



TUXEDO UNION FREE SCHOOL DISTRICT

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May 7, 2026

Dear Members of the Tuxedo Community,

A newsletter written by CPR, a local group, has been circulating in the community about the Tuxedo School District. We welcome an engaged and informed public; however, several statements in the newsletter lack important context or present an incomplete picture.

Below are selected statements from CPR along with clarifying information to help residents better understand the issues facing the District.

CPR Statement: "Transportation costs are being allowed to climb...yet remarkably there has been no serious effort from the BOE to renegotiate terms, and restructure the transportation sector."

District Response: The BOE and Superintendent engaged the services of one of the leading school transportation consultants in New York state, who ran a public bidding process after our current transportation provider issued a notice of contract non-renewal. The district had been enjoying years of below market pricing and annual renewals. Unfortunately, Tuxedo, like many other districts throughout the state who have gone out to bid have experienced significant increases in cost. Our consultant fought hard for Tuxedo and successfully negotiated a reduction of over \$315,000 for the 2026/27 school year to the proposal submitted by the sole vendor who responded to the district's call for bids. The reason for the increased costs—and the significant steps the BOE and Superintendent took to bring those costs down—were discussed on numerous occasions at public meetings which are also videotaped and available for public viewing both on the District's website and on YouTube.

Further, taxpayers may be wondering why busing costs increased so dramatically. The short answer is that between the time we negotiated our last contract and the time we negotiated this contract, there was significant consolidation in the busing industry in Orange and Rockland counties, and indeed nationwide. After COVID, contractors have experienced driver shortages, increased equipment costs (buses), and significantly increased labor costs. With driver shortages, rising equipment and labor contract costs and fewer bus companies bidding for contracts, the incentives for companies to offer competitive bids fell, and the ability to demand higher prices rose. That is the new reality facing many districts, and Tuxedo is no exception.

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District/Business Office
1 Tornado Drive
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George F. Baker High School
1 Tornado Drive
Tuxedo, NY 10987
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CPR Statement: “Spending is rising out of control...[with] projections for the next budget already includ[ing] \$380,000 increase in employee benefits, [and] \$400,000 increase in special education.”

District Response: While the numbers are correct, they lack important context.

District spending has increased approximately 4.7% in 2026-27, or 2.35% on average over the past two years, and 2.7% over the past five years. This is well below inflation over the same period. The 2026/27 budget is being impacted by some significant costs escalations that are largely out of our control. First, as a public school, TUFSD is legally mandated to provide special education services to any child in our district who needs them. This includes children who attend GGM and GFB, as well as children who live in district but attend a private school

such as TPS or St. Paul’s. Federal and state law do not allow for the cost of a placement for a special education student to be a factor in determining what constitutes an appropriate public education for students with educational disabilities. And those costs can be high: indeed, special education services (that is, services alone, exclusive of special-ed related transportation costs) are projected to account for approximately 17% of the 2026-2027 budget. While the district does its best to control special education expenses, ultimately those expenses are dictated by the needs of the students who live in our community, and not by the BOE, or the Superintendent of Schools.

Second, the cost of health insurance has risen nationwide. TUFSD belongs to the Orange Ulster Health Insurance Plan, a consortium that negotiates with insurance companies to secure the lowest possible rates for its membership. Belonging to a consortium makes good fiscal sense: the bigger the group at the bargaining table, the more leverage they have to bargain. The increase that we are seeing was negotiated by the consortium, and represents their best efforts to secure the lowest possible rates for their membership. Indeed, the health insurance costs the consortium negotiated are actually lower than those negotiated by the New York State Health Insurance Plan (NYSHIP), which covers state employees and many public employees across the state. The rising health insurance costs are thus not attributable to spending decisions made by the BOE or the Superintendent.

Third, transportation costs have risen appreciably as described above.

These three cost categories alone have driven approximately \$1.2 million of our increases in expenditures.

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CPR Statement: “[T]here has been no meaningful action by the BOE to address overstaffing, declining enrollment, [and] consolidation or restructuring.”

District Response:

As a preliminary matter, declining enrollment is a regional and nationwide reality, and not one confined to Tuxedo. 90 percent of New York state’s school districts recorded enrollment declines from 2013-14 to 2023-24, and some private schools in our area are likewise experiencing declining enrollment. Tuxedo is in a unique position, however, as the Tuxedo Reserve residential development is projected to increase enrollment by as many as 375 students upon full build out.

Further, the prior BOE and previous Acting Superintendent took meaningful steps in the 2025/26 budget to reduce staffing, including:

- Eliminating the Human Resources position;
- Eliminating the Transportation Director position and shifting those responsibilities to the Building Maintenance Supervisor under the supervision of our School Business Official;
- Paring back teaching staff, including eliminating two Elementary School teachers' aides; positions and reducing a 0.8 Elementary School art teacher, and a 0.8 High School science teacher, and a 0.6 Special Education;
- Trimming such staff positions, as the vacant cook-manager and custodial positions; and
- Eliminating the BOCES Public Relations service and parceling out those responsibilities to existing staff at a savings.

For the 2026/27 budget, the District is looking to take further steps to right size our staffing, including:

- Reducing a .5 Music Teacher
- Reducing a .6 Physical Education Teacher
- Reducing a 1.0 Elementary Teacher
- Reducing a 0.5 Technology Teacher
- Reducing a 1.0 High School Teacher

The BOE and Superintendent continue to explore further opportunities to consolidate and restructure to ensure our resources are spent responsibly and effectively, and we welcome constructive input from the community on how best to achieve that shared goal.

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CPR Statement: “[S]everal long-serving Board members have close family members employed within the district [which] is a clear conflict of interest.”

District Response: State law defines prohibited conflicts of interest for both teachers and civil service employees, and in neither instance is employment of relatives a violation of the state’s conflict of interest laws. To the extent there are any specific instances in which members of the community believe a BOE member improperly influenced a decision regarding a family member, the BOE and Superintendent welcome that information and will take it seriously.

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CPR Statement: The “Board [is] resist[ing] the feasibility study.”

District Response: The BOE and Superintendent are in communication with the stakeholders regarding the feasibility study and are looking at some key areas of focus to include in the study.

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CPR Statement: “[C]ollege acceptances are less than stellar.”

District Response: We are proud to report that in the past five years our students have been accepted to such institutions as Princeton University, Purdue University, Georgia Tech, New York University, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Penn State, Virginia Tech, University of Virginia, Northeastern University, Drexel University, Clemson University, multiple State

University of New York campuses, Rutgers University, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and the University of Connecticut. This is a very strong and well-balanced set of college acceptances.

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CPR Statement: "Tuxedo Reserve will not fix this."

District Response: While not a panacea, the Tuxedo Reserve will bring a significant number of new families to our community. Indeed, projections suggest that the population of Tuxedo will double when the Reserve is fully built and occupied. This influx of new students will, upon full build-out, dramatically remake TUFSD and the assessment rolls will also roughly double. We recognize that there are other challenges that need to be addressed as well and intend to do so with the help of our administration, legal counsel and architectural firm, as well as demographers. We also understand that the school district cannot be successful without the support of the community and we will work together to find common ground and team-developed solutions.

Tuxedo, you deserve an open and free exchange of ideas based on facts. We welcome an open exchange of ideas with CPR and all of our neighbors. We hope that in the end the entire community will recognize the value of building a Top 100 school district and support that endeavor. Not only will a strong educational program provide a great future for our children, but school quality also accounts for a significant portion of residential housing values. Our highly affordable tax rate is one of the lowest in the county; indeed, taxes for a home in Tuxedo would increase by approximately 70% on average if that same home was located in our neighboring districts. So, a school district that we can all support and be proud of is the most logical choice and one that is in everyone's interest. The BOE and Superintendent strongly encourage you to be informed and engaged voters and attend our meetings or send us an email with your thoughts or concerns.

We can be reached at: boe@tuxedoufsd.org.

Thank you for your continued support

Tuxedo Union Free School District Board of Education