

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

## Lew-Port addressing many changes with new school year

BY **JODEE RIORDAN**  
Board of Education President

Lewiston-Porter is up and running, with students, faculty and staff back to school both in-person and virtually. Thank you to everyone for your patience and support as we navigate returning to school during a global pandemic.

With so many changes, so many new learning models, schedules, protocols, rules, restrictions and traffic patterns, launching 2020-21 is a lot to manage. In any given year, there are always scheduling, transportation and technology issues, and this year was no different; but all things considered, it is going well. The first weeks are a time to get oriented and address challenges.

Monday, Sept. 14, was the first day of virtual learning for students in the hybrid model, and marked the first full week of new academics/graded instruction for the 2020-21 school year for all students. This is all a very new and different and challenging, and we at Lewiston-Porter know things will continue to evolve as we go forward. As I noted in our last "In the Loop," new guidance on food service to public health was issued at the wire. Let's take a look at these changes:

• In accordance with the latest New York state guidelines, the Lewiston-Porter Central School District will be providing *all* Lewiston-Porter students with meals daily at no cost. Students will have regular breakfast and lunch served on the days that they are in school. On days students are remote (hybrid and all 100% remote learners), families will be asked to pick up meals. The grab-

and-go bags will consist of two meals (breakfast and lunch). This service began Tuesday, Sept. 8, and will continue throughout the 2020-21 school year, or until amended by further New York state guidance.

Meal pick-up procedures are as follows: Lunches will be available for pick up Monday; Tuesday (for Tuesday and Wednesday), and Thursday (for Thursday and Friday). Families will pick up the grab-and-go meals at the high school main entrance. We ask that families follow the following time guidelines (when possible) to avoid crowding and traffic issues. Students with last names from A-L, 8:30-9:15 a.m.; and last names from M-Z, 9:15-10 a.m. Families are asked to present identification at pick up.

Families who are eligible for free and reduced lunch or do not have transportation should email [pgrupka@lew-port.com](mailto:pgrupka@lew-port.com) to make other arrangements. All information is posted on the district homepage, [www.lew-port.com](http://www.lew-port.com).

This process will likely evolve during the days and weeks ahead. Please be patient as Lewiston-Porter works through the logistics of this very important service.

• As to public health and safety, absolutely every precaution is being taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within Lewiston-Porter's schools. However, we must all recognize that the possibility of illness exists, as there are positive cases within our community.

Lewiston-Porter, together with the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH), is currently dealing with three cases that were revealed to the district just prior to the start of school. None

of these individuals were ever on campus.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) just launched an online dashboard that will track real-time COVID-19 infections and testing operations of every school and school district in the state. All COVID-19 positive cases will be reported to the new state website and the public will be able to view that website and search by district and building. "The COVID-19 Report Card" is now live at <https://schoolcovidreportcard.health.ny.gov/>.

• In addition to the new dashboard, school districts will also follow a new reporting requirement requiring a letter to be sent for all positive cases. In order to familiarize the community with the notification requirement, Lewiston-Porter Superintendent Paul Casseri shared the letter provided by the Niagara County Department of Health to all school districts to be used to report to the public.

Casseri stated, "I wanted you all to take a look at it and be aware of this communication scenario. If you were simply to receive such a letter without this background information it would be disconcerting. I wanted the community to see it upfront." The draft letter reads as follows:

"Please be advised that an individual in the [specify building(s)] has tested positive for COVID-19. The District has been in contact with the Niagara County Department of Health (NCDOH) regarding the situation, and the District is following all of the NCDOH's directives and guidance to help prevent the potential spread

of the virus.

"The NCDOH is in the process of contact tracing all potentially affected individuals. You will hear directly from the NCDOH if you or your child(ren) are determined to be at potential risk, and you will be advised at that time if any particular steps or precautions need to be taken. Please note that the District has cleaned and disinfected all potentially affected areas and rooms.

"This letter does not mean that you or your child(ren) were necessarily exposed to or in close contact with the individual who tested positive for the virus. Rather, we are simply informing you of the positive case. It is important that we all continue to comply with established health and safety protocols like social distancing, face coverings, good hygiene practices and monitoring for symptoms, among other equally important preventative techniques. If you or your child(ren) do experience any symptoms of COVID-19, please stay home and contact your physician.

"We ask that you please respect and honor the privacy of any individual in our school community who has tested positive and, instead, focus on the measures that we know to be effective in stopping the spread of the virus."

It is essential to realize that positive cases will not necessarily shut a building or the district down. Lewiston-Porter will wait for NYSDOH and NCDOH to confirm the threshold for closure, and to determine the length of a closure (resulting in a shift to remote learning). These decisions would all be in conjunction with the Niagara County Department

of Health. NCDOH is conducting all COVID-19 testing and contract tracing in all Niagara County school districts, including Lewiston-Porter.

Again, notification of a positive case does not mean that your child was necessarily exposed to or even in close contact with the individual who tested positive. NCDOH will contact you directly if your child is determined to be at potential risk, and you will be advised at that time if any particular steps or precautions need to be taken.

Please also familiarize your family with the "Return to School/Work Flowchart." The chart is posted directly to the Lewiston-Porter website.

If your child presents symptoms in school, Lew-Port school nurses will discuss the next steps with the family based on the guidance in this flowchart. Please note that, in every scenario, proof of a negative COVID-19 test is a final requirement for a return to work or school. This guidance is required by the Niagara County Department of Health.

Lewiston-Porter recognizes that this is not mandated for schools in other counties, but we must follow the guidelines required in our county by our DOH. NCDOH is steadfast in its position that a return to work or school for any employee or student showing COVID-19 symptoms will require a doctor's note, proof of a negative COVID-19 test, and resolution of the symptoms.

We will continue to work closely with NCDOH to keep our entire school community safe.

## Lewiston Town Board work sessions return

### New helipad eyed for Mount St. Mary's Hospital

BY **TERRY DUFFY**  
Editor-in-Chief

The Lewiston Town Board returned to its monthly work session schedule Monday following breaks for COVID-19 social distancing protocols and the summer months.

The session itself was rather brief and included a number of procedural matters. Among them was the scheduling of a public

hearing 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 28, to discuss an application for a proposed helipad at Mount St. Mary's Hospital on Military Road.

"There is a concept plan that's been submitted and the applicant has made it through the Planning Board phase before the Town Board. But it requires a hearing for the concept plan approval," commented Thomas Seaman, attorney for the town.

The hearing went on to be approved by the Town Board with little discussion.

Next, Councilman John Jacoby updated the board on the Patios at Essex Ridge subdivision. He said the application from the Savarino Construction developers on infrastructure-related issues remained incomplete. "The Patios at Essex Ridge, we've been waiting for a compliance letter to our concerns; we don't have it yet. So, we'll have to table it."

Seaman explained, "There was some conversation; I think that many of the board members do know what the applicant is seeking, but they have never actually

made an application. They haven't sent an application or made any type of official record that they are seeking anything. So, I don't know how we can move forward on anything until they make some type of request to the Town Board."

Town Engineer Robert Lannon said he had reached out to the developers, but has yet to receive any response back. "There's no issue with it to my knowledge; it's just that they haven't complied."

"I have fielded any complaints," Jacoby said. He noted he did receive earlier phone calls, but the matter has settled down among residents. Jacoby said he couldn't

understand the lack of response from the developer.

The Town Board went on to table the matter.

Wrapping up, Lewiston Police Chief Frank Previte announced LPD is the recipient of a new Datamaster unit intended for in-office investigations of driving while intoxicated arrests by officers.

"It's for the Datamaster; it's the instrument we use - not roadside, but we have actually in the office. It's to test for DWIs. It's given to us by the state; it will be no cost to the town, training-wise or maintenance-wise, as well," Previte said. "One of the reasons that were even considered for this is because our numbers are so high as far as department productivity-wise, as far as DWI enforcement in the area. It is a testament to the officers, as well."

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