

Officials, citizens look for DEC action

By Jill Terreri
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Frustrated with the way state and federal government agencies have not responded to messages sent by citizens and local government officials, county Legislator Clyde Burmaster called a meeting to develop a plan of action on how to deal with contaminated sites in Lewiston and Porter.

"We begged them for our lives and our health, and we didn't get any response," Burmaster said.

Friday's meeting, which was attended by a representative from Residents for Responsible Government, a citizen's action group, county government officials and state representatives, comes after the county Legislature sent seven resolutions to Albany asking for help with the chemical waste sites and a plea to stop expansion efforts of CWM Chemical Services in the Town of Porter with no or minimal reply.

Assemblywoman Francine DelMonte, State Sen. George Maziarz and Congresswoman Louise Slaughter's representative, Jane Schroeder, were asked to find funding on the state or federal level. That funding would be used either to employ a person or hire a private consultant to review studies, take a complete picture of what is contained in the sites and what kind of health risks the contaminated material poses.

Additionally, health trends in the area would be explored.

DelMonte, D-Lewiston, said the discussion centered on the entire site of Lake Ontario Ordnance Works Project, located in the Town of Porter.

Maziarz, R-North Tonawanda, suggested seeking funding sources to hire someone with a science background to work in the county health department to focus on the LOOW site to develop a clear picture of the site and its impact.

Maziarz said in the towns of Porter and Lewiston, and in Niagara County, there is a level of mistrust for the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Environmental Protection Agency, and the holder of a local post could be more trusted by citizens.

In addition, county Public Health Director Paulette Kline was charged with putting together a potential action plan in advance of commissioning a new study.

The group will meet again in three weeks.

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