

NESHAMINY

Lunch prices could increase 15 cents

By *RACHEL CANELLI*
STAFF WRITER

Neshaminy students buying lunch at school next year might not have to dig for as much extra change as they thought.

After bids came in lower than expected, the budgeted deficit for food services is roughly \$73,000, down from about \$98,000, officials told the Neshaminy school board last week. So next week, administrators will ask the board to increase lunch prices by 15 cents, saving families a nickel from the originally proposed 20-cent hike.

Students now pay \$1.95 in elementary school and \$2.35 at the secondary levels. If approved, the new meal costs would be \$2.10 and \$2.50, said Marie Wallace, food service director.

The adjusted prices would cover next year's anticipated loss caused by reduced revenues, higher delivery and fuel charges, and aging cafeteria equipment that needs to be repaired and replaced, Wallace said.

Officials also offered school directors options that included increasing breakfast prices. But the 15-cent proposal is their first choice, since more money is generated from lunch than breakfast and administrators have been trying to get more kids to eat in the morning.

For this school year, prices were raised by 25 cents to help plug the hole between \$3.15 million in revenue and \$3.2 million in expenses, said Wallace.

Based on a survey of surrounding districts, Neshaminy already charges less than most schools. And more than half of 50 area school districts also plan to hike meal costs, officials said.

Managers said they'd continue to monitor the budget and try to entice more students and staff to buy meals at school.

If the board doesn't approve the increase, taxpayers may end up stuck with the bill, administrators said.

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