

SCHOOL BOARD

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2023 · ISSUE 2



FROM PRESIDENT MUSANTRY:

As I sit down to write this article, the fiscal end of the 2022/2023 is within reach. At the close of each school year, I like to reflect on the year that was. This one is an especially emotional one for me. It will be the last full school year as a member of the Palisades School Board. Oh, and what a ride it has been!

I have served on the Palisades SB since 2011 and had the privilege of serving as Board President for 8 of those years! I am extremely proud of the work of the board over those 12 years. While being fiscally prudent over the last 10 years (4 years of no tax increase and the rest all held under 1%), the district continues to be national, state and locally recognized for academic, artistic and athletic accomplishments. GO PIRATES!

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BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE 2023-24 SCHOOL YEAR:

On June 7th, the School Board approved the Final Budget with a 0% tax increase for taxpayers for the upcoming school year. Over the past 10 years, our tax increases have been set at 0% (3 years) or less than 1% (7 years) including gaming revenue. The millage rate will remain the same at 117.74 mills.

Also of note, Palisades SD has the second lowest millage rate in Bucks County only second to New Hope Solebury School District that brings in twice as much earned income tax than Palisades (See chart on page 3.)

Capital projects, those that are funded through district savings, will include the following for the upcoming school year: safety and security upgrades, Gold gym locker room upgrades at the high school, air conditioning at the middle school, Tincum roof replacement, Wastewater treatment plant upgrades, and stadium lighting upgrades.

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ALL THE BEST TO OUR STUDENT BOARD REPS:

I have been able to participate in many leadership roles and activities throughout my career at Palisades! I have also been lucky enough to be a student representative for the school board for two years. The experience has been illuminating, and I am glad I had the chance to be welcomed and surrounded by extraordinary people. Thank you kindly for your hospitality!

My post-secondary plans are to attend and graduate from Harvard, studying Political Science and Government, also, Psychology. Then attend Harvard Law, become a lawyer, a judge, and then Supreme Court Justice!

Again, most appreciated,
Camila O'Donnell, PHS Class of 2023



I, too, am fortunate to have been a school board representative during my senior year and I am grateful for the experiences which it has provided me! Also, I have been able to participate in various clubs, activities and community service projects throughout my academic career in Palisades!

I will be studying Engineering at Harvard where I will likely use either my Army or Navy ROTC scholarship. I am interested in attaining a masters of engineering or attending business school after graduation.

All the best,
Hugh Salva, PHS Class of 2023

FROM PRESIDENT MUSANTRY CONTINUED:

Let me stop right here and thank those responsible for that recognition and those accomplishments. THANKS to, above all else, the students of Palisades! Their hard work and commitment, we can never recognize enough. Along with the students are what I refer to as the other 2 legs of the stool: the parents and guardians who give of themselves to support both their own children, as well as all the students of Palisades. And last but by no means least, the teachers, support staff and administrators who have dedicated their lives for the betterment of our students.

I have been asked about what my proudest achievement has been during my tenure. I have thought long and hard about the answer. I have to say, I cannot point to one thing. By serving on this school board, I can only hope that the series of decisions I have made have left the district in a better place. I sure know that I am a better person because of my time on the board.

I will forever be thankful for all the people I have interacted with during my tenure on the school board. I know I have gained some life long friendships out of this endeavor and will always be appreciative.

I want to give a special shout out to all the board members I have served with both past and present. You all have added to my life in a very special way. As an "insider" I truly understand and appreciate all the hard work and dedication you have put forth for the betterment of Palisades. You have made me a better person. My hat is off to all of you!

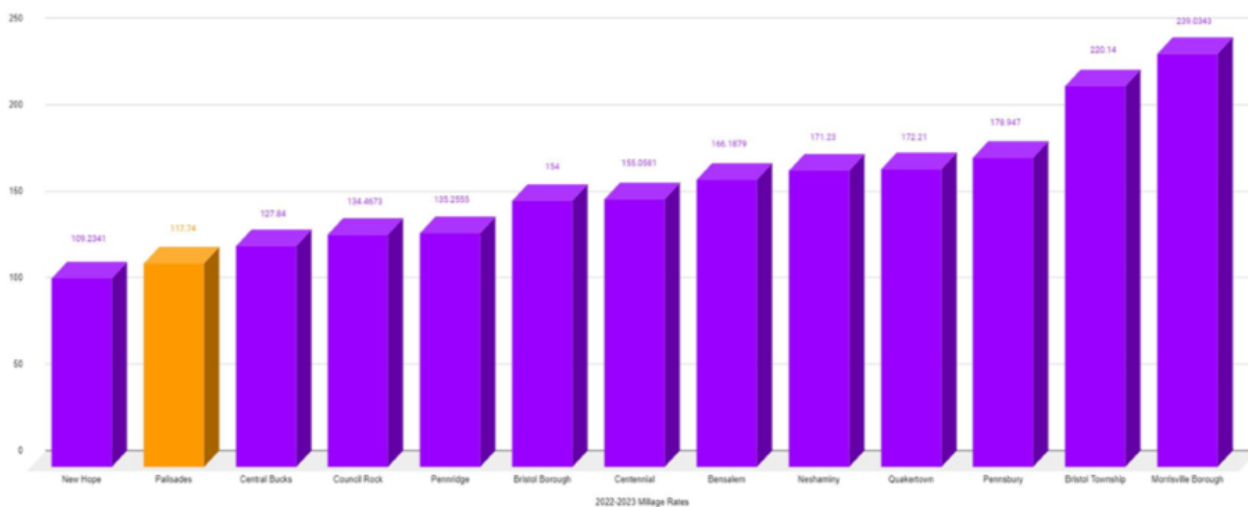
Lastly, I would be remiss if I did not leave my biggest thank you to a very special group. My wife and my 2 boys. Without their undying love and support there is no Bob Musantry, school board member. To think that when we started this adventure the boys were in elementary school and middle school and now they are grown adults who I could not be prouder of AND my wife, avid supporter and teacher/hero. To them - 143.

Thank you for allowing me to reflect, some would say ramble. Rest assured, I will still be involved in the district doings, just in different ways! Have a great summer!

BUDGET HIGHLIGHTS CONT...WHAT FACTORS HAVE AN IMPACT?

What has hurt...	What has helped...
Over the last 14 years, the Charter School budget has increased 314% and the pension costs have increased 632%. These costs are state mandated and outside of local control.	Since the Preliminary Budget presentations in the winter, the health insurance renewal came in at 16% which is down from the 20% budgeted; the dental renewal came in at 5% instead of the budgeted 10%. These updates resulted in savings of over \$400,000.
The Capital Projects budget increased by \$300,000 due a delay in Gold Gym renovations from the 22-23 budget. There was a decrease in Capital Projects budget of \$20,000 for a server upgrade that is deemed not to be necessary. The net result is an increase of \$280,000 in Capital Projects.	The Curriculum budget decreased by \$26,010 as a result of eliminating a \$20,000 purchase for materials that were not needed at this time and a reduction in field trip expenditures.

2022-2023 Millage Rates



New Hope SD Earned Income Tax revenue 20-21 = \$5.3M

Palisades SD Earned Income Tax revenue 20-21 = \$2.7M

- The difference (\$2.6M) is the equivalent of 10.5 mills of real estate taxes

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Teachers%20-%20Administrators/School%20Finances/Finances/AFR%20Data%20Summary/Pages/AFR-Data-Detailed.aspx>

HERE IS THE BOTTOM LINE...

Outside of planned savings to cover increased retirement costs, the capital projects mentioned above and Tech School renovations, the Final Budget uses \$1,594,486 from Fund Balance to balance the district budget.

NOTE: The gaming relief funds that come directly from the Commonwealth, are slightly lower than the 22-23 year and the District has 5 more properties qualifying for the Homestead/Farmstead exemption. The combination of the two will result in a decrease of the gaming relief reduction of \$0.86 per tax bill. Even with a 0% tax increase, there will be a slight increase in tax bills of \$0.86 due to this change from the state gaming funds.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN 2023-26

On June 7th, the School Board unanimously approved the Comprehensive Plan for the 2023-26 school years. This process is one that is required by the PA Department of Education every three years. Approval of the Plan means that the Board has approved the goals as presented as direction for our administration over the life of the Plan(*).

At Palisades, we pride ourselves in developing a Comprehensive Plan based on the feedback and input of our community at large. From Steering Committee members, to Action Planning Teams and surveys that are distributed, all stakeholders in our community have a voice in this process. Going forward, the planning teams will involve stakeholders to iron out all of the details involved in executing the Plan.

We are grateful for all of those who have contributed to the Plan and look forward to your continued support as we move forward.

(Please note that any budgetary requests that are proposed as a result of the details of the Plan will be brought before the Board during our budgeting process beginning again for the 2024-25 school year in the Fall of this year. As is always the case, the budget is voted on separately by the Board at the end of each school year.*

Focus Areas of the Plan:



- **Academic Excellence:** student preparedness, use of technology, and additional offerings for students.
- **Communication:** developing, distributing, and receiving timely and meaningful content and receiving feedback in a timely and efficient manner.
- **Facilities:** prioritizing infrastructure and building repair needs to enhance high quality instruction, as well as evaluating the safety and security of our buildings.
- **Student Services:** bullying prevention, improving mental health, as well as increasing public awareness regarding food services and student wellness as defined by School Code.

*The Newsletter and Comprehensive Plan
are found on our website
www.palisd.org
go to Our District*



During the month of May, our school counselors and our administrators worked together to place a spotlight on positive mental health. Each week in May, students and staff participated in activities that included strategies to improve mental health, as well as help to eliminate the stigma associated with this important topic being discussed nationwide.

Activities regarding taking time to enjoy your surroundings, being positive and kind, doing your best and persevering, as well as practicing self-regulation and mindfulness were a part of the month's focus. Each school's activities were geared towards the ages of the students they serve, but the message of improving mental health was consistent across the district.

This project is a bookend discussion about Youth Mental Health in Palisades which was held in the fall, featuring panelists like Melissa Groden from the Council of Southeast PA, Beth Hall from Lakeside Educational Network, Kristi Hoover who is an Assistant District Attorney from the Bucks County Attorney's Office, Katie Lloyd who is a Licensed Professional Counselor employed by Palisades School District, Chief Mike McDonald from Springfield Township Police and Dave Stiansen from Haycock Ministries in Kintnersville. The event was hosted by our Superintendent, Dr. Bridget O'Connell and Assistant to the Superintendent for Educational Programs, Dr. Michael Donnelly. Each panelist provided their take on what we can do together to help improve youth mental health in Palisades. The cover page of our last community newsletter outlines a few ideas to help promote positive mental health for the youth in our community including:

1. Eliminating the Stigma
2. Encourage Engagement and Belonging
3. Teach How to Self Regulate
4. Remain Active and Exercise Regularly
5. Be Proactive - Use and Advocate for Resources in our community
6. If you See Something...Say Something: Using Safe to Say
7. Strive for Five