

NESHAMINY

## School lunch prices could rise

*The hike is expected to cover cafeteria equipment upgrades and food, fuel and delivery price increases.*

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It might be time to check under the car and sofa cushions.

Neshaminy parents soon might have to come up with some extra change when handing their children lunch money.

The district's food service department is asking the school board next week to approve a 20 cent increase in all lunch prices. Students pay \$1.95 in elementary school and \$2.35 at the secondary levels, officials said.

The recommended hike is to cover a more than \$95,000 anticipated loss next year caused by reduced revenues and higher costs, said Marie Wallace, food service director.

She added that food, delivery and fuel charges continue to rise, and aging cafeteria equipment needs to be repaired and replaced.

But directors could vote instead on one of the following: to increase elementary lunch prices by 15 cents for \$35,000, secondary lunch prices by 20 cents for \$50,000 and secondary breakfast prices by 15 cents for \$10,000; or raise all lunches by 15 cents for \$72,000, secondary breakfast by 25 cents for \$17,000 and elementary breakfast by 20 cents for \$7,000.

Officials said they prefer the first option because 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, the board voted to raise prices by 25 cents to help plug the hole between \$3.15 million in revenue and \$3.2 million in expenses. Next year, administrators said they're expecting less revenue, but expenses are projected to go up by at least \$30,000.

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 up their meal costs, said Wallace.

Even though Neshaminy's food services department is working with fewer staff members right now, managers said they'd continue to monitor the budget and try to entice more pupils, and teachers, to buy meals at school.

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

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