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Lewiston seeks pay for waste; \$250,000 a year

By LISA AUG
Niagara Gazette

LEWISTON — The town board will try to get at least \$250,000 a year out of the U.S. Department of Energy as an in-lieu-of-tax payment as long as radioactive waste is stored at the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site on Pletcher Road.

Last night the board split along party lines in a 3-2 vote authorizing Republican Supervisor James J. Lombardi to negotiate with the department for as much money as possible to compensate the community for the various social and economic problems caused by 250,000 cubic yards of radioactive material at the site since 1944.

Lombardi noted that the energy department makes such payments to the local governments in Oak Ridge, Tenn., where the government operates several nuclear facilities.

Democratic members Al Ogg and Joan Gipp objected to the timing of the move, advising that the board wait until the department makes a final decision on whether to leave the material in Lewiston or move it to Oak Ridge or Hanford, Wash.

That decision is expected after the first of the year. The board wants the department to remove at least some of the material.

"We should take the initiative," Lombardi insisted, agreeing with Ogg's suggestion to ask for more than \$250,000. Lombardi was supported by Republican board members Richard Kolke and Robert E. Lee.

The board also split the same way over a resolution, introduced by Lombardi, opposing the proposed county charter, which is subject to a referendum Nov. 6.

Lombardi said the county's 12 town supervisors had reviewed the charter and come to the conclusion that it would allow the county to redistribute town sales taxes, thus taking a substantial portion of the town's income.

"Town taxes could skyrocket if the charter is adopted," Lombardi said.

Ogg and Mrs. Gipp, however, said the charter, while not without fault, is a desperately needed change to streamline county government and make it more efficient.

Kolke agreed that county government needs changing, but feared the possible adverse affects on the town from what he called grey areas in the charter.

A public meeting on the proposed charter will be held from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at Niagara County Community College.

In a separate matter, the board took strong exception to a delay in the construction of a grade crossing in place of the long-closed Hoover Road bridge.

A letter from the state Department of Transportation notified the board of a major obstacle — objections from Conrail, which owns the railroad tracks crossing the road.

Mrs. Gipp noted that the department promised construction would begin this fall, and Lombardi got unanimous support for a letter to the department insisting the project begin immediately.

In other business, the board set a public hearing for 7:30 p.m. Nov. 1 on a proposed townhouse development by William McDonald and Town Justice Sebastian Lombardi on Calkins Road.

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