

Stratford schools hire attorney

Pattis chosen as district plans fight over magnet school tuition

By Melvin Mason

The Stratford Board of Education is ready to challenge tuition bills of more than \$570,000 being sent by a pair of Bridgeport magnet schools.

School board members voted unanimously at Monday's regular meeting to hire Norman Pattis of New Haven as the district prepares to contest tuition charges for Stratford students attending Discovery Interdistrict Magnet School and the Interdistrict Science Magnet Schools on the Fairchild Wheeler School campus.

State law passed last June allowed for Bridgeport to charge its suburban districts \$3,000 per student starting in the 2017-18 school year.

Officials from Stratford and other area school districts are upset with the changes and the tuition charges. Stratford is currently facing the largest bill, at \$575,000 for 197 students who attend the two magnet schools.

Board of Education Chairman

“We believe we have one hell of a court case here. Based on [Norm Pattis's] preliminary review, we believe we're going to go for injunctive relief,” [Board of Education Chairman James] Feehan said. “We're going to apply to a judge to seek injunctive relief at first and obviously a lawsuit to stop all of this.”

James Feehan said Stratford and other suburban school districts will share in paying for Pattis's services, which he hopes will result in the law allowing for the billing to be stayed and eventually overturned.

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Feehan said Bridgeport is running “a profitable school district in the magnet schools, by their own information.”

“What they're doing is wrong. Our taxpayer money is going to be funding into the Bridgeport general fund,” said Feehan, saying it is running at a \$49,000 profit this year. “It's a money grab, that's all.”

Feehan expects the Stratford Board of Education may have to pay only between \$2,500 and

\$5,000 for Pattis's services. ■