

Unreasonable demands

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Neshaminy workers should lower their sights.

Teachers aren't the only Neshaminy employees who need to do a reality check. Bus drivers, secretaries, maintenance workers and other "support staff" want taxpayers to keep gift-wrapping health benefits.

Like the teachers, members of the support staff union receive free benefits, a situation the school board says it can no longer afford. Unlike the teachers, they're willing to pay something - but not enough. Five percent of cost is what they have in mind.

What they don't have in mind, apparently, is how much folks in the private sector pay for employer-subsidized health insurance - typically, 30-35 percent of its cost. That's thousands of dollars out of most people's take-home, which hasn't gone up much recently as a result, and is going up even less now - if at all. In fact, the worst recession in decades has seen a lot of workers hit with pay freezes or cuts; many have been laid off.

Amid such financial pain and suffering, it's almost inconceivable that school district employees can be so thoughtless. But not only are they demanding that taxpayers cover nearly the entire cost of health insurance, they want them to fund raises in the 3-4 percent range every year for five years.

In response to their unreasonable demands, the school board is considering contracting out some services. In a letter to the newspaper, board member William O'Connor noted that the district "can save just under (\$9 million) over a three-year period if janitorial services were to be outsourced."

How long would it take the owners of a private company to outsource if they could cut costs by \$3 million a year? Maybe 30 seconds.

School district employees, including teachers, need to think of the folks who pay their salaries and benefits. They're going through hard times. Jobs have been lost, salaries cut; people are hurting. School employees should lower their sights - or prepare to accept the consequences.

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