

## Brighton schools request tax cap override

### Justin Murphy

Rochester Democrat and Chronicle USA TODAY NETWORK

The Brighton Central School District is asking residents to override the state property tax cap in its annual spending plan, saying state funding levels have left it no choice.

The district says the increase in the tax levy — a 4.89% increase, more than double the 2.34% increase that the tax cap would permit — is inevitable and the direct result of the broken state Foundation Aid formula as well as past district commitments, particularly facilities work related to implementing full-day kindergarten. The proposed budget is for \$81.9 million, up 4.5% from 2018-19. Passing a budget that exceeds the property tax cap requires voter support exceeding 60%, which the district achieved once before in 2014.

“We’ve made accommodations within the budget ... but without massive cuts to programming or really filleting the strategy of paying our debt down and compounding the problem, we have to go over the cap,” Superintendent Kevin McGowan told the school board.

McGowan, the incoming president of the state superintendents association, pointed to the gap between actual state revenue and what the state pledged, but never has delivered upon, in the foundation aid formula.

Most districts in the state are underfunded compared to that formula, but Brighton comes up shorter than nearly any other, by about \$8 million.

“None of this makes any sense,” he said.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo has consistently dismissed districts’ complaints about the foundation aid formula and tax cap, pointing out that New York schools are the best-funded in the nation.

Local districts have a mixed track record in seeking tax cap overrides. West Irondequoit failed in 2014, then failed again on a second attempt, triggering an austerity budget for 2014-15.

Pittsford saw its 2017 budget go down, then passed a second version without full-day kindergarten funding. Victor passed an override by an eight-vote margin in 2016.

The budget vote is from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday, May 21, at Brighton High School, 1150 S. Winton Road.

More information is available at [bcsd.org](http://bcsd.org).

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**McGowan**