

School Board tries to keep up with South Lake growth

BRAD BUCK
Staff Writer

CLERMONT

With south Lake County's population surpassing school capacity, School Board members are trying to make sure construction keeps pace with growth.

By August 2007, the School District hopes to build a new middle school and high school in the Minneola area.

The next year, the school system is working with Lake-Sumter Community College to open a high school at the college's Clermont campus.

East Ridge High School, already extremely over capacity, will receive what School District officials call substantial enrollment relief with the opening of a new school in the Minneola area in 2010. Capacity at the new school is projected at 1,967.

In addition to the new schools planned for 2007, the School Board is building additions to

South Lake High School in Groveland and East Ridge High School in Clermont.

The board is also going to build a new Mascotte Elementary School. It's considered one of the most over-utilized facilities in the district.

Clermont Middle School is scheduled for an addition and renovations.

District officials also hope to provide relief at Lost Lake Elementary School with the opening of a new Minneola elementary school in 2007 and another South Lake elementary school sometime after 2010.

The location of two schools in the Minneola area hinge on whether the School Board wins a lawsuit against the county.

County commissioners voted 3-2 in September against rezoning the Lowndes property for a middle school and high school. The School Board sued the county over that action.

The School Board contends the Lowndes site in the Minneola area would relieve existing school crowding issues in South Lake, as well as those expected to be caused by thousands of homes approved or proposed for the area.

But nearby residents, environmentalists and parents flocked to a meeting in Minneola City Hall on Sept. 19 to protest the rezoning.

The School Board says the school site is compatible with the county's comprehensive plan, something the rebuttal from the county denies.

County commissioners recently voted 5-0 to rezone the 35-acre Bosserman property, opening the way for the School Board to build a middle school on that site.

But School Board members still have not given up on building a middle and high school on the 115-acre Lowndes land. If the lawsuit works out in their favor, they plan to move forward.



File photo
Mascotte Elementary School principal Elaine Ferguson, center, talks to School Board members while giving a tour of the school in July, 2005. The tour was instrumental in getting the School Board to help seek a new facility for Mascotte.

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LSCC has eyes on South Lake expansion

BRAD BUCK
Staff Writer

LEESBURG

Like many community colleges, Lake-Sumter Community College touts one of its advantages as "a great education close to home."

With the legislative session upcoming, the college is moving toward an expanded South

Lake campus in Clermont. That could include a huge new library and more ball fields.

It also hopes to expand its educator preparation institute, which helps people who did not get education degrees prepare to go into teaching.

Some 28 students took the first set of courses at the educator institute, said LSCC

President Chuck Mojock. In six months, those students will be done and could be leading classes of their own next fall, Mojock said. The second group starts in May.

The state Department of Education projects Florida will need up to 35,000 new teachers in the next three years.

LSCC has received grants

for its nursing program.

"We have created a Paramedic-to-RN bridge program, which allows a paramedic to finish the nursing program in a year," LSCC President Chuck Mojock said.

With development burgeoning in South Lake, the college anticipates 1,100 more students at its Clermont campus and 400 to 500 more University of Central Florida students, Mojock said. LSCC shares its Clermont campus with UCF.

"We really are strapped for room," he said.

The college plans a new science building on the Leesburg campus and will start construction soon, Mojock said. The 50,000-square-foot facility will be more than three times the size of the current science building, Mojock said.

The president also praised the college's foundation for raising \$758,000 in gifts and

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