

'In the Loop' with the Lewiston-Porter Board of Education

# New 'COVID-19 Report Card' discussed at board meeting

**BY JODEE RIORDAN**  
Board of Education President

On Tuesday, the Board of Education recognized its districtwide PTSA for their generous donation of \$9,000. This will enable the purchase of tents to create outdoor learning environments on the Lew-Port campus.

With the strict COVID-19 safety restrictions, having this space available to create opportunities to move outside throughout the day, no matter the weather, is amazing. The four large tents (20-feet-by-40-feet) will be set up at each building, allowing for outdoor instruction as well as expanding opportunity for mask breaks and fresh air.

This process was not as easy as just purchasing and putting up tents. Tents, although temporary structures by definition, are still considered classroom space and must go through the complicated process of State Education Department approval, like any construction project.

A shout out to Dr. Patricia Grup-

ka for navigating and expediting this process. The board approved both the SEQRA declaration and SED approval, along with acceptance of the donation. PTSA President Virginia McAuliffe and many PTSA members Zoomed in for the recognition.

Our PTSA is amazing! They are truly dedicated to recognizing and supporting the needs of our students, faculty and staff, families. Thank you!

Also at the session, Grupka guided the board through a quick introduction to the new "COVID-19 Report Card." The New York state dashboard provides real-time data to the public. The COVID-19 positive data reported on this site includes students, teachers and staff enrolled in the school district, both on-site and off-site. This information is either shared by the parent/guardian of the student, notified by teachers and other staff, or communicated by the local health department and updated daily.

Visit the dashboard at [https://](https://schoolcovidreportcard.health.ny.gov/)

[schoolcovidreportcard.health.ny.gov/](https://schoolcovidreportcard.health.ny.gov/).

On the Lewiston-Porter site, you will see data presented for each school (by building) and the district as a whole. The data is presented by total students and total teachers/staff and broken down by those on-site (individuals on campus) and off-site (individuals who are remote/never on campus). Clicking on either the district (Lewiston-Porter CSD) or school on the dashboard page will take you to the detailed COVID-19 report card for each. A dropdown on the dashboard also allows you to select data on our neighboring districts (Niagara Falls, Niagara-Wheatfield and Wilson).

When navigating the page, please take into consideration the wide layout of the page, which may not display the page accurately on a mobile device.

To date, Lewiston-Porter has had one on-site student testing positive, three off-site students testing positive, and no teachers or

staff have tested positive for a total of four positive cases (on/off site).

While families will be notified of a case in their child's building, please understand that does not mean your child has been exposed. The Niagara County Department of Health will conduct contact tracing to determine exposure and directly contact those determined to be at risk for exposure. From there, public health protocols as outlined on the COVID-19 flowchart will be followed.

We encourage your family to familiarize yourselves with the COVID-19 flowchart on the Lewiston-Porter homepage ([www.lew-port.com](http://www.lew-port.com)), and all information provided on the COVID-19 reopening page for complete information regarding testing, contact tracing and reporting.

During this pandemic and always, the health and safety of Lewiston-Porter students, faculty and staff and our entire community remain our highest priority.

There is no doubt that the Lew-

Port district, like all others, has worked through, and will undoubtedly continue to work through, an array of unparalleled challenges as we navigate this school year. On behalf of the Board of Education, I would like to acknowledge and express our sincere appreciation for our school-community partnership in this effort. Your input, support, feedback, cooperation and patience has been critical to our successful reopening, and it will continue to be vital as we move forward in the coming weeks and months ahead.

We all share a common goal: Providing the very best possible educational experience for every single one of our students in a safe, healthy and supportive environment. And as Paul Casseri stated in his most recent superintendent's message – and I second – we are looking forward to this year when we all rise to this most unusual occasion to meet that goal.

We are all in this together. Stay strong, Lewiston-Porter.

## National Grid files proposal for up to \$50 million in COVID-19 relief

National Grid on Tuesday filed a customer assistance proposal with its New York regulator that would provide up to \$50 million in financial assistance to support its most economically vulnerable residential customers as well as businesses that are struggling because of the pandemic's financial impact. The company sought input from the New York State Department of Public Service staff, customer advocates and other stakeholders to design the programs and determine how best to allocate the assistance to those most in need.

"Six months into the pandemic, the economic recovery remains relatively flat and unemployment rates are increasing sharply in the COVID-19 recession. National

Grid's relief package offers an important opportunity to provide our customers with financial assistance to lessen their hardship beyond what we currently offer through our existing COVID-19 programs and services," said John Bruckner, National Grid's New York president.

He noted funding for the programs will be targeted to customers who are in arrears and/or unable to pay their energy bills due to financial hardship stemming from the pandemic.

"By redeploying existing customer funds to programs carefully designed to address identified economic hardships, we believe our proposed programs will help with the financial difficulties currently

being experienced by our customers," Bruckner said.

### Programs Offer Additional Support for Economically Vulnerable Residential Customers

National Grid's proposal includes up to \$25 million in funding for two new programs for residential customers enrolled in the company's Energy Assistance Program. Participants in the EAP are among the company's most vulnerable customers, facing financial hardships that could require them to choose between paying their energy bills and other necessities. The company believes bill credits are the best tool for providing immediate assistance to help these customers manage their energy costs.

#### Program Highlights:

- ✓ Under the proposal, EAP customers would receive an immediate, one-time bill credit on both the gas and electricity portions of their bills.
- ✓ Customers enrolled in EAP who also have a deferred payment agreement will receive up to 12 monthly arrears incentive payments if they honor that agreement, which requires paying their current bill and a monthly installment toward their past due balance.
- ✓ If there are any funds remaining in this program after 12 months, the

balance will be shared as a final one-time bill credit for all EAP customers.

### Enhanced Economic Development Programs

For National Grid's business customers, the company's proposal includes up to \$25 million for a new arrears forgiveness plan and two enhanced economic development grant programs.

#### Program Highlights:

- ✓ Upon implementation, distressed business customers who enroll in a deferred payment agreement under the program's guidelines, will receive a bill credit on a portion of their arrears if they are current on their DPA.
  - ✓ These customers may receive a second bill credit on a portion of their arrears upon completion of their DPA.
  - ✓ A new COVID-19 recovery assistance grant program that offers grants to large commercial and industrial customers for eligible recovery-related expenses, including personal protective equipment, environmental health and safety measures, interest expenses associated with pandemic-related loans, and machinery and equipment costs.
- Further enhancing the existing manufacturing productivity program so that qualifying small- and

medium-sized business can apply for funds to support COVID-19 recovery and future resiliency, including business continuity planning, enterprise risk management, and support for employee/environmental health and safety.

The funding would remain available through August 2021, or until program funding is depleted.

Bruckner noted that, while New York and the federal government have taken measures to assist residents and businesses during this unprecedented time, the duration of the pandemic is unknown, and the impacts are difficult to predict.

"We believe that additional assistance is necessary for our customers. Our proposal is a way for us to provide crucial near-term relief," he said.

### Customer Commitment

National Grid remains focused on providing solutions to customers who are suffering from the pandemic's financial and personal impacts. Some of the immediate actions the company took at the onset to help customers include:

- ✓ Donating nearly \$1 million across New York to support hunger relief, human services agencies and others.
- ✓ Pausing residential disconnections and fees, late payment charges and collections-related activities and offering flexible payment plans.
- ✓ Launching extensive customer outreach through emails, letters, traditional and digital media, webinars, and calls to provide information on managing energy bills, offer flexible payment and billing options, and provide details on financial assistance and energy savings programs. The company encourages customers who are struggling to pay their bills to contact it for assistance as soon as possible.
- ✓ Offering the expertise of consumer advocates to provide crisis intervention support for customers, working closely with county social services and community assistance organizations.
- ✓ Providing enhanced economic development support to New York businesses producing critical pandemic supplies.
- ✓ Additional details on National Grid's pandemic preparedness, associated actions and a customer Q&A can be found at [www.ngrid.com/covid-19](http://www.ngrid.com/covid-19).

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