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## Tustin redraws high school boundaries

By George Stewart and Michael Felten

For Irvine World News

After more than four hours of public discussion and deliberation at a special meeting Monday, a majority of the Tustin school board adopted a new high school boundary map that angered many in the audience and some on the board.

School trustees had held several public hearings on the subject, starting by considering three map alternatives drawn up by a citizens' advisory committee. They ended up studying a total of 12 variations, based on the original three plus revisions.

Most of the speakers Monday night represented two groups, one in the attendance area of Guin Foss Elementary School south of 17th Street. The other was a mostly Hispanic group in the Lyon Street/Lambert Elementary School area along the city's western border, referred to as the Western Section.

Both groups were appealing to the board for their students to remain in the Foothill High School attendance area, where they go now.

The group around Guin Foss, mostly in unincorporated North Tustin, argued against neighborhoods being broken up, citing the closer proximity of Foothill High than Tustin High, where they would be reassigned.

One Guin Foss parent, and a former school board member, Gail Michelsen, said, "If you look at the map, we've been uprooted many times. We're just asking to stay at Foothill. Help keep stability in our area."

The Western Section parents were asking not be reassigned to the new Beckman High School attendance area. The boundaries are being redrawn to make room for Beckman to open in September of 2004 in Irvine.

Parents and children from the Western Section waved pink signs that read: "Lyon Street Students Want to Stay at Foothill High School."

Norma Vasquez, a single parent and president of the PTO at Lambert, appealed to the board, "Foothill is the best school for my kids to go."

Trustees Jon Abelove and Lynn Davis tried three times to pass the committee's Map B or a variation of it but all three failed because President Tammie Bullard and trustees Ann Albertson and Francine Scinto voted against them, insisting they would break up the Guin Foss area.

Scinto argued for a revised version of the committee's Map C.

In the end, by a 3-2 vote, Bullard, Albertson and Scinto prevailed over

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■  
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That means the entire Guin Foss area south of 17th Street to First Street between Newport Avenue and the district's western boundary will stay at Foothill but the Western Section will be transferred to Beckman, apparently against their will.

There was a loud uproar when the vote was passed.

Abelove objected to disrupting the Western Section while pandering to the wishes of those in another.

"It wasn't OK to do it to the Guin Foss area," Abelove said, "but now you are doing it to the Western Section."

Abelove produced figures to show Foothill's population would drop from about 37 percent Hispanic to about 23 percent, while the Anglo percentage would jump from 55 percent to 70 percent.

"It further segregates the schools," he said. "I'm so upset right now I'm shaking. It's so blatant. No other neighborhood can be disrupted except the Lambert area triangle. I'm ashamed of this."

Bullard said the board should not base boundaries on ethnicity alone.

"You're the only one with those race percentages," she told Abelove. "I'm looking at getting balanced enrollment in both schools. This is the closest revision to evening it (attendance) out."

With the approved map the student population for 2004-05 will be 2,091 at Foothill; 2,059 at Tustin; and 901 at Beckman, where the first year there will only be freshmen and sophomores in attendance. The Beckman number could be less if Western Section students choose to accept the option of going to Foothill as long as they have siblings concurrently enrolled there.

The school board voted to give Lambert families that option, called grandfathering. The first year it will affect 147 new high school students. The board will discuss extending this privilege to other schools at their Oct. 13 meeting.

The Beckman population is most important this first school year, because school officials say they must have at least 400 students in each class (a total of 800) to make the curriculum schedule work.

In 2005-06, Beckman will start to take on juniors, while the population at the two other high schools begins to drop. It is projected at 1,946 at Foothill; 2,007 at Tustin; and 1,410 at Beckman.

In 2006-07, when Beckman has its full complement, Foothill will have 1,796; Tustin will have 1,976; and Beckman will have 1,863.

All maps can be seen on the district's website at [www.tustin.k12.ca.us](http://www.tustin.k12.ca.us).