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Officials seek school blueprints

■ Council members hope to track history of site when building was going up.

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Two City Council members hope construction documents from Southside High School will provide answers about the site's environmental history. Council members James Hare, D-6th, and Daniel Royle, D-6th, have asked city attorney

John J. Ryan Jr. to find out how much paperwork exists on the school, which opened in fall 1979, and whether the city has a legal right to the documents. Their request came Thursday afternoon at a City Council workshop.

"I think that is a great idea. We have to start somewhere," said Gilberto Torres Cuevas, who has one daughter with

CONCERN on the **SOUTHSIDE**

cancer who graduated from Southside and one daughter who attends the school.

"I want to know the truth — exactly what was buried there and if it is under there or not. I don't want any runaround," he said.

Concerns about the school and the health of its students surfaced last month after Hare,

Royle and several parents asked the Elmira school board to examine why 13 current and former students at the school of 1,100 have been found to have cancer since 1997.

The school, at 777 S. Main St., is built on an 83 acres of land that was home to a number of factories making everything from typewriters to fire engines.

Fuel oil seeping into Miller's Pond was traced to storage tanks once buried on the Southside property.

State officials conducted tests at and around the site in 1996 for petroleum products, which are present at the site. A new battery of tests will begin next week to identify any metal and chemical contaminants there.

At a meeting Tuesday, state health officials said that Southside High School is not a health hazard, citing a three-week preliminary investigation of the cancer rates at the school. Investigations will continue into the summer.

"I came away from Tuesday's meeting with a lot of unanswered questions," Hare said.

"One was what happened at the time of construction," Royle said he wants to see documentation of where the oil tanks were located under the school and where they were taken for disposal. Hare said he wants the same detail about the toxic metals.

"There should be a paper trail someplace and we ought to try to discover it," Hare said.

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