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## Big Hollow to put land up for sale

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Special to the Tribune

July 18, 2007

Hoping to shore up District 38's shaky finances, the Big Hollow school board agreed to put its former 12-acre campus at U.S. Highway 12 and Illinois Highway 134 in Fox Lake up for sale.

The empty middle and elementary schools will be auctioned to the highest bidder, with a minimum asking price of \$5 million.

"It probably buys us another year," Board President Vickie Gallichio said Tuesday. "That would eliminate the need for [tax anticipation warrants] for the 2007-2008 school year and cut the amount we would need to borrow for the 2008-2009 school year, but we are far from out of the woods."

The board will meet Aug. 13 to finalize the resolution. By state statute, if a deal is not consummated within 60 days, the board has the option to restructure the offering or bring in an outside broker, according to Robert Kohn, the school district's attorney.

The 62-year-old facility was vacated in January for a new \$29 million middle and elementary school campus at Fish Lake and Nippersink Roads in Ingleside, leaving the district building-rich and cash poor. Four referendum measures have failed since 2002, forcing the borrowing of \$5.4 million to meet operating expenses over the last three years. Another referendum measure is being considered for February, officials said.

The district has reduced expenses by about \$714,000. Facing an estimated \$3 million operating deficit, the board voted last week to eliminate all art and music classes for the 2007-08 school year, projected to save \$245,000.

Other reductions came from a new cleaning services contract, saving \$117,000, and \$352,000 in miscellaneous savings from the bus program and making extracurricular athletics self-supported through fees.

At the suggestion of the independent Big Hollow Citizens Advisory Committee, the board Monday unanimously agreed to boost registration fees from \$150 to \$200 for students in Grades 1-8, with kindergarten students paying \$175 each. To date, 583 of about 1,440 students are registered, with a grace period extended to Aug. 17 at the old rate.

Expected to raise an additional \$35,000, the fee increase was scaled back from a proposed \$300 per student, much to the relief of Domenica Koch, 39, of Round Lake.

"I have three children in the district, so doubling would raise my registration fees from \$450 to \$900," said Koch, a real estate agent who moved into the district 1 1/2 years ago. "If they want me to support them on the referendum and support the PTO throughout the year, that's asking a lot."

Koch said she delayed registering during the "chaos" that began in May with \$1 million in illegally-enacted program cuts, since rescinded by the board. With gym, recess, some computer classes and even hot lunch offered again for the upcoming school year, Koch now plans to take advantage of the registration discount window.



"I just wanted to see how everything fell into place," she said. "I think a lot of parents were considering whether they should put their kids in private school rather than here."

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