

# School board, budget election now June 16

Cuomo's executive order delays absentee voting one week

## Lewiston-Porter update

BY TERRY DUFFY  
Editor-in-Chief

Voters in school districts statewide were informed this past week by Gov. Andrew Cuomo they now have until Tuesday, June 16, to return their absentee ballots via mail in order to vote on the budget and candidates for election.

The governor's original directive postponed these events until June 9. That was part of his executive order signed in March in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

"It's been hard to keep up, everything keeps changing," commented Lewiston-Porter Board of Education President Jodee Riordan.

Lew-Port voters will decide the fate of a \$49.092 million budget proposal.

With regard to the school board election, there are four candidates vying for three open seats. One is to fill a one-year term vacated earlier that begins immediately, with the new board member to be sworn in at the Lew-Port district offices on Wednesday, June 17. The other two members winning election would be for three-year terms beginning July 1.

The four candidates include incumbent board member Danielle Mullen, and Anika Fetzner, Charlotte L. Huebschmann and Jennifer Klemick. Their bios can be found in the "Budget 2020" edition of The Link, which was

mailed to households throughout the Lew-Port district in past weeks.

Riordan said ballot counting would begin promptly at 5 p.m. June 16. The process will include Lewiston-Porter District Clerk Marisa Barile, seven Niagara County election inspectors, and Election Officer Kevin Szanyi.

"Results will be announced once counting is completed, which, depended on the number of ballots received, may be that evening. Official results will be announced once certified," Riordan said.

She advised those with questions on the absentee process to visit [www.lewport.com](http://www.lewport.com) or contact Barile at 286-7266.

Cuomo signed and approved executive order 202.39, which moved the school budget/board vote to Tuesday, June 16. The measure states, "Sections 2018-a and 2018-b of the Education Law, to the extent necessary to allow any absentee ballot for an election held on June 9, 2020 and received in mail in the office of the clerk of the school district or designee of the trustees or school board not later than June 16, 2020 to be canvassed for such election. No ballots for such election shall be accepted ... after 5 p.m. on June 9, 2020 except those received by mail in accordance with this provision. ..."

"The ballots therein shall remain unopened pending delivery

of mailed ballots, and shall be removed and canvassed after 5 p.m. on June 16, 2020."

Lewiston-Porter, as do districts conducting absentee ballot now require that "all absentee ballots shall be received by mail by June 16, 2020 at 5 p.m."

Riordan said hand delivery of ballots will no longer be accepted as per the new executive order.

"The ballot must be delivered by mail by 5 p.m. on Tuesday June 16. Please take this into consideration when mailing your ballot and allow ample time for delivery," she said.

For more information on the proposed Lewiston-Porter \$49.092 million budget, visit [www.wnypapers.com](http://www.wnypapers.com).

## Niagara-Wheatfield update

BY MICHAEL DEPIETRO  
Interim Tribune Editor

This week, Gov. Andrew Cuomo extended the local school budget and elections deadline, and votes will now be counted on June 16. The move comes as many districts across the state reported various issues with the now-required absentee voting process leading up to the original June 9 date.

In Niagara County, an envelope shortage caused some commotion as ballots were supposed to be sent to residents by no later than June 3. Districts throughout the county had initially believed that ballots had gone out by May 23. However, NTS Data Services, which provides election services for the county, announced May 26 that, due to the shortage, many ballots had not yet been mailed out. Despite this, all ballots ended up being delivered on or before June 3.

Aside from the envelope issue, Niagara-Wheatfield District Clerk Maureen Mack said that, for the most part, the absentee process appears to be running smoothly in the Niagara-Wheatfield Central School District.

In terms of the governor's extension, most voters have reacted

positive to it.

"Some people were initially upset they hadn't had time to look at the ballot, so the people that have called that weren't aware of the (voting extension), they were very happy. So, from their perspective I think it was a positive," Mack said.

However, she said there has been some confusion and complaints among some residents regarding the absentee process. Some disgruntled people were just upset they had to vote by absentee ballot, preferring instead to come in and vote in person amidst the pandemic.

Another complaint came from a man concerned about voting privacy, specifically in regard to signing the return envelope. He was worried that whomever handled the ballot would see his signature and vote.

Mack explained there's nothing to be concerned about.

"I don't think people understand when you come in, you sign the poll book, your signature is still there... (the ballot-taker) still writes down a voter ID number. The process is basically the same," Mack said.

The man also had concerns about folding the ballot to hide

his vote. Mack said, "You can fold the ballot anyway you want as long as it fits in the envelope."

Once absentee ballots are received, the ballot goes, unfolded, right into a sealed election box. It is later counted by different individuals on counting day.

There was also confusion where some ballots were mistakenly mailed to the wrong place. Since the school board election coincides with the county election, Mack said she's gotten calls from the county voting office that some district ballots were sent there by accident. She guessed that those persons did not use the enclosed return mailer and confused it with the county's. Mack said the votes sent to the county were mailed back to the school district on June 9.

Despite the confusion however, the district is on track to see an unprecedented turnout. In a given year, the district usually sends out about 300 absentee ballots. This year, 17,500 were sent out. As of Wednesday afternoon, Mack said the district has received roughly 4,500 completed ballots. To put that into perspective, Mack said last year the total number of votes was just a little over 700, including absentees.

She went on to say that, at least in her time at the district, they've never had this many votes. To her knowledge, Mack said the largest turnout date in recent years was in 2009 when the district was in the midst of a fiscal crisis.

"I think people took advantage of being able to vote absentee this year that might not've voted (in previous years). Maybe they worked or their kids were in sports and they couldn't get back in time to vote? ... So, I think this has been a positive. Especially

with elderly people, being more vulnerable," Mack said.

When asked if she would like to see an expansion of mail-in voting, Mack noted some of the problems from this year and added that some people had trouble with filling the ballot out on their own as potential concerns. However, noting the increased public engagement, Mack said, "I think giving people the option would be a good thing."

## NU is first higher ed institution in country to provide students with virus-blocking pillows

To facilitate better health and safety, as well as to ease the concerns of students and their families, Niagara University has partnered with Spry Therapeutics to provide filtered pillows to its resident students. The university said it is the first in the country to provide this clean-sleep solution, which was made available by Spry Therapeutics, a health and wellness technology company owned by brothers and NU alumni Bill and Bob Purdy.

The spread of COVID-19 around the U.S. and the globe has spurred calls for higher standards of cleanliness across industries, including higher education. For universities in particular, where students share close living quarters for the academic year, new methods and procedures are being implemented to keep students safe. However, soft surfaces, such as pillows, remain susceptible to contamination. That's

why Niagara University's Office of Residence Life is the first to welcome students with a germ-blocking pillow in their residence halls.

"As we prepare to welcome our students back to campus this fall, we have put numerous measures in place to ensure their health and safety," said the Rev. James Maher, C.M., Niagara University president. "Being able to provide these pillows is another layer of protection that we can offer our students as they return to their Niagara University home."

Spry Therapeutics' pillow utilizes the world's first and only soft-surface filter technology, Pneumapure. The filter's efficacy has been proven in an independent test, and the company's filtered pillows are currently being used by major health care facilities in the U.S. to help slow the spread of COVID-19.

"We're humbled to be able to

offer our filter technology to our alma mater, Niagara University, and commend the school on leading the charge for higher standards of cleanliness across campus," said Bill Purdy, co-founder and CEO of Spry Therapeutics. "We hope that our filtered pillows help provide students and parents peace of mind as they arrive on campus in the fall."

Spry Therapeutics is a health and wellness technology company that uses a proprietary soft-surface filter technology to block all pathogens from entering or exiting any soft surface to which it's applied. The company's Pneumapure filter is designed to help prevent cross-contamination and provide a clean sleep solution to businesses and consumers alike.

Spry Therapeutics is headquartered in White Plains. For more information, visit [sprytx.com](http://sprytx.com).

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