

Southside panel to meet next week

■ School board elects president, leaves position empty until May.

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The advisory committee formed to help the Elmira school board address concerns over possible contamination at Southside High School will hold its first meeting Sept. 27, Superintendent Laura E. Sherwood said at the board meeting Tuesday night.

Also, members voted unanimously to elect Walter M. Badeau president and Susan J. Skidmore vice president. Badeau had been acting president since Thomas Kump resigned as president on Aug. 29, citing a possible conflict of interest with his job at the Chemung County Health Department.

"I think Walt moved into the position of acting president unexpectedly, but he's done a very good job," board member Robert E. Donahue said.

The advisory committee, which will meet at 6 p.m. at the high school, is composed of scientists, a doctor, environmental attorneys, parents, and health and safety officials. The committee plans to ask a current or former student to join as well, school officials have said.

Southside High School sits on property that was home to manufacturing facilities for more than 100 years. The state

began investigating possible environmental hazards in April after parents raised concerns about a seemingly elevated rate of cancer among current and former Southside students. The state took air, soil and water samples at the school in the spring and released findings Aug. 23 that determined that levels of contaminants at the school are not hazardous to students.

"When we began our investigation of Southside, we made a commitment to the public to keep them informed and therefore we made Southside a topic for discussion at every board meeting," Badeau said Tuesday night.

Board members also decided that they would not hold a special election to fill their vacant board position. They agreed that adding a ninth member—perhaps someone with less knowledge of the Southside investigation than they have—would not be a good idea. The board will stay at eight members until the regular election next May.

The board also:

■ Recognized students from Southside High School's Chem Bowl team, which last year finished fourth in the finals of that area chemistry competition.

■ Recognized Elmira Free Academy seniors for creating the "Buddy Program," where seniors are paired with freshman in order to show them around their new school. "I've heard really good things about this program," board member Deborah W. Pierce said. "I've had so many freshmen come to

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