

Southside: Test mullied

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ple would see that you really have made this effort to get some solid readings from a dead school."

"It's a very intriguing idea," school board President Deborah Pierce told Keefe. "I can't guarantee it in the next two weeks, but it's an excellent suggestion."

But Assistant Superintendent Robert Gosden expressed concern about the reliability of such results. "The question is whether you are creating a problem where there is none by shutting down ventilation," he said. "Normally all that stuff wouldn't stay there because the building breathes."

Nevertheless, Pierce asked Fariola to investigate whether closed-building tests would be feasible. Although school ends June 23, teachers continue work after students leave. And the building must be used for summer school classes starting July 11 because Broadway Middle School is closed for construction this summer.

Pierce also read a letter sent recently to the board by two city councilmen and the parents of several former Southside students who have cancer. This group triggered the investigation in April with a letter asking the board to investigate the school's cancer rate.

In the latest letter, they commended the board for its quick response to public concerns, but expressed disappointment that the board decided in May not to survey former students for cancer cases. The board rejected the idea because it does not have an up-to-date list of graduates' addresses.

Parents and councilmen suggested the district get addresses from class officers in charge of reunions. Board vice president Robert Donahue said the Southside booster club unsuccessfully tried something similar eight years ago when it was raising money for a new stadium. The club even picked through old yearbooks to locate class members, he said.

Instead, board members decided to post a message on the district and high school Web pages asking Southside graduates with concerns or information to contact the Chemung County Health Department.

The group also requested a copy of the 1977 study of the Southside site that was completed for the school district before construction began. Gosden said copies were given a few days ago to the Steele Memorial Library, which will place them in all its Elmira branches for perusal by the public.

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