

'In the Loop': Lew-Port budget, BOE elections on May 18

BY JODEE RIORDAN

Board of Education President

Lewiston-Porter's annual budget vote and Board of Education election will take place from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday, May 18, at the Community Resource Center. The budget will be presented to the community for approval, and three seats are open for the Board of Education.

The proposed budget is \$51,195,913. The increase budget-to-budget of 4.28% is due in large part to the financial burdens of operating during a global pandemic. Increased operating expenses include the cost of protective equipment and air quality supplies, added cleaning staff and hours, sanitizing and disinfecting supplies, and technology (including the cost of the remote learning program and its additional staffing requirements).

The proposed budget includes a 1% increase to the tax levy, which is well below the tax cap threshold of 2.26% and will translate to a minimal increase per household (26 cents per \$1,000 in Lewiston; 23 cents per \$1,000 in Porter).

The budget plans for a traditional school year in 2021-22, with all students on campus five days per week.

Consideration is taken for the continued necessity to work within pandemic guidelines and precautions, including the possibility to continue a remote learning model for some students.

The budget is also aligned with Lew-Port's strategic plan. It maintains programming and accounts for anticipated increases in student needs for academic and emotional support. Additional proposed services include K-12 reading and math specialists, a secondary social worker position, classroom technology upgrades, and onsite summer school (grades 8-12) and summer learning camp (grades K-8).

The district newsletter, The Link, provides full details on the 2021-22 Lew-Port budget plan. It was delivered to mailboxes this week following Monday's public budget hearing. An electronic copy is posted to the district website, along with all information and documents pertaining to the vote and election. Visit <https://www.lew-port.com/page/195> for complete details.

This year's BOE election is uncontested; three candidates are running for the three open seats. Two of the three seats are for three-year terms; one seat is a one-year term to fill the vacancy created by the sudden death of

Anne Orr on April 17. By state regulation, the one-year term will be filled by the candidate receiving the third-highest number of votes. The term begins immediately.

Biographies of board candidates Jennifer Klemick (incumbent), Julie Donnelly and Anika Fetzner are featured in both The Link newsletter and on the website.

The annual Lew-Port budget hearing and "Meet the Candidates" night took place Monday and is available for viewing on the Lewiston-Porter Schools YouTube channel, found at www.lew-port.com. Thank you to students Jessi Avila-Shah, Justin Pavan and Nathan Rhoads, moderator Allison Violante and adviser Paul Moskaluk for an informative and thoughtful event.

Lew-Port is grateful to the state and federal governments for the significant support realized this year to balance the increased operating expenses of the pandemic and its aftermath. The district awaits full guidance on the use of the federal funding, which will encompass mitigation costs covering learning loss and improvement of student programs, technology and safety districtwide. Stay tuned for updates on planning, the federal application pro-

cess, and how this will positively impact all students in the district.

While 2020-21 has definitely not been a traditional school year Lewiston-Porter is happy to announce the return of students in all grades to campus five days per week. Elementary students at the PEC and IEC (grades pre-K through 5) have been back full-time since April 26. Now, as transmission rates fall below the metric established by the CDC and NYSDOH guidance (100 cases per 100,000 of population), the district will be moving to bring secondary students (grades 6-12) back five days per week. Based on current trends in these metrics, secondary students could return as early as Monday, May 24.

Families who chose to will remain in the remote model through the end of this year.

Superintendent Paul Casseri will make the final decision on a return date based on the metrics, feedback and a number of other factors. Stay tuned for full details.

In anticipation of this change, updated bus routing schedules went out to all students in grades 6-12 and a parent/family forum took place Thursday in the high school auditorium. Similar

to the elementary forum held April 20, it provided the opportunity to share information and gather feedback from secondary student families and the school community.

Both forums along with earlier COVID-19-related forums are available for viewing on the district's COVID-19 Communication and Information Center link at <https://www.lew-port.com/domain/842>.

In his recent message to the community on this issue, Casseri said, "I have been asked why make this move so late in the year? Why not just simply finish the school year for grades 6-12 in the hybrid model?"

"The answer is simple: Our goal has been, since March 15, 2020, to get all our students back in school every day! That's what we do at Lewiston-Porter Central ... we educate children ... all children ... five days per week for 40 weeks out of the year. As an educational organization, we have stated to this community that, when we are able to do so, we will move to a full five days of instruction for all students. I intend to make good on the commitment. Schools are safe and students need to be in school! I am so glad we are now on the brink of making that happen."

IN THE NEWS

Virtual concert at Niagara Post Theater

The Niagara Post Theater is hosting a virtual concert to support its ongoing renovation of the 90-year-old, former U.S. military post theater at Fort Niagara State Park. Once completed, the Niagara Post Theater will host a wide range of live performances and programs, with a special focus on youth performing arts and inclusive educational opportunities.

A press release stated, "On June 10, an evening of free and virtual performances will introduce this transformative project to the community, showcase the theater space as it is today, and highlight our region's talent and creativity. ...

"This virtual concert is our way to connect people to the Niagara Post Theater in the best way we know how: through music, art and culture. We will also present the many ways that you can help bring this project to life through donation, volunteerism and

advocacy."

The event begins at 6:30 p.m. Registration information will be also available at www.niagaraposttheater.org and www.facebook.com/NiagaraPostTheater.

Learn more about the Niagara Post Theater project at www.niagaraposttheater.org.

Electronics recycling

The Youngstown Free Library will hold a free electronic recycling event

from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, May 15, in the parking lot of the Red Brick Village Center, 240 Lockport St.

Acceptable electronics include computers, monitors, TVs (LCD, CRT and plasma), laptops, modems, servers, microwaves, cell phones, FAX machines, copiers, CD players, IT equipment, peripherals, audio/visual equipment, telecommunications equipment and GPS units.

Suggested donation is \$5 per item, with proceeds to benefit the Youngstown Free Library.

Reclaim your bikes

The Lewiston Police Department will hold a bicycle reclamation event from 6:30-7:45 p.m. Wednesday, May 19, at the LPD offices, 4059 Creek Road, on the Lewiston-Porter campus.

LPD has acquired a number of bicycles in the community over past years and invites residents who may have lost their bicycle the opportunity to reclaim a bike. Residents are asked to bring a photo or paperwork to verify ownership.



**It's a unique time for our Graduating Class of 2021
Honor your graduate with a picture and message
to show them how proud you are!**

Niagara County: Niagara County Tribune/Sentinel - Friday, June 25
Erie County: Island Dispatch - Friday, June 25 / Grand Island PennySaver - Wednesday, June 23
PLUS on our website wnypapers.com

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