

# Historic school to be razed

BY BARBARA MILLER  
Of Our Lebanon County Bureau

**LEBANON** • By early August, Cornwall's 105-year-old red brick schoolhouse will be replaced by a gravel lot. The Cornwall-Lebanon School Board decided Monday night to proceed with demolition.

The board voted 5-4 against giving the Lebanon Valley Conservancy 30 days to come up with a lease agreement that could have provided two years to find money to restore the structure.

The conservancy had said it would pay the district \$500 a month rent for two years, along with legal and insurance costs. If, after two years, the needed money wasn't raised, the Conservancy would have paid for any increase in demolition costs.

"It's absolutely disappointing. I don't know where we go from here," said Wiley Parker, a conservancy attorney, after the vote. "This was sort of a Custer's last stand."

The conservancy's proposal came after the Cornwall Historical Alliance and Cornwall borough failed to reach agreements on saving

## THE BOTTOM LINE

■ **Property taxes in the Cornwall-Lebanon School District** will increase about 5.3 percent for 2008-09, under terms of the \$57.5 million budget adopted Monday night by the school board. The owner of a home assessed at the district average of \$21,300 will pay about \$97 more than last year, for a total of \$1,940. The real estate tax rate will be 91.08 mills, an increase of 4.57 mills. Eligible taxpayers will receive \$127 in property tax cuts from slots revenue.

the school for uses such as a museum or borough offices. Over three years, the school district postponed demolition three times.

Board member Harry Mathis said the board needs to protect its option to use the site for educational purposes.

Parker said the conservancy didn't want to own the building but wanted a long-term lease.

The district has renovated and saved two historic schools — Cornwall Elementary and South Lebanon Elementary schools, board member James Garrett said.

"How much of saving old buildings are we supposed to do?" he asked.

He also questioned whether the school district would be called upon to come up with money for renovations if the conservancy would fall short in

grants.

Estimates to renovate the building have ranged from \$1 million to \$3 million.

"We're not asking you to spend any money. We think we can do what hasn't been done before," Parker said, referring to raising grant money.

After nearly an hour of discussion, the board voted against the conservancy's lease request, and 7-1 in favor of demolition.

A contract was awarded to Musser Excavating of Litzitz, the low bidder at \$59,500. Work might begin within a week, and the demolition is to be completed in early August.

The district has no immediate plans for the land, but officials said the building is becoming a safety hazard.

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HISTORY LOST: THE OLD CORNWALL SCHOOLHOUSE

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## A FILM BY BRIAN KREIDER



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