

Annexation War Ends With Truce

By Lori Baker | Arizona Republic [Phoenix, Ariz] 13 Oct 2000: 1.

The Peoria Unified School District board has waved the white flag in its annexation war with smaller, neighboring districts.

The Peoria board Tuesday reversed a plan to go after the same coveted 45 square miles of property that Nadaburg Elementary voters last month had authorized annexing. Instead, the Peoria district will ask voters in March to annex another 45 square miles just east of the Nadaburg property.

The Peoria board added a caveat that if Dysart Unified voters on Nov. 7 reject a proposal to annex a square-mile area, Peoria will include that in its March vote, too.

Dysart board member Bob Koch said that he's concerned that Peoria Unified officials have "contaminated" the November election by sending a postcard to voters last month advising them that Peoria was interested in annexing the same area as Dysart. He filed a complaint with the Maricopa County Attorney's Office over the incident.

Deputy County Attorney Jill Kennedy told Peoria officials that they couldn't go after the same area if Nadaburg and Dysart voters already approved annexation.

The three districts are eager to annex land because it will boost their property valuation and possibly lower their tax rates. In addition, educators said, several housing developments are planned or under construction in the annexation areas and developers have asked to be annexed into the school districts.

Ed Sloat, Peoria Unified's director of research and planning, said there are plans for major housing developments near Lake Pleasant in the Peoria annexation area that would draw thousands of students. Several new schools will have to be built to accommodate them. If the area is in the Peoria district, he said, the district can work with developers to donate land and provide money to help pay for new schools.

Otherwise, students living outside an organized school district would seek to go to the closest district. That would cause problems for Peoria, because it wouldn't have enough schools to accommodate them, Sloat said. The 100-square-mile Peoria district, which has about 33,000 students, is proposing to annex land north of its boundaries, a move that would stretch the district to the Yavapai County line. The area is bounded by 139th to 147th avenues north of Cloud Road.

Nadaburg, which has about 500 students, stretches 117 square miles with the addition of the 45 square miles. The Dysart district, which has about 5,300 students and covers 224 square miles, is looking to annex a narrow square-mile tract running between 111th and 115th avenues from Grovers to Paradise Lane. Two housing developments are under construction in the area.

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