

Residents updated on CWM zoning, Lew-Port cancer study at R.O.L.E. meeting

500 HF - radioactive waste
by Terry Duffy mmm/s.n.

Over 100 concerned residents packed the First Presbyterian Church on Oct. 26 for a meeting of Residents Organized for Lewiston-Porter's Environment (R.O.L.E.).

The meeting was set to review issues and plot a strategy concerning the recent approval of a zoning permit by the Porter Town Board for expansion of the Chemical Waste Management (CWM) operations in the town of Porter.

In addition, the audience heard a report by an official of the Lewiston-Porter School District concerning an ongoing study of Lew-Port teacher deaths from cancer.

Leading off the agenda was a discussion of a lawsuit challenging the Porter Town Board's vote. Because of the pending litigation, Timothy Henderson, R.O.L.E. president, only briefly reviewed the details.

"It is important that it be filed in a timely fashion," Henderson said. "It is the intention of the suit to reverse their decision and revisit the issue in a more environmentally-friendly board next year," Henderson said.

Several candidates for the Porter Town Board were in attendance at the meeting. Among those was Republican Thomas Baia who told the audience he would have voted against the rezoning permit, and reminded those in attendance of his service to Porter residents as a member of the town zoning board and the Lewiston-Porter School Board.

Democrat William Choboy also expressed his opposition, informing the audience, "I am against the expansion and will work vigorously with others to overturn it. The approval was not in the residents best interest."

Conservative Party candidate Janice Zimmerman told R.O.L.E. members and the audience that she has always opposed the CWM rezoning proposal and is frustrated that the Porter board ignored the overwhelming opposition of the people, the Lewiston-Porter School Board and the Lewiston Town Board.

"I will be available and responsive to the people," she said.

Richard Hastings, Democratic candidate for the Niagara County Legislature offered residents a history of the politics in Porter as he saw it, commenting, "after 60 years of Republican rule, it was time for a change." Citing his involvement in Niagara Falls area ventures, he continued, "The wrong people have been in power too long. Our area needs some new blood."

Porter Town Supervisor Mert Wiepert, who is running unopposed, pledged his continued attention with respect to the CWM

expansion controversy, saying, "I will listen to the people and respect their opinions."

Henderson told the audience that the Nov. 6 election is the most important one that has ever faced Porter residents.

"They weren't allowed to speak on the night of the board vote, but their voice will be heard loud and clear on Tuesday. In many ways, it will act as a referendum," Henderson said.

The meeting also focused on the increase in cancers among teachers at the Lewiston-Porter campus on Creek Road, which is situated just west of the US Energy Department's storage site for radioactive wastes generated from the World War II Manhattan Project, and south of the CWM operations on Balmer Road.

Janet Mitchell, a teacher aide at the Lew-Port, said she had received a lot of cooperation from the district administration in her efforts to research the reports. A partial list compiled thus far revealed that 24 Lew-Port teachers have died from cancer within the last 25 years, the most recent ones being Mary Louise Oravec and Mary Lou Armstrong. Mitchell closed by saying that her research in the effort is ongoing.

The meeting itself closed with a prayer offered by Rev. Charles Lamb, with many of those in attendance offering donations to the Role legal fund as they departed.

Henderson noted that the legal effort is ongoing and contributions from area residents are still being accepted. Those interested are asked to send their donations to: R.O.L.E., PO Box 44, Lewiston, NY 14092.

For additional information, Henderson can be reached at 754-7179.