

NESHAMINY

## Budget changes could mean lower tax hike for residents

*More than 60 people in the district could lose their jobs, and families might have to pay for extra-curriculars.*

By **RACHEL CANELLI**  
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If the Neshaminy school board approves the recent changes to the 2009-10 preliminary budget next week, the average proposed tax increase could fall from \$500 to \$146, officials said Tuesday night.

While that figure could be offset by gambling revenue, it still means more than 60 people in the district might lose their jobs, and families could have to start paying for extra-curricular activities, administrators said.

By eliminating at least 65 positions, cutting bus routes and overtime, revising class schedules, and increasing various fees, business administrator Joseph Paradise said next year's spending plan should decrease from about \$167.3 million to roughly \$158.8 million.

With an estimated \$1.6 million expected in stimulus funds, the revenues might also increase to a projected \$154 million, said Paradise.

As part of those figures, though, officials still have to figure out how, and if, to apply a pay-to-play fee to cover \$250,000 of the \$1.6 million activities budget.

Paradise said the school board could apply a flat \$65 fee, or develop different levels based on the cost and type of activity.

Although a few board members and parents pointed out flaws in both systems, such as families not being able to afford the price tag, a couple residents without children saw no problems with the fees.

Either way, to fill the more than \$4 million budget deficit, the administration is recommending a 3.6 percent, or 5.4 mill, increase, which is under the Act 1 limit. That would mean a \$146 tax hike for homeowners with a \$27,080 assessment. The current millage rate is 148.6, administrators said.

But that could be offset by an average \$211 to taxpayers from gambling revenue, officials said.

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