

# New Lebanon & Columbia County

## NEW LEBANON CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Proposed Budget Spending Is Down But Tax Levy Is Up

by Doug La Rocque

Why is the proposed amount the school district budgeted for the 2021-22 school year down yet the tax levy is up by 6%? The answer is a revenue shortfall. According to the school district's website, "the use of \$428,911 fund balance as revenue for the 2020-21 budget created a \$428,911 hole in the 2021-22 budget. A tax error in billing resulted in over \$382,000 of revenue lost by under levying the voter approved levy and negatively impacted the 2021-22 Tax Cap formula. The district ended the year well below the State Comptroller's recommendation of 4% unrestricted fund balance. This is cash used to offset unforeseen issues."

The actual budget for the coming school year is \$12,122,588 million, which is a 5% or \$641,463 decrease for this year. The maximum dollars the district could raise under the tax cap formula was \$8,141,010 million. To balance the 2021-22 budget however, the district must raise \$8,596,955 by taxes or a 6% increase. The reason for the disparity is explained above.

According to the NYS Education Department, if

a district's tax levy is above the tax cap, voters must approve that budget by a 60 percent or greater margin. Such a district will be held to the actual tax levy amount approved by voters, with no further adjustment.

Speaking with *The Eastwick Press*, Superintendent Andrew Kourt says the district has already made several cuts, including an Assistant Principal, who also served as the Athletic Director. The AD's job will now be handled by a physical education instructor. The district also put off a new bus purchase for a year. Mr. Kourt points out that the tax billing error also created a 4.5% reduction in last year's tax levy, so the 6% increase this year actually makes up for that plus another 1.5%. She also admits they realize this is a hard thing to do during a pandemic. This also marks the first tax hike in the district since 2012.

#### Public Hearing And Vote

The School Board has set Wednesday, May 5 at 7 pm for the public hearing on the budget. That hearing will be held at the Walter B. Howard Elementary School. The actual budget vote is set for Tuesday, May 18 from noon to 9 pm at the Junior/Senior High School building.

## NEW LEBANON

### Bake Sale

On Saturday May 8, the Lebanon Valley Woman's Club will be having a bake sale. It will be in front of the Family Dollar, 500 US Route 20 in New Lebanon. The time is 9 am to 3 pm. There will be a delicious assortment of homemade baked goods. The proceeds will go to the Lore Squier Memorial Scholarship Fund. The scholarship and awards will go to New Lebanon High School students. We also support many other charities. Hope to see you there. The rain date is Saturday, May 15.

## NEW LEBANON

### Summer Youth Program

The New Lebanon Summer Youth Program will go forward as scheduled this year, beginning on June 28 and running through August 20. To receive a 20 percent discount, children must be registered by June 15. The final registration date is July 1.

For more information please contact Program Director Michelle Bienes at 518-788-1150.

## NEW LEBANON

### Looking For Volunteer Firefighters



The New Lebanon Valley Protective Association will hold an open house and recruitment drive on Saturday, April 24, from 1 to 5 pm at the firehouse at 523 US Route 20. Come meet the volunteers who help keep your community safe and learn how you can become involved. Free hot dogs, hamburgers and drinks will also be available.

## COLUMBIA COUNTY

### Birding The Hudson Valley

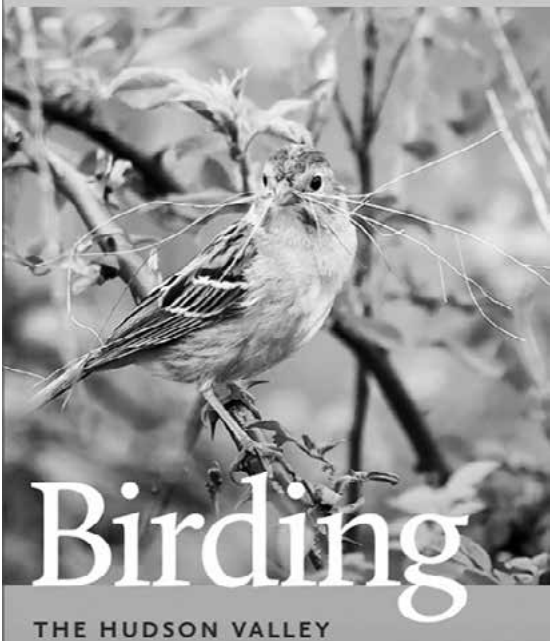
Birds are flocking to backyards throughout the Hudson Valley and Columbia County Habitat for Humanity can help you identify which ones you are seeing at our special Zoom event.

Noted ornithologist Kathryn Schneider will offer an expert view on our cherished feathered friends, based on her book, *Birding the Hudson Valley*.

This wide-ranging presentation, taking place at 4 pm on April 24 on Zoom, will include pictures and pointers from the book, offer suggestions for selecting binoculars, hints for finding birds, an introduction to bird foods and habitats and ways to become a better birder.

All proceeds will help build affordable housing in Columbia County.

Kathryn J. Schneider



## OLD CHATHAM

### Full Moon Adventure

A mindful guided adventure on safe moderate groomed trails, including interpretations of Native American traditions, Stories, Nature Awareness and Mindfulness practices will take place on Saturday, April 24 from 7:30 to 10 pm. Wine tasting (4 varieties), parking, private grounds, planned program, group interaction, hike bonfire ceremony, snacks and live entertainment.

Sign up at [www.sabbavineyard.com](http://www.sabbavineyard.com)

The event will take place at the Sabba Vineyard at 383 Pitts Road in Old Chatham.

## NEW LEBANON

### Dems Plan Virtual Meeting

Please join us for the Annual Meeting of the New Lebanon Democratic Association on Saturday May 1 at 11 am via Zoom. There will be an annual treasurer's report as well as election of the following officers for a two year term: President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. If you are a registered Democrat in the Town of New Lebanon, we would love for you to join us!

Indivisible Columbia County will be hosting a virtual, general meeting on April 25 at 4 pm. It will feature a presentation on police reform. Speakers include New Lebanon Supervisor Tistrya Houghtling, who will speak about current Columbia County efforts, and special guest Rowan Moore Gerety, son of local Dems Adelia Moore and Tom Gerety.

Rowan recently had an article published in *The Atlantic*, "CAHOOTS May Reduce the Likelihood of Police Violence," about an innovative crisis response program in Eugene, Oregon.

## HUDSON

### Columbia County Drug Take Back Day

Sheriff David P. Bartlett reports that the Columbia County Sheriff's Office is again partnering with the Drug Enforcement Administration for National Drug Take Back Day on April 24 from 10 am to 2 pm. The take back event will take place at the Sheriff's Office main building located at 85 Industrial Tract Road in Hudson.

The National Prescription Drug Take Back Day addresses a crucial public safety and public health issue. According to the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 9.7 million people misused prescription pain relievers, 4.9 million people misused prescription stimulants and 5.9 million people misused prescription tranquilizers or sedatives. The survey also showed that a majority of misused prescription drugs were obtained from family and friends, often from the home medicine cabinet.

The DEA's Take Back Day events provide an opportunity for Americans to prevent drug addiction and overdose deaths. Members of the Columbia County Drug Enforcement and Education Unit will be at the Columbia County Sheriff's Office to collect unused prescription medications. If anyone is not able to come to the office during the drug take back event, drug drop boxes are also maintained in the lobby of the main Sheriff's Office and in the vestibule of the Hillsdale substation.

If you would like to find more information regarding the DEA drug take back program you may visit <https://takebackday.dea.gov/>

