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Beilfuss and school construction projects will be ready for first day

By John Kelleher - Managing Editor

DeKALB - Paul Beilfuss is getting ready for his 51st first



DeKalb Schools Superintendent Paul Beilfuss and school board member Suzanne Lambrecht talk after the board meeting Monday night. The meeting was Beilfuss' first in his new position. Chronicle photo JOHN KELLEHER

day of school - and his first as DeKalb schools superintendent.

"I've been going to school and opening school for a long time," the superintendent quipped at his first school board meeting Monday night.

Beilfuss said he had met with the top administrative staff and found them to be "a group committed to expanding opportunities for children."

"We are going to have fun meeting the challenges before us," he said.

Beilfuss, who comes from the Wayzata School District in suburban Minneapolis, succeeds Brian Ali, who has been named schools superintendent in Kankakee.

Beilfuss got some good news at the meeting. Contractors said all four schools undergoing major renovation work will be ready for the post-Labor Day opening of schools. The deadline will be tight, especially at Huntley Middle School, but it looks like the schools should be ready on time.

"I'm confident that school will start on time," said Les Shaw, director of building and grounds. "It will be down to the wire, but we will make it."

Huntley, Chesebro Elementary School, Clinton Rosette Middle School and Wright Elementary School - formerly Malta High School - underwent major renovations over the summer.

The new superintendent also heard pleas from one mother concerned over the elimination of clubs at DeKalb High School. Katie Stoddard was a one-time adviser to Voices of Diversity, a club that worked for cultural diversity. She said Students Against Drunk Driving, the Math Club, Key Club

and Debate Club will be eliminated in a budget-cutting effort.

"The kids involved in these clubs are not involved in other activities, such as sports," she said.

"I am concerned about what will happen to these kids," Stoddard added.

In other business Monday, the board voted to begin preparing a statement on the massive residential growth that board members fear will take place in the coming years.

MeriAnne Besonen, assistant superintendent for business and finance, compiled figures showing that the number of permits issued for new single-family homes and townhomes in DeKalb and Cortland has increased sharply in recent years.

In DeKalb, 204 permits were issued in 2003, more than four times the number from two years earlier. So far this year, 110 permits have been issued.

Forty-six permits have been issued this year in Cortland, compared to two in 1998.

The school board's projections counted on a 2 percent annual increase in student population.

"It looks like it will be far greater than that," school board President Tom Teresinski said.

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