

Local

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Lew-Port dirt mostly OK

Few hot spots are found in testing of soil on school grounds

By Matthew Winterhalter
Niagara Gazette

LEWISTON — For the most part, recent soil tests performed at the Lewiston-Porter School District have come up clean.

Of 40 areas on the campus where the samples were taken, three turned up traces of hazardous material, Lewiston-Porter School Board President Jim Leighton said.

Testing was done by Joe Gardella, a professor of chemistry and associate dean of external affairs at the state University at Buffalo Environment and Society Institute.

"(Gardella) said nothing stood out across the whole facility," Leighton said. "Except on the north end of the property."

High levels of arsenic were found on a 200-by-600-foot patch of land north of the community center.

An area that was once part of an old

orchard, Leighton said.

"I used to go and pick apples there," he said.

With that in mind, Leighton said Gardella gave the impression that the arsenic is suspected to have come from an arsenic-based pesticide used in the past.

In two other areas — a 1-foot diameter spot at the back side of the community resource center and a 4-foot area in some brush between the Primary and Intermediate education centers — high levels of Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons were found, Leighton said.

The only other Lew-Port board member to attend a public meeting Wednesday was Jack Burmeister, who said Gardella explained the problem areas would be very controllable.

"It sounds to me like there's not going to be a problem getting this taken care of," he said.

Gardella announced that two public

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Jack Burmeister
Lewiston-Porter board member

meetings will be held on the matter, but neither Burmeister or Leighton know when they will be held.

Wednesday's meeting was called by associates of Gardella and Lew-Port administrators weren't present, Leighton said.

"The administration decided not to go," he said. "They wanted the public to know the school had nothing to do with the tests."

The soil samples were taken from various locations in July in hopes that an independent sampling would answer questions of some residents who feared areas of the campus might be contaminated.

The Creek Road campus is located on what traditionally has been considered the buffer zone area of the Lake Ontario Ordnance Works. LOOW was the site of federal government activity during the 1940s, including the storage of radioactive waste.

Areas where samples were taken are shown on the project's Web site: www.buffalo.edu/~gardella/lewport. Among the areas sampled were playgrounds, athletic fields and the drainage ditch from the LOOW site that curves through the back of the campus.

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