

CONCERN
SOUTHSIDE

Health official quits school board post

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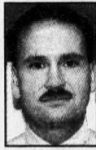
The president of the Elmira school board resigned Monday, citing a "perceived conflict of interest" between his job with the Chemung County Health Department and his role on the board.

Thomas G. Kump, 38, was elected to a second three-year term in June and was chosen president that same month. He turned in a letter of resignation Monday. Walter M. Badeau, the board vice president, has been named acting president. Kump has played a pivotal

role in the current investigation into whether environmental contamination at the Southside High School site is a factor in what some say is a high incidence of cancer among current and former students.

As director of environmental health for the Chemung County Health Department, he served as the liaison between residents and the state officials conducting the investigation. As school board president, he represented the interests of the school district.

"I have done everything in my power to keep the two positions separate," Kump said in a written statement. "Unfortunately, perception or appear-



KUMP



BADEAU

ance is sometimes much more powerful than reality itself."

In a telephone interview, Kump said newspaper articles had helped contribute to this perception because whenever his health department job was mentioned in stories about the cancer investigation, his role as school board president

would be mentioned immediately afterward.

"So people keep asking, 'Is there a conflict of interest?'" Kump said. "So when the question keeps popping up, day to day, I know that the question isn't going to go away by itself."

Kump said the comments never surfaced at school board meetings but were present in the community. He said he felt that his resignation would serve the board best.

City and school officials had praised Kump for his dual role, saying he was quick to respond to their concerns.

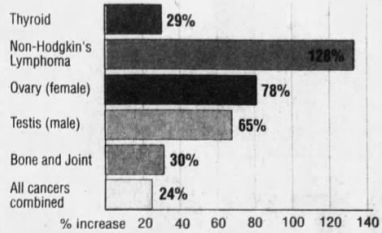
Badeau said Kump helped guide the district through a difficult year, one in which it

had no permanent superintendent until recently. The board, under Kump, also worked to make sure that the \$88 million construction program under way this year benefited students throughout the district. Kump also sought to improve students' performance in light of the tougher state standards, Badeau said.

The board can handle Kump's resignation in one of three ways, Badeau said. It can go without a replacement until the next board election in May, appoint a replacement approved by the board or hold special elections that would involve paying for election inspectors.

Childhood cancers associated with environmental exposure

Reflects the percentage increase in incidence rates for teens ages 15 to 19 from 1973 to 1995.



SOURCE: National Cancer Institute

CHRIS BELL/Star-Gazette

Investigators sharpen focus

Common risk factors sought among testicular cancer patients.

By **MARGARET COSTELLO**
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The state Department of Health says it will launch an in-depth investigation of the unexpectedly high rate of testicular cancer found among Southside High School students since 1997.

Investigators will seek to determine whether the stricken boys and men had any common risk factors.

Although the health department says the overall cancer rate among current and former Southside students is lower than expected based on statistical averages, the rate of testicular cancer is higher than expected compared with other communities in Upstate New York.

To date, 22 current or former students have been found to have cancer since 1990. Based on statistical averages, the health department report said 48 people could be expected

to develop cancer during that 20-year period.

"This has been a front-burner issue for us," said John Signor, a spokesman for the state health department. "We're going to work and get the results as quickly as possible."

The Elmira school board will discuss the health department findings during its regularly scheduled meeting at 7 p.m. today at the administration building, 951 Hoffman St., Elmira.

Southside High School sits on property that was home to manufacturing facilities for

See **CANCER/4A**

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