

# District asks to be in Hootch case

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The Northwest Arctic School District, which serves Kotzebue and the 10 other villages in the NANA region, has asked to be a defendant in the "Molly Hootch" case, the eight year old lawsuit which requires construction of bush high schools.

The District moved to intervene and have itself made a defendant along with the state Department of Education chiefly because of its opposition to a regulation drafted by Alaska Legal Services which would require that villages be allowed to participate in the planning and evaluation of programs for the schools in their communities.

As drafted, the regulation would require a program planning meeting with villagers at the beginning of each school year, as well as the collection at the end of the year of villagers' views on how well the program had worked.

One suggested means of obtaining the villagers' evaluations has been a survey which would be offered to each member for completion at the end of the year.

Deputy Director Steve Cotten of the Center for Law and Education in Cambridge, Massachusetts (the Center has assisted Alaska Legal Services with the Hootch case from its inception) said the original Hootch consent decree had re-

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quired involvement of community members in program planning and evaluation for a period of three years after each new high school was built, but that the Department of Education had failed to see that Rural Education Attendance Area's complied with the requirement. On behalf of its clients, therefore, Legal Services went to court asking that the planning and evaluation provision be enforced.

Northwest Arctic School District administrative assistant Marty Zelonky stated that the District felt it was already substantially in compliance with the proposed regulation, and said that the District was willing to have the Department of Education decide whether or not it had in fact complied with the regulation.

An affidavit filed by District Superintendent George White with the motion to intervene stated that the proposed regulatory changes would, ... "burden Northwest Arctic School District and other REAA's." Cotten disagreed, stating that the workload imposed by the regulation was not excessive and that any district which was already making an effort at community involvement in its planning and evaluation process would have

no trouble complying.

Zelonky, however, said that the burden arose from the fact that the planning and evaluation requirements in the proposed regulation would duplicate the function already being performed by the advisory school boards in the villages.

Although the District does feel that the proposed regulation

would be burdensome, its opposition may not be as firm as the documents filed in support of the motion suggest. The state Board of Education at a meeting earlier this month voted to promulgate the proposed regulation for comment by REAA's and other interested parties. Zelonky said that the district would not oppose the

regulation before the state Board and might not even oppose it in court.

He stated that the District wanted to be involved in the lawsuit so that it could act if subsequent regulatory or other issues raised in the lawsuit should affect its interests seriously enough to merit court action.