

B'field Hill schools consider pay-to-learn plan

By GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Bloomfield Hills schools should open the schools on a limited basis to non-resident students willing to pay tuition, according to a proposal made by board trustee C. Thomas Wilson.

Wilson also proposed that the position of Paul Gwinn, retiring director of elementary and middle school education, be eliminated. That move could save the district as much as \$100,000 in salary and benefits, Wilson said.

The proposal was met with cautious response by the rest of the board members, but they did decide to consider it.

The moves would help the district cope with declining state revenue that threw the school's pro-

posed \$63 million budget into the red and led the district to lay off seven teachers and cut several other positions.

"We have had people for years trying to get their kids into the district," Wilson said.

Under Wilson's proposal, non-district students would be allowed to enroll in Bloomfield Hills schools by paying an approximately \$8,000 annual tuition, roughly what the schools spend on educating each student.

In addition, they would have to sign an agreement to maintain satisfactory grades to continue in the schools.

Wilson said if 100 new students enrolled, it would raise \$800,000, which is nearly the amount of the previously projected budget deficit.

Wilson said he is only considering the high school-level classes in his plan, but it could be expanded in the future to other grades if space is available. But, Wilson said, district students would be given priority for admission.

Currently, the schools allow non-residents to enroll only under specific circumstances. A non-resident can enroll if the parents are building a house in the district but they haven't moved in.

They have to show proof they are building a house.

Also, if parents have to move out of the district, seniors near graduation can continue in the schools until graduation.

In either case, parents pay \$43 a day tuition for elementary school and \$49 a day for secondary school.

There are only a few students enrolled under these conditions now, a school spokeswoman said. The district has 5,648 regular students and 124 in developmental education classes for handicapped children.

"It's an intriguing idea," said trustee Sharon Tosch. "It might be a way of maintaining a better school population."

"Let's look at it at least to see if

there are any negatives. On the surface it deserves a look-see," said trustee Edward Fleischmann.

Trustee David McGraw also suggested the board look into the proposal but take time to consider questions about it.

"Maybe there are some areas we should pursue. Maybe there is no interest," McGraw said.

Regarding the elimination of Gwinn's position, Fleischmann

sounded a cautious note.

"What bothers me is if the board is trying to micro-manage administration, I don't think we should dwell on one position. We're away from what we should be doing."

Trustees McGraw and Linda Finkel agreed with Fleischmann, but Finkel added, "If we're not into that (working with administration why do we participate in union contract negotiations?"



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