative costs include salaries and benefits for administrators, supervisors, and clerical staff, as well as expenses related to district operations such as public information, printing, insurance, legal and auditing services, management software, and Board of Education activities.

Capital	2025-2026	2026-2027
Amount	$7,311,556	$7,326,710
% of total	16.92%	16.66%

Capital costs relate to the operation and upkeep of district facilities. This includes salaries and benefits for maintenance and custodial staff, utilities, building maintenance, and supplies. Capital expenses also include debt service, real property tax refunds, and transfers to the Capital Fund for planned purchases, including one large school bus, one small school bus, and one SUV.



TACONIC HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT BUDGET NOTICE

Overall Budget Proposal	Budget Adopted for the 2025-26 School Year	Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year	Contingency Budget for the 2026-27 School Year *
Total Budgeted Amount, Not Including Separate Propositions	$ 43,222,236	$44,017,406	$42,825,404
Increase/Decrease for the 2026-27 School Year		$795,170	$1,192,002
Percentage Increase/Decrease in Proposed Budget		1.84%	(2.71%)
Change in the Consumer Price Index		2.63%	
A. Proposed Levy to Support the Total Budgeted Amount	$26,506,443	$27,303,836	
B. Levy to Support Library Debt, if Applicable	$0	$0	
C. Levy for Non-Excludable Propositions, if Applicable **	$0	$0	
D. Total Tax Cap Reserve Amount Used to Reduce Current Year Levy	$0	$0	
E. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy (A + B + C - D)	$26,506,443	$27,303,836	$27,303,836
F. Total Permissible Exclusions	$0	$113,906	
G. School Tax Levy Limit, Excluding Levy for Permissible Exclusions	$26,757,557	$27,625,904	
H. Total Proposed School Year Tax Levy, Excluding Levy to Support Library Debt and/or Permissible Exclusions (E – B – F + D)	$26,506,443	$27,303,836	
I. Difference: G – H (Negative Value Requires 60.0% Voter Approval – See Note Below Regarding Separate Propositions) **	$251,114	$322,069	
Administrative Component	$3,532,456	$3,616,782	$3,526,974
Program Component	$32,378,224	$33,073,914	$32,409,720
Capital Component	$7,311,556	$7,326,710	$6,888,710

* Provide a statement of assumptions made in projecting a contingency budget for the 2026-27 school year, should the proposed budget be defeated pursuant to Section 2023 of the Education Law

- Public use of building by outside groups and organizations regardless of affiliation must be charged a fee to cover ALL expenses related to usage. *This includes the pool and fitness center, playing fields, and other usage of building space.*
- Non-essential maintenance cannot be performed inside or outside of the facilities, as well as on the grounds.
- Equipment purchases cannot be made, including athletic equipment/uniforms, buildings & grounds purchases, and classroom related equipment.
- Non-instructional employees, not in a collective bargaining unit, cannot receive a salary increase.
- Field trips not part of the instructional program cannot be provided unless self-funded.
- Student supplies cannot be purchased.
- PTO & Teachers that use the facilities for programs of entertainment or for a social nature cannot be permitted unless self-funded.
- Public relations firms and publications used to assist the district in promoting its image cannot be funded.

	Under the Budget Proposed for the 2026-27 School Year
Estimated Basic STAR Exemption Savings[1]	$261.00

The annual budget vote for the fiscal year 2026-27 by the qualified voters of the Taconic Hills Central school district, Columbia County, New York, will be held in the Veteran's Community Room in said district on Tuesday, May 19, 2026 between the hours of 12:00pm and 9:00pm, prevailing time in the Veteran's Community Room, at which time the polls will be opened to vote by voting ballot or machine.

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1. The basic school tax relief (STAR) exemption is authorized by section 425 of the Real Property Tax Law.

Taconic Hills
CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

73 Route 11A
Craryville, NY 12521

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
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Bonnie Torchia, *President*
Richard Viebrock, *Vice President*
Joseph Costa
Molly Delaney
Jeanine Earnhart
Margaret Hallisey
Samantha Maker
Ronald Morales
Alicia O'Rourke

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
Lynnette Brunger

The Taconic Hills Board of Education meets regularly on the third Wednesday of each month. Meetings are open for the public to attend and are also streamed on YouTube.

Produced by Questar III Communications Service

VOTE

Tuesday, May 19, 2026
12 p.m. – 9 p.m.
Taconic Hills Veterans Community Room

QUALIFIED VOTERS
- A citizen of the United States
- At least eighteen (18) years of age
- A resident of the District for a period of at least thirty (30) days prior to the day of the vote

What You'll Vote On

Election of School Board Members

To elect three (3) members of the Board of Education to the following terms: two (2) to five-year terms commencing July 1, 2026 and expiring June 30, 2031, succeeding Board Members Bonnie Torchia and Margaret Hallisey, whose terms expire June 30, 2026; and one (1) to a one-year term to fill the vacancy left by the resignation of Kevin Maisenbacher, for his unexpired term, commencing May 20, 2026 and expiring June 30, 2027.The candidate running to fill one of the vacant seats is Bill Mulrein.

Proposition 1: 2026-2027 Budget

Shall the Board of Education of the Taconic Hills Central School District be authorized to expend the sums set forth in the budget, for the 2026-2027 school year, in the amount of $44,017,406 and to levy the necessary tax therefor?

Proposition 2: Purchase of School Vehicles and Buses

Shall the Board of Education be authorized to (a) acquire one (1) large school bus, one (1) small school bus, and one (1) SUV at a maximum aggregate cost of $351,000.00; (b) finance such purchase by expending $351,000.00 from the unassigned fund balance?



Student Gracie Sheak helps bring Hello, Dolly! *to life during the Taconic Hills High School Drama Club production held March 12–14, 2026. The show featured memorable scenes, lively music, and energetic dancing.*

Scan the QR code for the full 2026–2027 Proposed Budget details.