

agendas cloud debate

By Gregg Hennigan
The Gazette

IOWA CITY — Two high schools or three?

Among all the questions the Iowa City school board must answer as it decides how to redraw school boundaries, the lingering high school issue is the most basic. Should the school district

now: "They're going to have to make some really difficult decisions in the sense of, what direction do they go with a two-high-school or three-high-school" scenario, said Rob Schwarz of RSP and Associates, the consultant the district hired to help it redraw school boundaries.

The school board will take up the boundary is-

on redistricting, including maps of the scenarios, go to www.iowa-city.k12.ia.us

sure, known as redistricting, at a work session at 6:30 tonight. The board has stayed on the periphery until now, with RSP leading a 38-person committee that came up with

USION IS expected by the end of the school year.

High school enrollment is what got the redistricting process started last summer. City High is under capacity, while West is full and growing. School officials would like to build a new high school in a few years, but they don't believe the district

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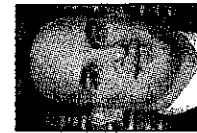


Liz Martin/The Gazette

the four lunch periods now overlap each other. Crowding at West and enrollment under capacity at City High are drivers for the school district's redrawing of school boundaries.

Friendly tug of war

Collaborative divorce can help reduce cost, time and animosity



Jake Koller
Cedar Rapids lawyer

By Irish Mehaffey
The Gazette

After 14 years of marriage, Marla McKinney wanted a divorce, but without her and her husband destroying each other and with some family ties intact.

She'd had a traditional divorce — fighting it out in court — after her first marriage, so when her attorney suggested an alternative

called "collaborative law," she was willing.

Collaborative law is designed for people who want to minimize conflict and work out an agreement with a spouse without going to court. This process is supposed to save time, money and emotional pain.

A dozen lawyers in Cedar Rapids and Iowa City were trained last month in collaborative law and will be the first to

offer this less adversarial type of divorce in the Corridor.

Collaborative law was founded in 1990 by a Minneapolis attorney, and since that time, many other states have adopted the practice.

Jake Koller, who practices family law with Simmons Perrine Moyer Bergman in Cedar Rapids, said a group of 20 or so lawyers in Des Moines have been resolving di-

vorces like this for the past five or six years.

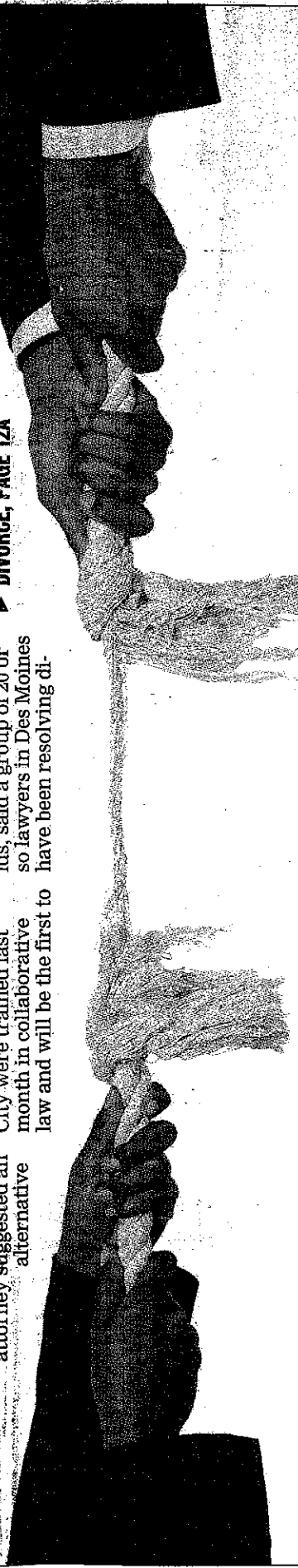
"There shouldn't be the misconception that this is easy, but it's a way to resolve conflict as opposed to creating it," said Koller, who coordinated the local training.

Koller said the process differs from mediation because the couple must

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More information

- if you're interested in more information on collaborative law, go to www.collaborativelaw.org
- For a listing of the Collaborative Lawyers of Eastern Iowa, call Jake Koller, (319) 896-4022.



May spent stolen money on appliances, electronics

Nearly half of U.S. households avoid paying federal income tax

Escaping federal income taxes

Nearly half of U.S. households will

Divorce/Couple control decisions on assets, children

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sign a binding agreement to reach a resolution, and each spouse must be represented by an attorney who has problem-solving and negotiating skills to help them explore all their options. In mediation or a self-represented divorce, there's no binding agreement, and the couple are on their own, he said.

If the two can't come to an agreement through collaborative law, Koller

said, they must hire new attorneys and begin the traditional process.

McKinney, 65, of Johnston, said her ex-husband didn't want the divorce, so it took some prodding. They started the process in January 2005, and it was final three months later.

"My first one took about a year to settle," she said.

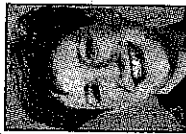
McKinney said she was impressed with both attorneys, who allowed her and her ex to be creative

in their solutions.

"What we did with the house and the business we started together wouldn't have made sense to anyone else except us," McKinney said. "We did some unusual things, but the lawyers helped guide us and pushed us to do it."

McKinney said it wasn't inexpensive, but compared with a traditional divorce, "it saved a chunk of money."

Anjie Shutts, McKinney's attorney with Whit-



Anjie Shutts
Des Moines lawyer

field and Eddy in Des Moines, said the process is typically less expensive than a traditional divorce, depending on the circumstances.

The average divorce can run from \$3,000 to \$5,000 or more. An average collaborative divorce runs about \$2,000 to \$4,000.

"The two most impor-

tant things you have are your children and money. Why leave those up to a (judge) to decide?" Shutts said. "This way (the couple) have control over all of it."

Shutts said there's also a savings if mental health or financial services are needed, because the couple agree to share resources.

Shutts said she handles about five to six collaborative divorces a year, and all have been resolved without going to court.

Fifth Judicial District Judge Michael Huppert said he presided over family law cases last year in Polk County, and he thought the collaborative divorces were a good idea because they keep the couple in control and out of court.

"I think (judges) prefer they work out their financial needs and custody issues because they are most familiar with those," he said.

■ Comments:(319) 398-8318; trish.mehaffey@gazcom.com

Schools/District has many communities

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has the money to run it.

The school board decided that as long as it was looking at the high schools, it only made sense to address all school boundaries. Now, how to move forward is centered around what to do with the high schools, board President Patti Fields said.

"I don't think we can lose sight of that, because that was the catalyst for this entire discussion," she said.

The boundary scenarios lay out three possibilities for the high schools:

they're all trying to create their own identity, and the school district kind of works beyond those boundaries," he said.

The Iowa City school district includes Iowa City, Coralville, North Liberty, Hills and University Heights.

Officials admit it will be impossible to please everyone.

The ultimate goal of redistricting, Assistant Superintendent Ann Feldmann said, is "to get our district in a better place, in a better position to serve kids, and the main issues that we're attempting to solve are capacity

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