

# Lew-Port votes yes to testing

By Rick Forgione

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LEWISTON — The grounds the Lewiston-Porter School sit on will be tested. Members of the Board of Education will not.

In separate motions Tuesday, School Board members agreed to spend \$56,000 to test for soil contamination on campus, but voted down a resolution to volunteer for drug and alcohol testing.

"This is a high priority," board member Nils Olsen said about the soil testing. As for board member Ed Lilly's motion to have board members take drug and alcohol tests, Olsen said, "I have a hard time taking it seriously."

This was the second time in a month that Lilly failed to pass his motion. He defends the proposal by saying board members should be positive role models and lead the charge for a drug-free district. His colleagues, however, said his plan lacked detail and was politically motivated.

Board member Gretchen Baxter said Lilly's motion failed to address where the tests would be taken and by whom, what happens if a board member tests positive, and who pays for the tests to be administered.

"I'm happy to be tested," said Baxter, who abstained from the vote. "I just want some more answers before I do that."

Board President Jim Leighton was more direct in his opposition: "I'm voting no, because I think it's a political ploy."

Olsen, Leighton, board members Frank Collins and Jack Burmeister voted against the motion.

Leighton also expressed concerns about approving the soil testing, a long-time initiative being examined by local environmentalists.

The school campus was built on the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works buffer zone property, considered to be one of the most heavily contaminated sites in the country. The district will spend \$51,000 over two years to test a variety of soil samples.

"This is the cost of a teacher," Leighton said.

The district will cover most of the cost by using money it receives from its "pouring rights" contract it has with Pepsi Cola Co. That money is to be earmarked for improving sports fields and health and safety issues, interim Superintendent Don Rappold said. The district will also seek out grant money and ask the towns of Lewiston and Porter to help pay for some of the testing cost.

"Hopefully there won't be a need to go beyond the first set of tests," Olsen said. "This is the heart of the community. We have the responsibility to the community to get some answers."

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