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NOL appears to be shifting; SLL standing pat

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FREMONT -- The Northern Ohio League is searching for new members, but Fremont Ross is not one of them.

In an attempt to fill two vacancies created by outgoing members Galion and Upper Sandusky, an NOL committee recently sent letters of interest to 10 schools.

"I was really surprised at that," Fremont Ross athletic director Art Bucci said. "I don't know what they are looking at, but we're still interested."

Greater Buckeye Conference member Sandusky was one of the schools to receive a letter of interest from the NOL. The other nine schools were not immediately known.

On March 4, North Central Conference principals and athletic directors voted to accept Galion as the league's 10th member. In February, Upper Sandusky accepted an invitation to join the NCC.

The Galion Board of Education was expected to accept the NCC invitation this week.

Upper Sandusky and Galion will not officially become NCC members until the 2011-2012 school year.

Now, four charter members of the NOL -- Bucyrus, Crestline, Galion and Upper Sandusky -- have left the conference in favor of the NCC. The NOL was formed in 1944 and is the second-oldest league in Ohio behind the Northwest Ohio Athletic League, which was formed in 1926.

Other NCC members include Buckeye Central, Colonel Crawford, Lucas, Ontario, Riverdale and Wynford.

"We need to take a look and see what we need to do to better ourselves in regard to a league," Bucci said. "It disappoints me that we weren't considered (by the NOL)."

SUBURBAN LAKES LEAGUE

Two of the Suburban Lakes League's three smallest schools -- Elmwood and Gibsonburg -- are blocking conference expansion.

Reduced to seven members, SLL officials had been contacted by two schools -- Rossford and Fostoria -- who are interested in filling the conference's vacancy. But both Rossford (by a 5-2 vote) and Fostoria (by a 4-3 vote) have been rejected by SLL principals.

The SLL has been looking for an eighth member after Lakota accepted an invitation in March 2008 to join the Midland Athletic League and will make the switch this fall.

At a Feb. 19 meeting, principals from Eastwood, Genoa, Lake, Otsego and Woodmore voted to accept Rossford into the SLL. Elmwood and Gibsonburg principals voted against the addition.

"There hasn't been any new developments since the vote was taken on Fostoria and Rossford," Gibsonburg principal Thom Loomis said. "We're pleased with the way things are at the present time. We're comfortable with a seven-team league. I guess that's the way we hoped things would go. If an eighth-team comes up that can get in, if the vote is required, that would be good."

SLL regulations state that a 75 percent vote is needed to approve a new member. With outgoing Lakota not having a vote, a 6-1 margin by the remaining seven conference schools is required to invite a new school into the fold.

With 292 students, Elmwood is the smallest SLL school. Woodmore (295) is seventh with only three more students than Elmwood. Gibsonburg and Lakota are tied for fifth (315). The rest of SLL enrollment figures include Lake (383), Genoa (390), Otsego (409) and Eastwood (466).

Both Fostoria (482) and Rossford (478) have larger enrollments than any other SLL school.

Because Eastwood, Genoa, Lake, Otsego and Woodmore favor the addition of Rossford, one solution could be for those six schools to form a new conference, leaving Elmwood and Gibsonburg as independents.

In the immediate future, SLL expansion has been placed on the back burner.

"(The issue of expansion) never came up at our meeting (of athletic directors) Wednesday," SLL commissioner Jim Yeager said. "Right now, we're going to continue as a seven-team league until something else develops."
