

NESHAMINY

## Board facing tough budget decisions

*There has been talk of eliminating certain teacher positions and bus routes.*

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Good news! Neshaminy's budget should fall within the Act 1 tax spending limit. The bad news: Everybody won't like something about it. That's what business administrator Joseph Paradise told the Neshaminy school board this week about the district's previously projected \$167 million spending plan. To meet the tax law's allowable 4.1 percent increase, which equals 6 mills or \$4.6 million in Neshaminy, officials said they need to shrink a \$14 million deficit to \$4.5 million.

It's unclear who, or what, will suffer the most. But administrators said the cuts will involve program changes and elimination and service reductions from the cabinet to the custodians, including teachers.

"We're not sure how we're going to do that yet," said Paradise. "It's still a work in progress. Every part of the district will be affected. But there's no other way to do it. There's no magic bullet."

Revenues, including property and business taxes, are down almost \$3 million to about \$153 million, Paradise reported last month. Since officials don't want to use any more of the dwindling \$1.2 million savings account, taxpayers would see an average \$500 increase to help fill that gap, administrators said.

For that reason, some homeowners, many senior citizens, have been petitioning the board for a zero percent budget/tax increase.

To ease the burden, board members and administrators have discussed sharing elementary art, music and gym teachers, advertising at sporting events, reducing the pre-first program, going paperless, increasing class size, charging community groups to use facilities, eliminating lead teachers, decreasing bus routes and charging for extra-curricular activities.

Neshaminy qualifies, though, for about \$3.3 million in exceptions, including for special education. So, that could bump the district's allowable total increase to 7 percent, or 10.32 mills. But the board members previously voted to try their best not to use those.

Paradise is expected to present the updated budget to the board during its April 28 meeting, which begins at 7 p.m., in Maple Point Middle School's board room.

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