

NESHAMINY

Administrators put budget under microscope

The district's goal is an average tax increase of \$175, officials said.

By RACHEL CANELLI STAFF WRITER

Let the treasure hunt begin.

In the next few weeks, Neshaminy administrators will be playing detective to try to find \$2.9 million to fall under the state's tax increase limit.

Neshaminy officials announced Tuesday night that they are less than \$3 million shy of achieving their budget goal of not implementing a tax increase more than the 4.4 percent allowed under Act 1.

Although the Neshaminy school board unanimously approved the \$166.5 million 2008-2009 proposed final budget, business administrator Joseph Paradise said that figure is ever-changing.

The expenses are up from the current year's \$164.4 million working budget and revenues are projected at \$154.4 million, officials said.

While that would mean a gap of about \$12.1 million, administrators found additional savings with more than 50 retirees expected and estimated savings from possible school closings. The deficit could decrease by another more than \$3 million to roughly \$9.1 million, administrators said.

Officials did not provide a current average tax increase, but said the district's goal for taxpayers who own homes assessed at the district average of \$27,080 is a \$175 tax hike. Neshaminy still needs to implement the increase because of economic conditions, including declining investments and revenues.

"We're trying to live within our means," said Paradise.

"We're not there yet, but I'm optimistic," added Superintendent Paul Kadri. "It's a challenging process, but there's a good chance we'll hit that [mark of \$2.9 million more in reductions.]"

Administrators will be reviewing health benefits costs, staffing and other expenses, officials said.

Starting Monday, residents can obtain a copy of the budget, or view the document online. Administrators are scheduled to review further changes to the budget June 3 and the board is expected to approve the final version June 16, administrators said.

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