

Budget cuts

Sharing the pain

Neshaminy teachers need to face reality.

At least everybody will be unhappy. Well, almost everybody. We refer to the Neshaminy School District, where officials are cutting and scraping, trying to pare down next year's budget to meet the state-mandated 4.1 percent spending increase outlined in Act 1.

To do that, school board members and administrators have to chop about \$10 million from the original \$167 million spending plan. Among the budgetary proposals: increasing class size; decreasing bus routes; charging for extra-curricular activities.

There were several others outlined by our reporter in Friday's newspaper. But just any one of the aforementioned would almost guarantee a packed school board meeting. But what's the school board to do?

Taxpayers clamor for a limit on expenditures — and they should. School taxes have been spiraling ever higher with no end in sight. While the last tax reform effort didn't produce the relief promised, at least the spending cap has imposed some sort of a check. And so everybody will feel the pinch ... so far, with the exception of teachers.

While teachers did not see a pay increase this year due to a contract extension, their free health benefits remain in play. And the teachers union is insisting on keeping that unreasonable perk for the next contract. Indeed, the union rejected the same offer recently accepted by administrators, which requires a contribution toward benefits, albeit half of what folks in the private sector pay.

Our point: The teachers union needs to accept reality. And reality for most people is frozen or reduced salaries if not unemployment, and ever increasing contributions toward the cost of employer-provided health insurance.

We're not suggesting teachers take a pay cut, though that's how many businesses are staying afloat amid rough economic seas. We are suggesting that the teachers union begin to accept reality by agreeing to pay what most people would consider a bargain rate for health insurance. That would be a start. We know it will be painful, but everybody's suffering now.