



District 15 to study zoning and facilities

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With some District 15 schools having room to spare and others bursting at the seams, officials are on the cusp of hiring an educational facilities planner to identify, evaluate and hopefully rectify a host of logistical challenges.

On Wednesday, representatives of the firm OWP/P Cannon Design attended a Palatine Township Elementary District 15 special meeting to start work on a master plan that will lay out redistricting and building use options for now and the next 10 to 15 years.

The district is expected to hire the Chicago firm sometime in June or July for a sum yet to be determined. Their work would take about a year.

"They'll take a broad look at the district to see if there could be any changes or improvements," school board member Rich Bokor said. "We need to make sure we can succeed as a 21st century school district."

The board discussed several specific concerns it expects to see addressed, such as the location of Conyers Learning Academy. The alternative school and early childhood center serves students from across the district, but its location in the district's far southeast corner means long bus rides for many.

"The idea of CLA is great. But the location? Not so good," board member Sue Quinn said.

One option is to "repurpose" a more centrally located building for CLA services, but "we recognize you can't just take over somebody's school," Quinn said.

Another issue is the high-density housing in the district's northeastern section. Many English as a Second Language students live in that area, but have to be bused elsewhere because of crowding at nearby schools. The east side of the district has a shortage of elementary schools while the west side lacks a single junior high.

In 1999, District 15 paid \$3.4 million to Palatine-Schaumburg High School District 211 for 40 vacant acres in Inverness as a site for a future junior high. Now Quinn wants to either sell the plot or develop a plan for it.

Bokor said that once hired, the architectural firm will do building walk-throughs this summer and calculate updated enrollment projections.

This fall, the district will form a committee of school, business and community members and host public meetings to examine the firm's work and the district's options.

"Once it's approved, I expect it to be a very public process," Quinn said. "And that's important for our community, especially given all the trust issues with the board right now."