

Local News

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Districts weigh hot-button issues

By Amanda Keim, Tribune

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Two north East Valley school districts will tackle hotbutton issues Tuesday night, as the Scottsdale board will vote on a new janitorial contract and the Cave Creek district will discuss what to do about high-voltage power lines that cross a middle school parking lot.

The Scottsdale Unified School District will decide whether to approve a contract with Bonded Contract Cleaning once its contract with ABM Janitorial Services is severed Oct. 11.

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The ABM contract was signed in early June and was supposed to last a year.

However, the district decided to end the contract early after it said the company's background checks weren't as stringent as the contract stipulated — something the district looked into after an ABM janitor was accused of raping a Saguaro High School freshman on campus and was later revealed to be in the country illegally.

ABM has disputed that it does not conduct thorough background checks.

When the district solicited janitorial companies in April, Bonded Contract Cleaning came in a close second to ABM, said Bill Yazel, director of purchasing services.

“Since the process was so recent, we felt comfortable going back to that solicitation,” Yazel said.

Bonded has agreed to have an outside company review the state and federal background checks it conducts on employees who work in Scottsdale schools, a stipulation the district sought after the Saguaro incident, Yazel said.

In Cave Creek, the district board is supposed to vote on spending \$1.4 million to move high-voltage power lines that cross the Sonoran Trails Middle School parking lot.

Sonoran Trails moved to a new campus this year, and some parents have raised health concerns about the lines' electromagnetic fields, or EMF. Some studies link high EMF levels with childhood leukemia and other diseases.

The board has already seen a chart of estimated EMF levels for different parts of the school, but last week asked for more information before voting.

On Tuesday, the board will see a second estimate on EMF levels and a map of the campus showing various EMF readings, said Kent Frison, assistant superintendent of operations and finance.

Representatives from the Western Area Power Administration, the federal agency that runs one of the lines, will also be on hand to answer questions, Frison added.

The board may make a decision Tuesday, but could table it for a later date. Some board members last week indicated they may want to see a long-term study on EMF levels before voting on any relocation.

Scottsdale district

What: Scottsdale Unified School District board meeting

When: 5 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Education Center, 3811 N. 44th St., Phoenix

Cave Creek district

What: Cave Creek Unified School District board meeting

When: 6 p.m. Tuesday

Where: Former Black Mountain Elementary School site, 33016 N. 60th St., Cave Creek