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Lew-Port board hears on Army Corps findings

Board discusses campus building survey

by Tiffany Hyman

All eyes and ears were on Jim Stachowski, environmental engineer for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as he led off and occupied much of Tuesday's Lewiston-Porter School Board meeting. He updated the board on corps investigations completed earlier in areas of the southwest drainage ditch adjacent to Lew-Port and on the campus itself, which is situated on the western end of the former Lake Ontario Ordnance Works site in northern Lewiston.

Stachowski explained the testing was conducted by the corps to determine any residual impact to the campus areas from previous U.S. Department of Defense activities conducted at LOOW site during the World War II days and beyond. According to the corps' final inspection report of its work, released in March 2011, its purpose was "to evaluate if previous DoD activities associated with historical aerial photographic 'anomalies' in undeveloped portions" of the campus property, "... resulted in impacts to surface and subsurface soil, and whether there were potential impacts to surface water, sediment, and soil within the southwest drainage ditch, where it traverses the school campus."

Stachowski said the corps' assessments were performed by means of field screening, sample collection, laboratory analysis, and evaluation of detected constituents.

"We investigated three areas of the school property," said Stachowski. "We investigated soil disturbances, southwest drainage action and the mound east of campus."

The Army Corps of Engineers sampled a total of 11 locations. Soil was drilled at each site, and two soil samples were collected from each location. They also conducted a laboratory analysis, which determined all areas contained native soils made of topsoil and clay. The field screening measurements concluded the samples were non-detect or below background.

Stachowski said the corps' final conclusions of the two-year investigation are that there is no risk to human health or the environment found within the district property, and there is no need for further examination.

Dr. Joe Gardella, Larkin chair and chemistry professor at the University at Buffalo, was comfortable with the thoroughness of the Army Corps investigation.

"I'm impressed with identification of specific sites," Gardella said.

In other news from the session the board reviewed a survey of building conditions on the Lew-Port campus. Considered were three categories and priorities: health and safety accessibility, interior reconstruction and exterior reconstruction.

For example the board found that reconstruction of the district's exteriors would cost an estimated \$6.6 million to fix. A few of the proposed repairs include replacing the high school's roof, which currently contains moisture, and the heating system, which is original from the 1970s. A total of \$1.1 million would be used for immediate needs, such as the replacing the roof and heating system at the high school.

"We have an ongoing source of revenue," said Lew-Port School Superintendent, Chris Roser, of the district's capital funding available from state Power Authority relicensing settlement monies. "Now is where you make a difference in a project - these numbers can and will change."

No timetable on reconstruction was discussed.

Wrapping up, the board discussed policy changes. Ryan G. Smith, attorney with Webster Szanyi LLP, presented the board with upcoming policy changes for the school year.

The four policy changes, Nos. 7424, 7630, 8000 and 8262, included filtering computer use, Children's Internet Protection Act, loaning institutional hardware and addressing child abuse and neglect. All the changes were placed to help and protect the safety and welfare of students, faculty and administration.

The next board meeting will be held on Tuesday, Aug. 16, at 6:30 p.m. at the Community Resource Center on the Lew-Port campus.