



**Report of Findings
Town of Hague
School Advisory Committee (SAC)
March 13, 2025**

Report on Committee Assignment

- **Committee assignment - advise Hague Town Board and its citizens regarding:**
 - Quality of education provided
 - School tax situation
- **Meeting purpose**
 - Inform the Town and public on SAC findings to date
 - Engage community in improvement

Meeting Agenda

- **Background**
- **Findings**
 - Academic performance
 - PILOT agreements
- **Next steps**
 - Q&A
 - Discussion
- **Conclusion**

SAC Membership

- Jack Bast, Chair
- Kathe Allen
- Rolly Allen (D)
- Beth Barton-Navitsky
- Barbara Booth
- Peter Carney
- Susan DeLarm-Sandman (R)
- Linda Fusco
- Michael Galow
- Walt Lender
- Amanda Peterson (R)
- Sandy Smith
- Sally Thurston
- John Zamrok

SAC Activities

- Meet monthly
- Attend monthly School Board of Education (BoE) meetings
- Join Rural Schools Association of New York (RSANY)
- Promote Hague Resolutions → requests to the BoE
 - Multi Year Assessment Averaging (MYAA) in school tax levy
 - Hague Participation in PILOT agreements affecting school taxes
 - Streaming of BoE meetings
 - Include energy project Full Market Values in levy apportionment

Report of Findings

- Michael Galow: Academic Performance
- Peter Carney: PILOT Agreements

How Well does the TCSD Serve Its Students?

*A high level comparative review of student proficiency
results in English Language Arts (ELA), Math, and Science
and High School Graduation Results*

Michael Galow
Dr. Linda Fusco
Beth Barton-Navitsky

March 2025

Working Together

- In 1979, the Hague and Ticonderoga school districts were consolidated to form the Ticonderoga Central School District (TCSD) to provide a high quality, efficient and effective public education for our children. ***The educational achievement of students is at the heart of our common interest in supporting the TCSD.***
- In 2024, TCSD Superintendent Scott Nephew and High School Principal John Donohue presented “A Story of Rural Education” at the 2024 Property Owners of Silver Bay annual meeting.
- March 21, 2024, Planetarium Program and tour of the building for the community.
- Previous presentations to the Hague community
 - Annual Budget Review – Laurie Cossey 2023
 - Monthly Meeting Summer 2011 – History of Hague Annexation.

Purpose:

- The purpose of this portion of the presentation is to inform parents and community members about the performance of the Ticonderoga Central School District (TCSD) and engage parents and community members in an effort to improve the performance of Ticonderoga's schools for the benefit of all children.

Methodology

- NYS requires school districts to conduct annual assessments that measure the percent of students who are proficient in the NYS learning standards by grade level and subject area - English Language Arts (ELA), Math and Science. The assessments for ELA and Math are given in Grade 3 through Grade 8, whereas the Science assessment is conducted only in Grade 5 and 8. For example, the ELA test taken by 4th graders measures the percentage of Grade 4 students who demonstrate proficiency in the benchmarks embedded in the state ELA standards for 4th grade students.
- All of the data used in this presentation was taken from the NYS Education Department Parent Dashboard - <https://data.nysed.gov/parents/>

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for ELA by Grade

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for ELA by Grade (3-8)				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
3rd Grade	59%	62%	78%	43%
4th Grade	34%	76%	75%	47%
5th Grade	22%	76%	14%	44%
6th Grade	47%	62%	64%	44%
7th Grade	28%	60%	52%	50%
8th Grade	36%	68%	50%	46%

In grades 3 and 6, the percent of Ticonderoga students who were proficient in ELA *was greater than the state average. However, with the exception of the grade 3 results, fewer than 50% of Ticonderoga's 4th through 8th graders were proficient in the standard for ELA.*

The percent of students in the Lake George Central School District (Lake George) and the Bolton Central School District (Bolton), with the exception of the Grade 5 students in Bolton, had ELA proficiency rates above the state average.

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for ELA by Grade

2023-24 Comparative ELA Proficiency Results for Combined Grades 3-8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Grade 3-8	36%	67%	57%	46%
State Rank	439	49	109	N/A

- *On a combined Grade3-8 basis, only 36% of TCSD students were proficient in the ELA standards where the NYS average was 46%. The combined results for Lake George and Bolton were well above the NYS average and placed these school districts among the top school districts in NYS.*

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Math by Grade

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Math by Grade (3-8)				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
3rd Grade	84%	82%	88%	54%
4th Grade	45%	83%	75%	58%
5th Grade	41%	84%	33%	49%
6th Grade	56%	67%	57%	51%
7th Grade	37%	71%	65%	57%
8th Grade	27%	60%	78%	41%

In grades 3 and 6, the percent of Ticonderoga students proficient in Math was *greater than 50% and greater than the state average*. However, *all other grades were less than 50% and lower than the state average in Math*. The percent of Grade 3-8 students in Lake George and Bolton, with the exception of Grade 5 students in Bolton, was well above the state average by grade level.

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Math by Grade

2023-24 Comparative Math Proficiency Results for Combined Grades 3-8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Grade 3-8	N/A *	76%	69%	54%
State Rank	N/A	49	96	N/A

The NYS Parent Dashboard did not report data for the percent of combined Grade 3-8 students who were proficient in Math for the TCSD. The combined Grade 3-8 student proficiency results for Lake George and Bolton students was well above the NYS average of 54% and placed them among the top 100 school districts in NYS

2023-24 Comparative Student Proficiency Results for Science by Grade

- In NYS, assessments for Science are only given in Grades 5 and 8.

2023-24 Comparative Proficiency Results for Science Grades 5 and 8				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
5th Grade	31%	72%	14%	35%
8th Grade	30%	50%	67%	34%
Combined Grade 8**	N/A *	59%	80%	53%
Combined 5 & 8	N/A *	67%	59%	44%

** Combined Grade 8 includes the results for students who took the Regents 8 test and the standard state test for Science

The NYS Report Card does not report data for the combined Ticonderoga Grade 5-8 Science results. In Lake George and Bolton, some 8th graders took the Regents 8 Science exam in place of the standard state 8th Grade Science test. It does not appear that any Ticonderoga students took the Regents 8 Science test. The state provides a combined Grade 8 result reflecting the achievement of students who took either of the two 8th Grade Science tests. Combined Grade 5 and 8 Science proficiency results for Lake George and Bolton students are well above the state average.

2023 and 2024 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rate

2023 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rates				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Graduation Rate	91%	96%	100%	86%
Drop Out Rate	9%	3%	0%	5%

2024 Comparative 4-Year High School Graduation Rates				
	Ticonderoga	Lake George	Bolton	NYS Average
Graduation Rate	83%	92%	100%	86%
Drop Out Rate	11%	7%	0%	5%

The 2024 High School Graduation Rate for the TCSD was notably worse than in 2023 and the drop-out rate was well above the NYS average in both years. There can be some variability year over year especially in cases where the graduating classes are small, so more data collection and analysis would be worthwhile to evaluate the results over time to determine if there is a sustained trend of improvement or decline.

Comparing the Ticonderoga graduation and drop-out rates with those for Lake George suggests there are opportunities to improve the TCSD results. If 6 (out of 66) more TCSD students had graduated in 2024, the graduation rate in Ticonderoga would have been 92% - this should be an achievable objective for the TCSD.

Overall Findings:

- **The Grades 3-8 learning proficiency results for the TCSD in ELA, Math and Science do not compare well to the NYS average and compare less favorably with the results of our neighboring districts in Lake George and Bolton.**
- **The 2024 High School Graduation rate at Ticonderoga High School is three percentage points below the state average. The high school graduation rates in Lake George and Bolton are substantially higher.**

Concerns:

- **If foundational skills are not mastered in the elementary and middle schools, it is challenging to improve the achievement of High School students.**
- **The lower-than-average high school graduation rate should be concerning to parents in the district, especially when compared to nearby districts.**

What Can be Done - What Can I do - What Can We Do Together?

“ Our history is not our destiny.”

- Be Bold – *Expect excellence!*
- In the 2015-2018 TCSD “Strategic Plan for Continuous Improvement” the TCSD leadership set out an ambitious Vision and Mission Statement:
 - *Vision: We aspire to be the national model of excellence in rural education*
 - *Mission: We engage and inspire a community of learners today and into tomorrow*

What Can be Done - What Can I do - What Can We Do Together?

- *Ticonderoga Superintendent’s message from August 2023:* “We will remain committed to the social and emotional well-being of our students and staff throughout the 2023-2024 school year, while continuing to pursue academic success.”
- *Lake George Vision:* To foster academic and personal **excellence**, responsibility and cultural awareness, we are dedicated to creating:
 - An engaging and innovative learning environment for each student
 - A comprehensive K-12 instructional program using best practices
 - Student connections to extra-curricular opportunities
 - An appreciation for diversity and local traditions
- *Bolton Superintendent Message (2024)* - “We strive for academic **excellence** and remarkable experiences in a supportive community, which will exceed all expectations.”

What Can be Done - What Can I do - What Can We Do Together?

- Improving student achievement is challenging work that requires leadership, perseverance, commitment, determination and most importantly community engagement and support. It will take time, and setbacks will occur, ***but there is no reason to believe that the current level of performance is inevitable or impossible to change.***
- It will take parents and community and business leaders to express their concerns persistently to the School Board and School leadership team to encourage them to take on the challenge of excellence boldly and be accountable for improvement.

PILOT Agreement Findings

Peter Carney

What's up with our school taxes?

- Current Situation
- What is a PILOT?
- Board of Education Actions
- TCSD Energy PILOT Agreements
- Comparison with Regional Actions
- Effects on Taxpayers
- Energy PILOT Scenario Analyses
- Findings
- Objectives

Current Situation

- TCSD is not achieving satisfactory education results
- TCSD's Tax Levies are far more than our neighbors

School	School Rank (600+) for NYS Tests 2024				School Tax \$/1000 Full Market Value
	Math	ELA	Science	ELA Regents	
Lake George	49	49	66	95	\$ 4.99
Bolton	96	109	132	254	\$ 3.80
Ticonderoga	125	439	527	363	\$ 7.70
Hague					\$ 7.46

What is a PILOT?

- **Definition:** Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT)
- **Reason for being:** To encourage projects that are aligned with specific public policies such as renewable energy
- **TCSD options:**
 - “Opt out” of the requirement to reduce taxes thus providing leverage for TCSD to maximize PILOT revenues through due diligence and negotiations
 - Fully include the Full Market Value (FMV) of projects with PILOTs in the apportionment of the school tax levy across multiple districts to fairly recognized the benefits of such projects

Board of Education (BoE) Actions

- For seven recent energy projects located in Ticonderoga the BoE missed opportunities to reduce the financial burden on taxpayers, and actively increased the burden on Hague.
 - PILOT agreements reduce the contribution of these projects to school funding, which is otherwise paid by taxpayers.
 - Exclusion of these seven projects from the apportionment calculation shifts costs from Ticonderoga to Hague
 - BoE precedent includes tax exempt properties in the apportionment calculation. An example found in the 2024-25 school budget is a \$20 million mill project – a similar industrial project.
 - Host Site agreements were not negotiated.

TCSD Energy PILOT Agreements

- Seven energy projects, with an estimated cost of at least \$150,000,000, currently have PILOT agreements.
 - Champlain Hudson Power Express
 - 1250 MW DC transmission line from Quebec to NYC with an estimated cost of \$7,000,000,000 required to be in service by May 2026 or NYC will not have sufficient electricity available.
 - 1st year PILOT revenues for TCSD estimated to be \$122,770 which is approximately one quarter of the taxes due if taxed at full value.
 - Six solar projects
 - 42.5 MW with estimated costs in excess of \$100,000,000 scheduled in service over the next two years
 - 1st year PILOT revenues for TCSD estimated \$73,673 which is approximately one sixth of the taxes due if taxed at full value.

Comparisons with Regional Actions

PILOT tax reductions are made up for by increased local taxes

Many jurisdictions did not give CHPE a PILOT including NYC. More than 300 jurisdictions have “opted out”

TCSD BoE did not seek a Host Site Agreement. Putnam CSD negotiated for \$4 Mil

Many jurisdictions negotiated PILOTs with smaller tax reductions compared to TCSD

Resource	Jurisdiction	PILOT Tax Reductions %
CHPE	TCSD	77
	Clinton County	72
	Green County	70
	Warren Washington Water Route	56
	Saratoga County	28
	Schenectady County	0
	Dutchess County	0
	Orange County	0
	Ulster County	0
	NYC	0
	Rockland County	Varies*
Solar	TCSD	91
	Lewis County	83
	Franklin County	76
	Green County	70
	Cayuga County	58
	St. Lawrence County	45
	Niagara County	39
	Saratoga County	36
	Tioga County	10
	Putnam CSD	0
	Clinton County	Most opt out
	* Rockland County PILOTs are front end loaded	

Effects on Taxpayers

- More than \$1,000,000 of 1st year revenues have been left on the negotiating table with these PILOTs.
- These PILOTs will effectively increase school taxes in both Ticonderoga and Hague compared to fully taxing these projects.
- Hague currently pays more than 56% of the school tax levy.
- TSCD BoE decision to not include the value of these projects in the school tax apportionment calculation shifts more costs to Hague and reduces the amount of the CHPE PILOT payments due to TCSD.

Energy PILOT Scenario Analyses

Scenario	Project Payment	Included in apportionment?	Ticonderoga Full Value Tax Rate / \$000 FMV value, share	Hague Full Value Tax Rate / \$000 FMV value, share
Base case: School year 2024-25	None	NA	\$7.70 44%	\$7.46 56%
1 – TCSD BoE Special Policy	PILOT	No	\$7.59 44%	\$7.34 56%
2 – Hague’s Request for Fairness	PILOT	Yes	\$8.35 48%	\$6.77 52%
3 - Opt out case	Full Tax	Yes	\$7.05 48%	\$6.87 52%

Findings

- TCSD was a party to the PILOT agreements that were entered into without conducting independent due diligence in the execution of their responsibilities as a taxing authority.
- TCSD has entered into multiple agreements that have left a million dollars a year on the table for as long as 30 years.
- TCSD has compounded these failures by shifting the tax burden to Hague by refusing to include the FMV of these energy projects in the apportionment calculation.
- TCSD gave little or no consideration to Hague's interest in the process, thereby undermining the trust Hague taxpayers have in TCSD's leadership.

Objectives

- TCSD BoE should immediately reverse its policy and include the FMV of all PILOT projects in the apportionment calculation
- Hague must have a seat at the table for all future PILOT agreements considered by TCSD
- Implement Multi-Year Assessment Averaging (MYAA) to smooth out tax bills
 - Would have helped Hague taxpayers after recent reassessment
 - Will help Ticonderoga taxpayers when energy projects are included in apportionment calculation

Discussion, Q & A

- Academic Performance
- PILOT Agreements et al.

Summary of Findings

- Academic Performance
- PILOT Agreements and MYAA

Academic Performance - Summary

- TCSD academic performance has decreased.
- Grades 3-8 learning proficiency results are generally poor relative to the NYS average.
- The low High School Graduation Rate is concerning.
- It will take parents and community and business leaders to express their concerns persistently to the BoE and School Leadership Team to encourage them to take on the challenge of excellence boldly and be accountable for improvement.
- SAC and the Town Board are taking the lead in Hague.

PILOT Agreements - Summary

- TCSD did not exercise substantive due diligence in its tax authority role.
- Missed opportunities in current Agreements have left a million dollars a year on the table for as long as 30 years.
- Refusal to include energy project FMVs in the apportionment calculation shifts more of the unwarranted tax burden to Hague.
- Hague seeks inclusion in future PILOT agreements affecting school tax to prevent future recurrence.
- Hague seeks inclusion of MYAA and energy project FMVs in the apportionment calculation.



Thank you for coming!

**Be involved and engaged in
better education and fairer school taxes!**

School Advisory Committee (SAC)

Appendix

Town of Hague School Advisory Committee Member Profiles – March 2025

The Hague Town Board established the School Advisory Committee (SAC) in May 2023 following the town's first property assessment revaluation in 19 years. The resulting school tax changes prompted a third review of the Ticonderoga Central School District (TCSD) tax levy apportionment process, which affects both Hague and Ticonderoga. SAC's mission is to assess the state of education for Hague students and evaluate the town's school tax structure in collaboration with Ticonderoga and TCSD.

Committee Members:

- **Jack Bast (Chair)** – Hague resident since 2004, elected Town Board member since 2018. Holds a BE in Marine Engineering (SUNY Maritime) and an MS in Nuclear Engineering (MIT). Retired from General Electric after 31 years in engineering management, followed by a current career in automobile financing and business consulting.
- **Kathe Allen** – Hague resident since 1999. Holds a BA in Psychology (University of Vermont) and a Master of Science (University of Bridgeport). Licensed real estate broker with expertise in the impact of school districts on property values. Served on a previous committee with the same mission as SAC. Advocates for fair school tax representation, given Hague's high percentage of seasonal residents ineligible to vote on school budgets.

Town of Hague School Advisory Committee Member Profiles – March 2025

Committee Members (continued):

- **Beth Barton-Navitsky** – Full-time Silver Bay resident. Holds a BS in Business & Education (Rosemont College) and an MS in Educational Leadership (SUNY Plattsburgh). Former teacher and school administrator/principal with 18+ years of educational experience. Current Licensed Real Estate Salesperson and active member of the Rural Schools Association of NY. Past Executive Director of The Sembrich Opera Museum and board member of the Glens Falls Foundation, the Grace Memorial Chapel, the North Country Ministry and was active in the Northern Lake George Rotary Club for over 17 years, including as its President.
- **Barbara Booth** - Full-time Silver Bay resident since 2019, previously lifetime summer visitor. Holds an AB in Statistics (Harvard University). Former market research consultant with 30 years' experience in all phases of research projects, from problem definition through analysis and presentation of results. Projects included customer satisfaction, brand strategy, customer segmentation, volume estimation, and face-to-face interviews with Fortune 500 C-suite executives. Has assisted the Silver Bay YMCA and the Ticonderoga Natural Foods Co-op with customer surveys.

Town of Hague School Advisory Committee Member Profiles – March 2025

Committee Members (continued):

- **Peter Carney** – Hague native with seasonal home in Hague. Attended Hague CSD and graduated from Ticonderoga CSD. Holds a BS in Mechanical Engineering (University of Rochester), pursued graduate studies in environmental engineering at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and holds an MBA in Finance (Binghamton University). Career in the power industry and is an expert and published author in all aspects of energy projects including financing.
- **Dr. Linda Fusco** – Summer resident of Silver Bay for over 75 years. Holds a BS in Mathematics (SUNY Plattsburgh), an MST in Mathematics (Fordham University), and a PhD (University of Nebraska-Lincoln). Over 60 years in education as a teacher, administrator, and STEAM/Literacy consultant (SW BOCES and NYC Schools). Active member of the Rural Schools Association of NY and is President of the Property Owners of Silver Bay (POSB) with over 120 members. Author: [Navigating MathLand: How Parents Can Help Their Kids Through the Maze](#). Board member American Association of University Women, Adirondack Branch.

Town of Hague School Advisory Committee Member Profiles – March 2025

Committee Members (continued):

- **Michael Galow** – Longtime Hague summer resident. Holds a BA in Economics (Fordham University). Senior management experience with NYC Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA). Public transit consultant. Currently president of his family-owned manufacturing company. Serving his fourth term on his hometown NJ's Board of Education with extensive knowledge of school finances, contract negotiations, curriculum and school board operations.
- **Walter Lender** – Ticonderoga resident with a strong interest in TCSD. Holds a BA in English & History (Hartwick College) and an MS in Administration & Management (St. Michael's College). Board member and Vice President of Development & Government Relations at Silver Bay YMCA. Walt's community involvement includes being Executive Director of the Lake George Association (LGA), Director of Development for the Fort Ticonderoga Association, Executive Director of PRIDE of Ticonderoga, Inc., Student Services Coordinator for North Country Community College, and Town of Ticonderoga Planning and Zoning Board.
- **Sandra Smith-Cehowski** – Seasonal visitor to Hague since 1972. Holds a BA in Education (Elmira College) and Master credits (SUNY College of Saint Rose). Art teacher at Moriah CSD for three years and at Albany CSD for 35 years; involved in Albany CSD Staff Development, ATLAS, Discipline With Dignity, After-school Programs, Murals and Staff Retirement Committees. Home tutored for three years after retirement.

Town of Hague School Advisory Committee Member Profiles – March 2025

Committee Members (continued):

- **Sally Thurston** – Queensbury native and summer resident of Hague. Holds a BS in Chemical Engineering (Cornell University) and a JD (Harvard Law School). Recently retired senior partner at prominent NYC law firm Skadden Arps specializing in tax law. Serves on the board of the Lake George Association (LGA).
- **John Zamrok** – Multi-generational Hague lakefront cottage owner. Holds degrees in Political Science (County College of Morris) and Criminal Justice (Seton Hall University). Has over 45 years of law enforcement and military firearms training experience, owning and operating his own company since 2010. Background includes State of NJ Range Master, State Investigator for both the NJ Divisions of Criminal Justice and Gaming Enforcement.

As part of the joint Ticonderoga Central School District community, SAC remains committed to evaluating academic performance and school tax structure, advocating for Hague's residents and a sustainable education system.