

## NESHAMINY

## Board continues trimming budget

By RACHEL CANELLI COURIER TIMES

Three and a half down, but a long way to go. Neshaminy's projected budget gap is down \$3.5 million from January's \$14.7 million estimate, business administrator Joseph Paradise told the school board Tuesday night. Besides including possibly 100 retirees, the board recently voted to consider closing Tawanka Learning Center and Neshaminy Middle School this year. Depending on if Neshaminy rents the buildings that could save the district about \$1.5 million or more reducing the budget difference to \$11.2 million, or a 13.5 mill increase, said Paradise. Under Act 1, school boards can't increase a millage rate beyond 4.4 percent, or \$4.8 million in Neshaminy, without a voter referendum, Paradise said. The district also qualifies for about \$5.7 million in exceptions, a total allowable increase of \$10.6 million, administrators said. In January, the board approved the 2008-09 roughly \$168 million preliminary spending plan. At that time, officials reported the district's projected revenues at \$153.3 million.

The expenses are up from the current year's \$164.4 million working budget, administrators said. To fill the gap, Paradise recommended using \$7 million of Neshaminy's fund balance, or savings account.

The current millage rate is 142.3. One mill equals \$774,779, officials said. For taxpayers who own homes assessed at the district average of \$27,080, that could mean a \$371 tax hike, Paradise said.

Neshaminy could find savings through retirement contributions and healthcare premiums, officials said.

Rachel Canelli can be reached at 215-949-4191 or .