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School Board Will Ask County To Raise Tax, Fee

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TAMPA - Hillsborough County School Board members voted Tuesday to ask the county commission to increase impact fees on new construction to help pay for new schools.

Other recommendations made Monday by a task force that reviewed school capacity and funding will wait for more study, board members agreed. The task force also said the board should ask the public to approve a half-cent sales tax to buy land and build schools, and members want the Legislature to support increasing the documentary stamp tax on home purchases.

The impact fee increase would begin June 1, raising it from \$196 for an average new three-bedroom home to \$1,000 and increasing by that amount every six months until it reaches \$4,000.

Board members proposed meeting with the county commission at a school to talk about the proposals. Commissioners, who also met Tuesday, took no action on the task force recommendations but also talked about a joint meeting with the school board. No date has been set.

Another issue facing the school board is pressure from a parent group from Newsome High School that wants the board to ban Gay Straight Alliances at schools.

Alice Wilkinson, of Valrico, representing Citizens for Academic Excellence, made her second plea to the board in as many meetings, presenting what she said were 1,000 form-letter petitions bundled with red ribbons and carried in a child's green plastic wagon.

"We are not a group of parents who are intolerant," Wilkinson said. "We are not right-wing loonies. At some point we feel there will be no line to draw."

Sponsorship of the clubs during the school day is "highly inappropriate and potentially exposes our minor children to health and safety risks," the petition states.

Five Hillsborough high schools have such clubs and have had no problems, said Lewis Brinson, assistant superintendent for administration. The district has a committee looking at legal issues raised by the parent group and will invite students and parents to a meeting in January, Brinson said.

In other action, board members approved a salary increase for themselves, up \$1,572 to \$39,520 annually for each member.

The following appointments were made:

- Mark West, principal at Turkey Creek Middle School, becomes principal at Bloomingdale High, replacing B.J. Stelter who is retiring.
- Darlene Carter, assistant principal at Northwest Elementary becomes principal there, replacing Mark Dafeldecker, who died Sept. 17.
- Denyse Riveiro, assistant principal at Lee Elementary Magnet School, becomes principal of MacFarlane Elementary Magnet School on Jan. 2, replacing Susan Turner, who is retiring.
- Cindy Luiaconi, supervisor of technology services, becomes manager of services and support today.

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