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Twin Tiers Life



District hires legal help for cancer probe

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The Elmira school district hired two Buffalo-area environmental lawyers Friday to help it address environmental concerns and review "technical details" of the ongoing cancer investigation at Southside High School.

The two lawyers are Rick W. Kennedy and Paul D. Meosky of the law firm Hodgson, Russ, Andrews, Woods & Goodyear.

"The board is interested in having legal representation just as the city has retained representation in (environmental lawyer) Craig Slater," said Laura E. Sherwood, superintendent of schools in Elmira. "It's the prudent thing to do under the present circumstances. I think it's occurred to (the board) over time that they just need experts."

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 departments of Health and Environmental Conservation 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. The school board voted Tuesday to hire an independent contractor to perform a second round of tests.

"We will advise the district in respect to the environmental contamination discovered at Southside," Kennedy said in a written statement. "This raises complex and sensitive issues, which the district needs experienced and sophisticated help dealing with."

Sherwood said Kennedy and Meosky will also work with the Citizens Advisory Committee, a group being put together to help the district review all of

CONCERN on the
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