



December 13, 2024

Dear Flemington-Raritan Regional School District Parents, Staff, and Community Members,

On December 12, our District held the first of three Town Hall sessions focused on the 2025-2026 school budget. I share my sincere appreciation for the many staff and community members who joined us both in-person and virtually, especially during the hectic holiday season. If you were unable to attend but would like to hear the discussion, please use this [link](#) to access the audio recording.

During the session, I shared budget information including the history of school funding, the budget process, factors that influence decisions, reasons for our financial strains, a recap of state aid, and the need to seek voter approval to raise the budget above the 2% cap. I also outlined the tax impact should voters approve an increase to the tax levy above 2%. Click this [link](#) to view the full presentation. A brief overview is below:

- **School Funding:** The District budget is regulated by the School Funding Reform Act (2008); districts faced steep budget slashes in 2010; the S-2 bill (2018) eliminated adjustment aid; and health benefits legislation (2020) placed more burden on local school districts. The bottom line is continuing to hold the budget at a 2% cap forces FRSD to make dire cuts in spending.
- **Budget Process:** As I wrote in my November letter, [linked](#), budget planning began in the fall and continues among administrators, Board of Education committees, and across school offices and departments. I remain committed to communicating as much information as I have available as we continue to face steep deficits.
- **Budget Factors:** Staff salaries and healthcare costs alone exceed the 2% cap. Increases are expected in all categories like supplies, utilities, facility upkeep, special education tuition, and transportation. The pandemic funding we received has ended and costs for mandated programs and services are skyrocketing too. Other factors for decision-making include staffing needs, reserve account balances, facility repairs, and educational priorities. Everything and everyone at FRSD is important, but we can no longer afford to maintain the personnel and programs with our current budget. In fact, one of our Board members stated during the Town Hall, "Everything is on the table."
- **Reasons for the Strain:** In a nutshell, lack of funds is driving the deficit; namely, federal funding that has ended; the impact of the S-2 funding formula; a lack of surplus funds; loss of cumulative state aid (over \$1 million in 6 years); deficit budgeting year over year; and cost increases in self-insurance, security, energy, transportation, and state-mandated expenses.

There is an option to address our 2025-2026 budget crisis -- the Board of Education will ask voters to approve raising the tax levy above the 2% cap. A public vote will be held on March 11, 2025. If approved by voters, an increased tax levy above 2% helps the district maintain class sizes (around 17-24 students in Grades K-4), keep staff positions, prioritize academic programs, fund our Class III Officers, and continue our athletic and extracurricular student activities. In addition, the district can continue to provide instructional materials for existing programs, maintain programs like Reading Recovery and STEM, and replace outdated technology.

Raising the tax levy above 2% impacts taxes in both Flemington Borough and Raritan Township. For example, a Flemington Borough home assessed at \$400,000 can see an annual FRSD tax increase of \$29 for a 4% tax increase, \$65 for a 6% increase, and \$101 for an 8% increase. A Raritan Township home assessed at \$600,000 can see an annual FRSD tax increase of \$310 for a 4% increase, \$386 for a 6% increase, and \$462 for an 8% increase.

The district needs to decide how much to ask voters to approve through a public vote on March 11. Your opinion and feedback are critical at this stage in budget planning. Please take a moment to complete this budget poll, [linked](#). Your

**Strategic Goals:**

**Goal Area #1:** The District will provide a comprehensive and rigorous educational experience that connects and expands students' knowledge while engaging and empowering all learners to synthesize and apply their skills and understandings in meaningful ways.

**Goal Area #2:** Develop a continuation of a multi-tiered system of support within the district to target the social, emotional, and mental health needs of students.

**Goal Area #3:** The district will create opportunities to foster unity between the community and the school district in order to strengthen partnerships and develop a shared responsibility for student success.

**Goal Area #4:** Create an enticing and competitive work environment to attract and retain high-quality candidates representative of students' diverse backgrounds in the Flemington Raritan Regional School District community.

**Goal Area #5:** Ensure the finance and facilities needs are budgeted to upkeep and meet the needs of the growing district.



anonymous response will help guide the district in gauging public support and help formulate the final question that is asked of voters.

Our next Town Hall meeting will be held in person on Monday, January 27, from 6-7:30 PM at J.P. Case Middle School. Once again, the session will offer a budget update and question-and-answer time. The community can also attend virtually with this Zoom [link](#) (Webinar ID: 873 9532 7021 and code: 066752). Click this event flyer [link](#) for details. Also, please mark your calendar for our third Town Hall on Wednesday, February 26.

To stay up-to-date on budget development, please check our budget web page, [linked](#). On this page, you'll also find this [link](#) to a Frequently Asked Questions document that provides responses to common questions as well as questions raised at Town Hall meetings. The document will be updated regularly, so please check back often. If you have questions, please be sure to email them to [budget@frsd.us](mailto:budget@frsd.us).

I've shared a lot of information, and I want to make it easy for you to find what you might need to feel informed and involved. All of the links I've shared in this letter are listed again below for your reference.

Do you want to:

- Read my first budget communication to families? View my [November letter](#).
- Listen to the information session? Access the [Town Hall #1 Audio Recording](#).
- Review my budget presentation? View the [Town Hall #1 Presentation](#).
- Come to or log into the next session on January 27? View the [Town Hall #2](#) flyer.
- Share opinions and feedback? Complete our [Budget Poll](#).
- Learn more about specific budget topics? View our [Budget Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- Stay up-to-date? Check our [Budget Webpage](#).
- Ask more questions? Email [budget@frsd.us](mailto:budget@frsd.us).

Thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to our school district and student success.

Sincerely,  
Kari McGann, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

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