



School board to discuss drug testing

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The possibility of requiring drug tests for all Keys students participating in extra-curricular activities will be a topic of discussion for the Monroe County School Board when it meets Tuesday at Coral Shores High School.

Discussion of drug testing, along with other district policies, is scheduled for the workshop session at 10:40 a.m. The regular meeting, which includes updates on the district's Marathon Manor property and Harris School, is scheduled to begin at 5 p.m.

Schools Superintendent Randy Acevedo said the workshop will continue board discussion on new and updated district policies created annually by consultant Neola Inc.

Some of the policy changes are required by state law, while others reflect new directions from the board, such as the banning of "active" politicking by district employees on school property and the debate over drug testing.

"Shortly after this board was in place, one of the first policies we pulled out and modified was for politicking," Acevedo said. "I don't envision that policy changing a lot during these discussions, but I think we want to make sure we didn't lose anything during this process of updating the policies."

However, the drug testing policy change is a new discussion, which he expects to hear more of on Tuesday and probably after.

"They'll be some questions that may lead to further workshop items or further discussions down the road," Acevedo said. "I'm not opposed to expanding drug testing from a prevention standpoint and learning experience. But I would say if the board is going to do that, they need to identify [budget] reductions in other places."

Acevedo said the district spent up to \$40,000 in one school year for drug testing, which now is required only for student athletes.

Board Chairman Steve Pribramsky said the current system of drug testing only athletes is unfair.

"An extracurricular activity is something that is not a right but an opportunity for the students. It's a competitive situation," Pribramsky said. "Whether it's the starting quarterback or first-chair trumpet player in the band, I think all our students should be held to same standard.

Also on Tuesday's agenda are updates on request for proposals being issued to redevelop two district properties.

The first is the historic Harris School in Key West, which was recently removed from consideration by the state as a preservation project that could have infused the Monroe County School District with \$5.4 million.

Now, Acevedo said the district is ready to solicit its own bids for redevelopment.

The second property is Marathon Manor, which has sat empty since the district purchased it in 2005 for \$7.4 million with the intention of creating teacher housing and more space for adjacent Marathon High School.

Acevedo said a request for proposals should be issued soon for bids to develop the property with the original intent of teacher housing and expanded school fields.