

Dear Wainscott School District Taxpayers and Wainscott Residents:

Your Board of Trustees is pleased to propose a budget for 2024-2025 of \$4,873,608.00, a 0.57% increase from last year's budget. The proposed 2023-24 budget will result in a 2.58 % increase in our tax levy and a corresponding increase in our tax rate from \$262.65 to \$269.42 per thousand assessed valuation in East Hampton and from \$ 1.40 to \$ 1.43 per thousand assessed valuation in Southampton. The proposed tax levy will not pierce the District's effective statutory Tax Cap. Therefore, only a simple majority is needed to approve our proposed 2023-2024 budget.

Last year was the most difficult and disruptive annual budget vote and Trustee election in our District's 293-year history. Our District is the only one of 124 school districts on Long Island where voters failed to pass a budget forcing the District to operate under a legally mandated austerity budget for the current school year. This year's austerity budget forced the Trustees to make difficult cuts in our programming, including eliminating District provided Pre-K, the retention of our fourth-grade students (who traditionally graduated after third grade and in fact had already graduated from our K-3 program), the elimination of our part-time music, art and computer/technology instruction and all field trips for the current school year.

Recently, we updated you on current District operations in a district-wide mailing posted on the District's website (<https://wainscottschool.org>). In short, the District's finances have stabilized during our current school year. The District is extremely fortunate that members of our community made generous donations to the School which allowed the Trustees to reinstate our part-time music, art and computer/technology instruction and all field trips for the current school year. We have also experienced a swift and dramatic decrease in the number of our tuition students to more historical levels (66 currently as compared to 97 in 2022-2023). Tuition payments for the nearly 30 new tuition students who moved into the District during the 2022-2023 school year were the principal cause of the District's financial crisis that resulted in last year's budget defeat.

Importantly, next year's proposed budget includes the reinstatement of all programs and services cut last year and the addition of an in-house Pre-K program at the Wainscott School, a long-term goal of the Trustees. Bringing the Pre-K program in house, which includes the promotion of our current teaching assistant to a certified teacher position with primary responsibility for the new program, will reduce our overall expense budget when our tuition savings for our Pre-K students are accounted for. Our plan to keep the fourth grade in the Wainscott School for the 2024-2025 school year is necessary to avoid exceeding this year's Tax Cap. Going forward, the Trustee's presently intend to offer Pre-K through the third grade at the Wainscott School.

The Trustees have worked hard to ensure that this year's budget is the minimum necessary to conduct next year's highly acclaimed K-4 educational program at the Schoolhouse and pay for our tuition students. Your support of the budget is imperative as it will place the District on more solid financial footing following last year's financial uncertainty.

The Trustees urge all qualified voters to take part in the budget vote and District Election that will take place on Tuesday May 21, 2024, between 2:00 pm and 8:00 pm in the New Schoolhouse. Voting can be in person, by absentee ballot or an early mail ballot. Recent changes in State Law require that voting by early mail ballot be available for the first time in this year's election. The District has posted on its website a complete description of the "Qualified Voter" requirements, timelines and procedures (including the requisite applications and affidavits) for voting by absentee ballot, voting by early mail ballot or in person voting on election day.

As always, your Board of Trustees thanks you for your continued support and understanding.

Sincerely yours,

David E. Eagan, President,

Kelly Anderson,

William A. Babinski, Jr.