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Rossville-Alvin sends high school deactivation to voters

ROSSVILLE—In a 6-1 vote, the Rossville-Alvin School Board opted to put the question of deactivating its high school to the voters.

The board met Monday night in the grade school gym, hosting the boards of Bismarck-Henning and Hoopeston Area to iron out details on tuition rates, student choices of schools and possible cooperative programs among the districts.

Craig Potter cast the only no vote which, if approved Nov. 2 will close the high school allowing Rossville-Alvin High School students to choose between attending Hoopeston Area or Bismarck-Henning high schools.

The plan nearly came undone over disagreement on whether students should be able to choose more than one school during their high school career.

Rossville-Alvin Superintendent Carl Sartwell said the district will not draw geographic lines, forcing students to attend one school or the other. Rossville will bus students in to the grade school and then run shuttle buses to each of the other districts, so that a student who lives close to the Bismarck-Henning line could attend Hoopeston Area if he so chose.

Some Rossville-Alvin board members, like Ray Rice, favored allowing students to choose a school, then change their minds one time for any reason. Rice said deactivation is about choices and students should be allowed "one chance to switch whether it's because of a change of programs or somebody looking cross-eyed at them."

Randy Hird, Bismarck-Henning superintendent, responded with "I don't think we're very supportive of that."

Hird and HA Superintendent Mark Conolly explained that once students choose which schools they will attend, those districts will accept an equal percent-

age of Rossville-Alvin High School's teachers. If students later change their minds, the schools must still keep the staff. "Teachers follow students," Hird said. "You can't change that."

Conolly said that while all districts want equity for incoming Rossville-Alvin students, allowing them to make a second choice gives them more equity than current students in any of the districts have. "Our students are not given that option, either," he said.

Chuck Mockbee of the Bismarck-Henning board, agreed. "Your students don't have a choice now," he said. "They're not losing anything."

Jim Ribbe, another B-H board member, said both the Bismarck-Henning and Hoopeston Area districts plan to hold open houses for Rossville-Alvin students and parents to familiarize themselves with the districts. R-A students are also expected to shadow students in each district to get a better feel for classes and extracurricular programs. After those, "I think I could make that choice and be confident in my choice," he said.

Mockbee said a tentative parents night has been set for 7 p.m. Oct. 5 at Bismarck-Henning. Rossville-Alvin students will be at the school for an assembly that day.

Other options suggested by Rossville-Alvin included creating an appellate board to decide on requests to change schools and one to allow students of all three districts to attend whatever school they choose.

Asked by Rice if choice was a deal breaker, neither Hoopeston Area nor Bismarck-Henning board members answered.

Later in the meeting, after R-A board member Dale Lithgow hesitated on the resolutions, saying he preferred that an intergovernmental agreement be in place before the board voted, R-A board president Den-

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nis Price brought the issue of choice to a vote. Those
~~voting to allow students to choose only once were Roger~~
See **DEACTIVATION** on other side

Deactivation continued from other side
Satterwhite, Davan, Price and Eric Roberts. Dissenters
were Craig Potter, Rice and Lithgow.
The first draft of the intergovernmental agree-
ment will be ready for all the boards' September meet-
ings, starting with Bismarck-Henning on Sept. 13.
The boards agreed on a blended tuition for-
mula based on splitting the difference between the tui-
tion rates of Hoopeston Area and Rossville-Alvin.
Sartwell said Bismarck-Henning's projected
rate for this year \$6,145.25 and Hoopeston Area's pro-
jection is \$5,998.63, resulting in a tuition rate of
\$6,071.94.
However, Hird pointed out, that rate would be
good for the existing school year. Since deactivation
would not begin until next year, the districts would have
to pay a rate based on the fiscal year ending June 30,
2005.
The boards also agreed on timing for student
choices, choosing Dec. 15, 2004 as the deadline. The
date will allow Hoopeston Area and Bismarck-Henning
to make staffing decisions and notify teachers of an nec-
essary reductions in force by March.
Conolly and Hird said timing is critical the first
year because of the teacher issue and that in subsequent
years, student choices need not be made until after
Christmas vacation.
Sartwell said that of the district's 14 high
school teachers, he expects only four to choose which
district to go to. The others will retire, not be tenured or
are not full time high school teachers, he said.

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Spaghetti Supper
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\$5 adults, \$3.50 kids under 12
104 Thompson Ave.

Rossville-Alvin will probably keep all support
staff, including bus drivers, cooks and custodians, he
said.

All three districts expressed interest in coop-
erative classes that might be offered at Rossville's high
school, including agriculture and home ec which RA
currently co-ops at Rossville with Hoopeston students.
However, Hird said Bismarck-Henning "doesn't want to
be guilty of biting off more than we can chew" and did
not want to make other decisions dependent on co-op
classes.

The ag program was specifically discussed
because of the existing co-op between Hoopeston
and Rossville and because Bismarck does not offer
ag classes.

Mockbee said Bismarck does not have room
to offer ag classes and so might use Rossville's high
school.

Conolly said Hoopeston Area supports con-

Police News

Layton Seggebruch of LS Diesel, 220 N.
Tenth Ave., reported Tuesday that someone threw a
brick through a windshield of the cab of a Chevrolet
truck.

The damage occurred sometime in the last

Obituaries

LONG - Clara B. Long, 96, of Champaign,
formerly of Hoopeston died at 11:16 a.m. Monday,
Aug. 23, 2004 at Carecentre in Champaign. Grave-
side services will be held at 1 p.m. Thursday at Flor-
al Hill Cemetery. There will be no visitation. Hamil-
ton-Orr Funeral Home was in charge of arrange-
ments. Memorials are suggested to United Methodist
Church, 403 E. Main St., Hoopeston, IL 60942.

Weather

Chance of thunderstorms today and tonight.
High 32, low 69. Tomorrow, partly cloudy. High 87,
low 69.

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Classifieds

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