

Lohud March 1, 2017

Tax Watch: Hudson cruise an academic lesson or boat party?

David McKay Wilson, Tax Watch columnist Published 4:36 p.m. ET March 1, 2017 | Updated 2 hours ago

Tax Watch Columnist David McKay Wilson examines the district's \$36,000 dinner cruise for eighth-graders.



(Photo: Cornucopia Cruise Line/submitted)
[LINKEDINCOMMENTEMAILMORE](#)

When is a \$37,000 field trip for John Jay Middle School eighth-graders not actually a field trip?

When it's a \$120-a-head dinner cruise on the 115-foot Cornucopia Destiny, down the Hudson River from Yonkers to New York Harbor and back, alleges Johannes Wille, a longtime budget critic of the Katonah-Lewisboro schools.

The "sunset boat party," according to Principal Richard Leprine, will feature dining and dancing on May 18 for 241 of 267 John Jay Middle School's eighth-graders. They will be chaperoned by 28 adults, including the school nurse. School officials say the annual cruise, which is mostly paid for by parents and the Katonah-Lewisboro PTO, is "an essential component of the district's eighth grade academic program," according to documents obtained by Tax Watch.

Wille, a silver-haired retired corporate finance professional, has raised questions about the district's finances for years, as well as the unyielding property tax burden that has remained steady despite the district's dramatic drop in enrollment over the past 15 years.