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Judge backs Perez's request for Dade school records

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A Miami-Dade judge on Friday endorsed School Board member Marta Perez's requests for information from the school district, but stopped short of making a formal order.

"A request for documents has been made," Circuit Judge Ronald Friedman said. ``Those documents need to be provided. How they are provided is something these parties need to figure out."

In an unusual move, Perez sued Superintendent Rudy Crew this week, alleging that he has neglected to fulfill seven public records requests since he took office in 2004. The requests range from the costs of renovation at School Board offices to a list of employees earning more than \$100,000.

Crew's staff, however, says that they have responded to approximately 120 information requests from Perez over the past 2 ½ years.

Florida has a strong public-records law that requires agencies to provide the information or cite specific exemptions to the law.

If the parties in this case cannot come to an agreement on the requests listed in the suit, a general magistrate will decide if and how the district should respond.

"For the some that we haven't responded to, we don't know that we have to," Crew's chief of staff, Carolyn Spaht, said after the hearing.

Perez has contended that the district's responses to her requests have often been incomplete and inadequate. She called Friday's hearing ``a minor victory."

The other issue in Perez's suit, which seeks to better define Crew's powers to set the School Board agenda, will go to trial.

Perez and other board members complained last month after Crew refused to include four items that she had proposed on the December meeting agenda, saying they dealt with issues over which the board had no power.

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