



Breaking down the budget
Brookhaven Town Board holds public hearing to consider 2024 budget

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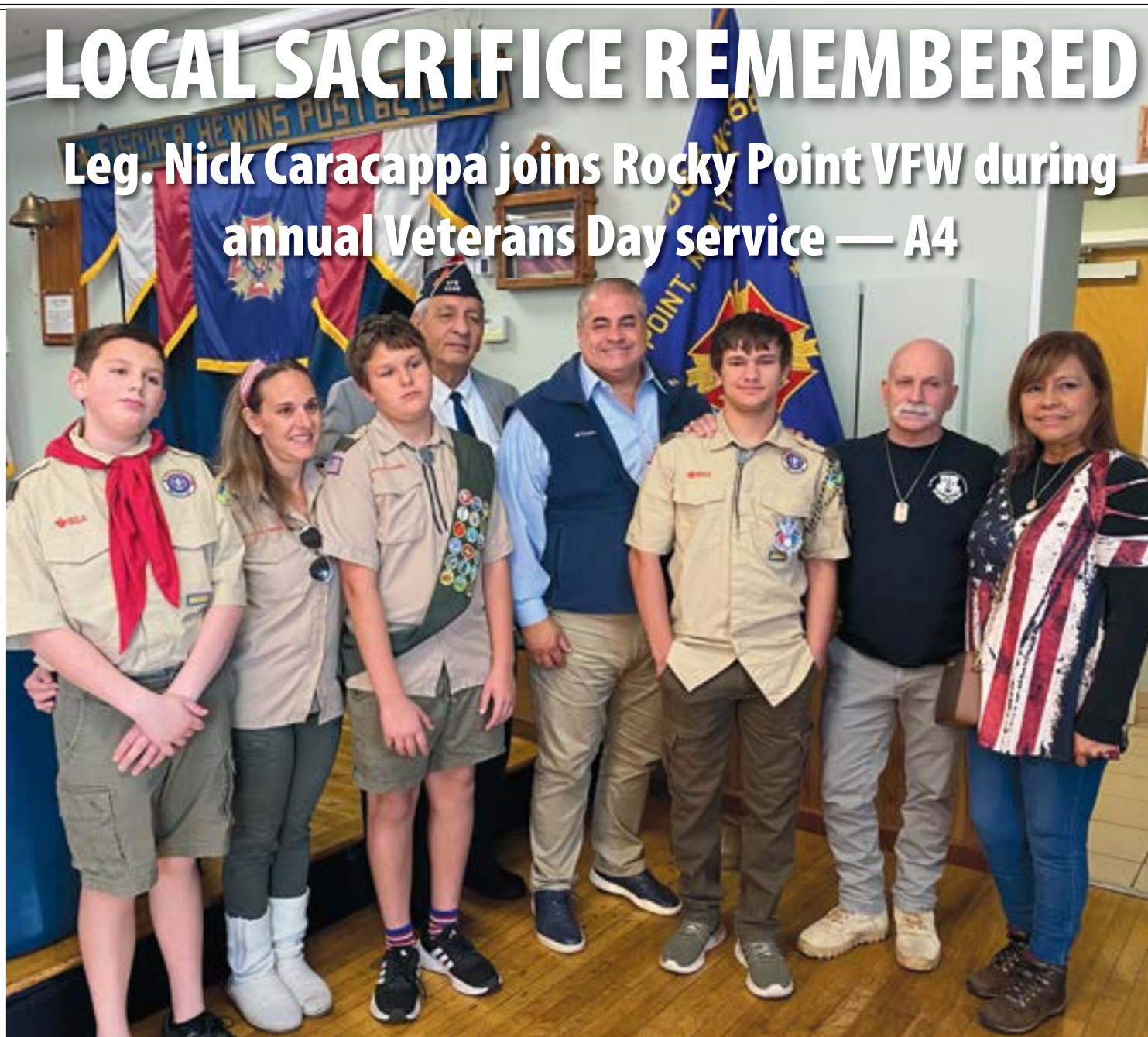


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Port Jeff's deputy mayor announces run for New York State Assembly

BY RAYMOND JANIS
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Just over a week after Election Day, the 2024 election season is already underway.

Village of Port Jefferson Deputy Mayor Rebecca Kassay has exclusively announced her campaign for New York State's 4th Assembly District. She is running as a Democrat.

The 4th District seat is currently held by New York State Assemblyman Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson), who unseated former Assemblyman — and Suffolk County Legislator-elect — Steve Englebright (D-Setauket) in 2022, who had occupied the seat since 1992.

Kassay entered the Village of Port Jefferson Board of Trustees in 2020 and was appointed deputy mayor earlier this year. During her tenure in village government, she has served as trustee liaison to the Building Department and Planning Board; the Conservation Advisory, Six-Acre Park and Tree committees; and was appointed the village's inaugural sustainability commissioner.

Before entering public life, she worked as a youth environmental volunteer program director at Avalon Park and Preserve in Stony Brook. She is also a small business owner, operating The Fox and Owl Inn bed-and-breakfast on Main Street in Port Jefferson with her husband Andrew Thomas since 2014.

"I'm running for the New York State Assembly because we need leaders who understand that governance which truly reflects the voices, needs and concerns of their constituents starts with listening," Kassay said in a statement. "In the village government, there are no national political party affiliations. I am practiced in working with anybody who is interested in pursuing commonsense, balanced solutions to ongoing challenges."

Kassay described several quality-of-life concerns as "screaming for representation" in Albany, such as housing scarcity and the unaffordable standard of living in District 4. She said the state government must help create housing opportunities while conforming to the existing suburban character of local communities.

"I know that one-size-fits-all plans and mandates have tried to come down from the state, and while they try to address problems, they're not suitable for the variety of unique communities within our area," she said in an interview. "We need to find ways that we can support the creation of more housing opportunities for the middle class while preserving that suburban lifestyle."

The Port Jeff deputy mayor identified various environmental challenges facing the 4th District, offering to leverage her environmental advocacy background toward climate-resilient policies.

"I really look at climate resilience as something that's part of almost every dynamic conversation that government is having at this point," she indicated.

Kassay referred to health care as another policy concern, citing soaring health care expenses as a barrier to entrepreneurship and economic development. "A lot of folks here who might set out as entrepreneurs or small business owners might be held back by health insurance as a barrier, so I really want to work to address that and make that more affordable for small business owners and entrepreneurs, specifically, but also for everyone else who is interacting with the state health insurance market," she said.

Among other ideas, Kassay said she would use the office to pursue greater public investment in mental health services, target the opioid crisis, apply pressure on the Metropolitan Transportation Authority for improved services along the Port Jefferson Branch of the Long Island Rail Road and expand coordination between the state and local levels of government.

Kassay's current term as village trustee expires in July 2024. She stated she will not seek reelection for village office.

"I really look forward to serving not only Port Jefferson village residents but the residents throughout the district of AD4 from Stony Brook and all the way down to Gordon Heights, using the skills and relationships I've built at the village level and leveraging those skills all throughout the district," she said.

To read Kassay's entire statement, please visit tbrnewsmedia.com.

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Brookhaven Town Board holds public hearing on 2024 budget

BY SAMANTHA RUTT
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Brookhaven Town Board held a public hearing on Thursday, Nov. 9, to consider the 2024-2028 Preliminary Capital Budget, exclusive of special districts.

TOWN The Preliminary Capital Budget is a plan for capital expenditures, which are projects expected to have a useful life of more than one year. The budget includes projects such as road repairs, parks improvements, building renovations and landfill expansion.

The town's commissioner of finance, Tamara Branson, opened the hearing by presenting highlights of the 2024 preliminary operating budget. The total appropriations for the operating budget amount to just over \$335 million. This represents an increase in spending of 1.6%, with a rise in the town property tax levy of about 1%.

In her presentation, Branson noted the preliminary budget will use no fund balance to balance the budget in the seven major tax districts. Outgoing town Supervisor Ed Romaine (R) — who is leaving office later this year to become Suffolk County executive — praised the budget.

"No fund balance has been used," he said. "It's all structurally balanced," adding, "I think that's important because some people lose that. Sometimes, you see towns using the fund balance or the reserves to balance a budget. We have not done that for years."

The finance commissioner mentioned that the preliminary budget complies with New York State's 2% levy cap, the town's Tax Rate and Debt Management Cap and all fund balance policies adopted by the Town Board.

Branson's presentation also noted no reduction in constituent services or total full-time staffing. The presentation further pointed out that the preliminary budget would lower property taxes across the nine ambulance districts by a combined 4.6%.

In the preliminary operating budget townwide summary, Branson noted the tax levy to be almost \$195 million. Contrarily, to help balance the budget, the non-property tax revenues will equate to \$140 million. To this, the finance commissioner commented on the work of the town Finance Department to help stabilize the budget.

"This is the area we have all been working

on for the past decade," Branson said. "To grow the non-property tax revenues."

Romaine emphasized the importance of generating revenue from other sources, such as renewable energy.

"We want to encourage revenues from other sources, like solar," he noted. "The more we grow non-property tax revenue, the less people have to pay — or the less we have to raise property taxes."

Property taxes hold the most significant of the six major budget funds, supporting 54.5% of the total revenues. Second to property taxes, the town's landfill, recycling and sustainability management contribute 22.3%. Building, fire prevention, and planning/environmental comprise the next biggest portion at 12.7%. The remainder of the total revenue includes parks, franchises, mortgage tax and state aid.

The preliminary budget's planned expenditures are dedicated to employee compensation, employee benefits, contractual and equipment, and debt service. Romaine commented on the reduction of debt service, noting that the percentage of the town's expenditures on debt service has decreased by 5% in the last decade.

The budget will feature new bond and reserve-funded projects totaling \$47.9 million. Most of this sum will be allocated to highway development and improvement, focusing on roads, drainage, traffic safety, and updated machinery and equipment.

The remaining funds will support other projects such as parks and recreation facilities and equipment, open space preservation, public safety, planning and environmental, and landfill infrastructure improvements.

According to Romaine's report of Sept. 29, the operating budget "reduces landfill revenues to reflect loss of volumes in 2023" and "grows the Landfill Post-Closure Reserve by \$1 million to an anticipated \$26 million."

"I think this is a good budget," the departing town supervisor indicated. "It is a very stable budget. It holds taxes very low — far below the rate of inflation — and allows us to move forward into the future."

The board will consider the 2024-2028 Preliminary Capital Budget, exclusive of all special districts, during a public meeting on Thursday, Nov. 16.

To view the full hearing, please visit brookhavenny.gov/meetings.

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Rocky Point VFW observes Veterans Day

BY AIDAN JOHNSON
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

As Veterans Day once again arrived on Nov. 11, members of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6249 in Rocky Point took the time to pay their respects to all those who have served in the military.

“As a veteran, I stand before you with a profound sense of pride, humility and gratitude,” said Joe Cognitore, commander of Post 6249, in a speech to those in attendance.

COMMUNITY

“I’ve been where many of you and our fellow service members have been, serving our great country with unwavering dedication, yet facing the many challenges that come with it.”

Cognitore made it a point to focus on the importance of Veterans Day not only from the perspective of being a veteran and VFW post member but also from “the collective duty we as U.S. citizens share in honoring our veterans and ensuring the truth and essence of this day is not forgotten.”

“Veterans Day isn’t really about acknowledging

our service or expressing gratitude,” he continued. “It is about making Veterans Day a touchstone for understanding, education and appreciation for our Americans.”

“And I believe it’s our job as veterans to help ensure the true significance of this day isn’t lost in the noise of the [store] sales or everyday life,” he added.

Suffolk County Legislator Nick Caracappa (C-Selden) spoke at the event and expressed appreciation for the national holiday and the local veterans community.

“If you think about it, what these guys do, especially at this post, they are out in our communities every single day making a difference, as are many other posts,” he said in an interview. “All veterans continue to serve our communities and our country, so it’s only fitting that we recognize them and appreciate them and realize that they are out there on a daily basis.”

Cognitore mentioned upcoming events at the post, including the opening of the Suffolk County World War II and Military History Museum on Dec. 7 located at the former Rocky Point train station across the street from the VFW post, and a Christmas party on Dec. 9.



VFW Post 6249 in Rocky Point hosts its annual Veterans Day service on Saturday, Nov. 11.
Photos courtesy Joe Cognitore

LEGALS

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Email: legals@tbrnewsmedia.com

Notice of formation of PEARLS BLOSSOM LLC. Arts of Org. filed with Secretary of State of New York (SSNY) on July 23,2023. Office location: Suffolk County. SSNY has been designated as the agent of the LLC upon whom process against it may be served.SSNY shall mail a copy of the process to the LLC.80 Orville Dr Suite 100-10265 Bohemia, NY 11716. Purpose: Any lawful purpose.

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§466-A**

WHEREAS, a new Real Property Tax Law §466-a now permits enrolled volunteer firefighters throughout New York State to be eligible to qualify for a partial real property tax exemption on

their residential real property subject to approvals by local counties, towns, cities, villages, fire districts, etc.;

WHEREAS, Real Property Tax Law §466-a requires that local government entities wishing to confer the benefits of said statute on enrolled volunteer firefighters serving within their boundaries hold a public hearing; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Centereach Fire Districts wishes to consider conferring the partial real property tax exemption benefits of Real Property Tax Law §466-a upon the enrolled volunteer firefighters of the Centereach Fire Department;

NOW, therefore, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Fire Commissioners of the Centereach Fire District will hold a public hearing in order to hear public comment on whether or not it should confer the partial real property tax exemption benefits of Real Property Tax Law §466-a upon the

enrolled volunteer firefighters of the Centereach Fire Department on Tuesday, December 5, 2023 commencing at 6:00 p.m. at the Fire Headquarters Building located at 9 S. Washington Avenue, Centereach, New York.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the aforesaid matter will be presented to the residents and taxpayers of the Centereach Fire District and the Board of Fire Commissioners for public comment to the Board of Fire Commissioners so that all persons interested in the subject can be heard at such time and place.

Dated: November 7, 2023
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POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:

Man injured in Mount Sinai car crash

Suffolk County Police Sixth Squad detectives are investigating a three-vehicle crash that left a man critically injured in Mount Sinai on Nov. 14.

Ronald Indelicato was stopped in traffic in a 2022 Nissan Maxima southbound on County Road 83, near Canal Road, when his vehicle was struck from behind by a 2022 Chevrolet Cruz being driven by Jonathan Esposito at approximately 3:40 p.m. Indelicato's vehicle then struck a 2018 Honda Pilot driven by Paul Abbruzzese, that was stopped in front of the Nissan.

Indelicato, 77, of Coram, was transported to Stony Brook University Hospital in critical condition. Esposito, 37, of Ridge, was uninjured. Abbruzzese, 68, of Mount Sinai, and an adult passenger in the Honda were uninjured.

All three vehicles were impounded for safety checks. Detectives are asking anyone with information about this crash to call Sixth Squad Detectives at 631-854-8652.

Holtsville man indicted for leaving scene of crash that killed pedestrian

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced that Steven Syrop, 52, of Holtsville, was indicted for Leaving the Scene of an Incident Without Reporting, which resulted in the death of 42-year-old Jennifer Bianco, of Bay Shore, in May 2023.

According to the investigation, on May 21, 2023, at approximately 12:00 a.m., Syrop was driving a blue 2020 Chevy Silverado southbound on North Ocean Avenue in Holtsville when he allegedly struck Bianco, who was walking on the shoulder of the roadway. Syrop then left the scene without stopping or rendering aid to Bianco and failed to report the collision to law enforcement. Bianco died at the scene as a result of the injuries she sustained from the crash.

Car parts found by law enforcement along the shoulder of the road where the collision occurred matched the damage to the defendant's car, which was found parked at his home the day after the incident.

Porch pirate strikes Setauket

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly stole a package containing an iPhone from the porch of a Vento Lane home in Setauket on October 19 at approximately noon. The man fled in a black SUV.

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers offers a **cash reward** for information that leads to an arrest. Anyone with information about these incidents can contact Suffolk County Crime Stoppers to submit an anonymous tip by calling 1-800-220-TIPS.

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this woman? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for petit larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate a woman who allegedly stole \$300 worth of clothing from T.J. Maxx, located at 5125 Nesconset Highway in Port Jefferson Station, on October 19.



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for petit larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly stole merchandise from GNC, located at 2322 North Ocean Ave. in Farmingville, on November 6.

Visit www.tbrnewsmedia.com/police for more press releases from the Suffolk County Police.

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First of its kind: Brookhaven Town Board to review new zoning category for Jefferson Plaza in Port Jeff Station

BY RAYMOND JANIS
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Port Jefferson Station/Terryville is approaching a potentially community-defining transformation as the Brookhaven Town Board weighs the future redevelopment of the Jefferson Plaza shopping center, owned by Islandia-based Staller Associates.

Later this month, the board will consider rezoning the 10-acre parcel at the intersection of state Route 112 and Terryville Road to a Commercial Redevelopment District, or CRD, a new classification within the town's Zoning Code. Jefferson Plaza would be the first property in town history to receive this designation if approved.

Enacted in 2020, the CRD enables mixed-use development along parcels of over 5 acres in size. According to the code, the CRD aims "to create the type of planning and zoning flexibility which is necessary to stimulate the revitalization of abandoned, vacant or underutilized commercial shopping center, bowling alley and health club properties."

Town of Brookhaven Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) represents Port Jefferson Station on the Town Board. In an exclusive interview, he summarized the CRD's purpose as "more housing, less commercial space, generally."

"The local government has created an incentive to spur redevelopment," he said. "But it hasn't been used yet, so we're trying to use it now."

Commercial decline

Kornreich said this new approach to commercial revitalization is guided by a sequence of "extinction events" occurring within the local retail market.

Since the establishment of these local downtowns in the previous century and even earlier, Kornreich identified the emergence of automobile culture and the growth of large box stores as the first threat to traditional mom-and-pop storefronts and downtown economies. In the wake of this first extinction event, "retail took a hit that it never really recovered from," Kornreich said.

Retail's downward trajectory was further exacerbated by e-commerce, which began to put even the big box stores and large retailers out of business. "And then, of course, COVID came, and that hit commercial real estate and retail," the councilmember noted.

Confronting the many changes reshaping the commercial landscape, Kornreich said the CRD would help spur commercial redevelopment.

"This is our existential challenge: How do we help guide the redevelopment of our community so it can be healthy, so that it can thrive, and so that people can afford to live here and have a good quality of life," he said.

Richard Murdocco is an adjunct professor in the Department of Political Science at Stony

Brook University, specializing in land use, real estate markets, economic development and environmental policy. Given the current pressures upon the commercial sector, Murdocco concluded that "these antiquated shopping

centers need a redo."

While redevelopment has traditionally elicited local opposition from nearby residents, Murdocco suggests that various projects throughout the region have gained traction among locals.



Town of Brookhaven Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich, right photo, speaks to a crowd of residents assembled at the Jefferson Plaza shopping center in Port Jefferson Station on Sunday, Nov. 12. Photos by Carolyn Sackstein



Locals rally outside Jefferson Plaza over proposed revitalization

BY CAROLYN SACKSTEIN
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

On the first cold day of the season on Sunday, Nov. 12, locals gathered in the parking lot of Jefferson Plaza along Route 112 in Port Jeff Station to discuss the proposed revitalization of the plaza.

In the days before the gathering, Paul Sagliocca and members of the Port Jefferson Station/Terryville Civic Association canvassed the neighborhoods surrounding the shopping center. This preparation brought out roughly 80 residents.

Sagliocca was joined by fellow civic members Lou Antoniello and Jerry Maxim. Town of Brookhaven Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) spoke to the crowd and Suffolk County Legislator-elect Steve Englebright (D-Setauket) — both representing PJS/T in their respective districts — listened to the concerns of attendees.

The speakers called for residents to attend PJSTCA's upcoming meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m. at Comsewogue Library. They especially urged residents to speak up during an upcoming meeting of the Brookhaven Town Board to consider a proposed change of zone to a new Commercial Redevelopment District classification on Thursday, Nov. 30.

Questions raised

Owned by Staller Associates, Jefferson Plaza is currently zoned for commercial use. Staller must seek zoning changes from Brookhaven Town for mixed-use development of the property. The proposed revitalization calls for 263 residential units in a four-story structure.

Sagliocca suggested that residents to the west were anxious that the new apartments would have

sightlines into their yards and windows. Critics also expressed concerns over increased traffic and possibly rerouting traffic with one-way streets, making accessing their homes inconvenient.

Others raised concern over the impact of potentially many new residents on the environment, especially the aquifer. They questioned how much more stress the local environment could bear.

Another concern was the blocking of the sun by the height of the new structure. Maxim called for a "shade study" to determine how far the shade would extend into the neighborhood. Sagliocca spoke of the impact on Mather and St. Charles hospitals in Port Jefferson, which serve Coram, Selden and the greater Port Jefferson area. Kornreich emphasized the need for a traffic study to be conducted independently and objectively.

Maxim highlighted the potential impact of the proposed units on the Comsewogue School District.

Antoniello explained, "I'm not saying we don't need multifamily housing, but you can't have it dictated by the people up in Albany. Right now, the development they want for this area is really land abuse, not land use. They are looking for a density that is three times the allowable density that the Town of Brookhaven allows. This will set a precedent for every multifamily project that occurs in Port Jeff Station, Terryville and Port Jefferson village."

He added, "Asper our hamlet and [commercial] hub study, over 80% of the people questioned said they didn't want multifamily units. We're now taking studies which cost combined over a hundred thousand dollars. We are throwing them in the trash. Those are our bibles. We have to do it right, we don't have a choice."

"It seems to me that a lot of these redevelopment projects are starting to gain momentum because the property and the blight are so large," he said. "These are significant pieces of property," adding, "Government responded to the need for adaptive reuse, and now there's a legal mechanism through the zoning district on which to do that."

Questions raised

The push for commercial redevelopment has met with scrutiny from some.

Ira Costell, president of the Port Jefferson Station/Terryville Civic Association, raised several questions about the Jefferson Plaza proposal.

The CRD "hasn't been used previously, and this does seem to be the test case," he said. "In my estimation, it's the lynchpin for further development in our community, so that's why it's essential that we get this right and not rush to judgment."

"To address those things, I think we need better community input," he added. To generate such input, he has asked residents to attend the civic's upcoming meeting at Comsewogue Public Library on Tuesday, Nov. 28, at 7 p.m.

Local civic members are ringing the alarm over the CRD in the neighboring Three Village community. Herb Mones, land use chair of the Three Village Civic Association, highlighted the need to remediate commercial blight but suggested the CRD code is too developer-centric.

"On every level, the intention of redeveloping neglected or failing shopping centers is an admirable goal," he said. "But the way that the code is written allows for really unprecedented development that has a tremendous negative effect on communities that are impacted by the density that results."

Mones said the language of the CRD code is "so vague, so arbitrary and so capricious that it could be applied to virtually any shopping center in the Town of Brookhaven."

Based on the statute, which incentivizes redevelopment of blighted properties through relaxed land use standards, Mones said the CRD code "encourages landowners to purposely neglect their properties in order to promote this eventual redevelopment."

George Hoffman, also a member of TVCA, concurred with Mones, referring to the CRD code as "a very vague law that I think was done in haste."

"It was really a code change that was done when we didn't know what was going to happen with COVID," Hoffman said. "I think it really has to be reevaluated, and I don't think it works in this situation here" at Jefferson Plaza.

Given that Jefferson Plaza would be the first parcel listed as a CRD, he added that this matter has implications for residents townwide.

"If they use this code to the maximum allowable density, I think it's going to set the standard of a new suburban model for development," he said.

The Town Board will consider the proposed change of zone for the Jefferson Plaza property on Thursday, Nov. 30, at 5 p.m.

SBU chooses Lynch as inaugural director of the Collaborative for the Earth

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Heather Lynch is hoping to take a few pages out of the Coke and Pepsi playbook, which is rarely, if ever, used in the fields where she works.

A penguin expert who has traveled more than 9,000 miles to Antarctica to monitor populations of these flightless water fowl, Lynch, who is the IACS Endowed Chair of Ecology & Evolution, plans to use her new role as the inaugural director of the Collaborative for the Earth at Stony Brook University to accomplish several tasks, including shaping the way people think about environmental issues like climate change.

“Coke and Pepsi understand the importance of psychological research and persuasion,” Lynch said. “The environmental community has not used any of the tools to get at the hearts and minds” of the public.

Scientists have been trying to reach people in their heads when they also need to “reach them in their hearts,” she added.

Lynch hopes to figure out ways to bring in people who are experts in psychology and persuasion instead of adding another model of climate change consistent with so many others that have made similar predictions.

Lynch, whom a steering committee chose from among several qualified tenured faculty at SBU to take on this new role, will also help organize forums in which researchers and participants worldwide discuss pressing environmental issues.

In the forums, Lynch plans to encourage debate about challenging topics on which researchers disagree, such as the role of nuclear power in achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. She also hopes to address the concept and moral hazard of geoengineering.

In recent years, scientists have debated whether geoengineering, in which scientists use chemical means to cool the atmosphere, could exacerbate the problem or give people false hope that taking steps to reduce emissions or mitigate climate change may not be necessary.

Lynch also suggested other “third-rail topics” as population control may be fodder for future Stony Brook forums.

Scientists “don’t discuss controversial things,” said Lynch. “There tends to be an echo chamber in the scientific community. The forum will help us air these issues.”

To be sure, Lynch believes the issue of climate change and the urgency of the climate crisis is well established. The differences she hopes to discuss relate to various potential solutions.

“I’m hoping to focus on things where we disagree,” she said. “We need to get at the root of that.”

The right candidate

As a candidate, Lynch met numerous criteria for the search committee and for Provost Carl



Heather Lynch, above, is the inaugural director of the Collaborative for the Earth at Stony Brook University. Left, SBU Provost Carl Lejuez, to whom Lynch is reporting in this role.

Above, file photo courtesy Rolf Sjogren/National Geographic; below file photo



Lejuez, to whom Lynch is reporting in this role.

“Her research is and has been squarely placed to understand climate change and the climate crisis and how we try to move forward toward a healthier planet,” said Lejuez.

Lynch is also a “creative, entrepreneurial thinker” who has an “exciting vision for what the Collaborative can be,” Lejuez said. “She has a real strength in leadership and is very good at bringing people together.”

Lejuez has several goals for the Collaborative in its first year. He would like Lynch to start creating forums that can “live up to the potential of being

a leader in creating that academic conference that brings rigor to real-world problems” and is connected to policy, industry and politics and that has clear deliverables.

Additionally, Lejuez would like the Collaborative to move toward an understanding of Stony Brook’s role in the future of climate science, climate justice and sustainability.

a competition akin to the entrepreneurial TV show “Shark Tank.” At Stony Brook University, faculty judges could evaluate ideas and advance some of them.

The Shark Tank could give students an opportunity to propose ways to create a greener Stony Brook campus.

As for the psychology and social science of environmental efforts, Lynch plans to work with the Alan Alda Center for Communicating Science to explore ways to understand how people think about these issues.

The evidence and impact of climate change increases the urgency of this work and the potential contribution of the university to debating, addressing and proposing solutions.

Earlier this year, Hurricane Otis intensified within 12 hours from a tropical storm to a deadly Category 5 hurricane, slamming into Mexico.

The potential for future storms with intensification that occurs so rapidly that forecasts might not provide warnings with sufficient time to take emergency measures should ring alarm bells for area residents.

Hurricane Otis, whose intensification was the second-fastest recorded in modern times, “should scare everybody on Long Island,” said Lynch. “People think toddling along with business as usual is an option. That is not an option.”

New podcasts

Lynch plans to dedicate considerable energy to this effort, cutting back on some of her teaching time. She plans to conduct podcasts with people on campus, speaking with them about their work, what keeps them up at night, what technologies excite them and a host of other topics.

She also hopes to bring in the “brightest lights” to big-stage events at Governors Island and on Long Island.

She is pondering the possibility of creating

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Editorial

Beyond 'thank you'

Honor veterans by preserving their history

"Thank you for your service."

Especially around Veterans Day, we say and hear these words many times. We express our gratitude and appreciation for American veterans, those who risked it all so that we may enjoy our cherished American freedoms.

The freedom to speak one's mind. The freedom to exercise one's sincere religious convictions. The freedom to peaceably assemble and petition government — and the freedom of the press.

While we often take these freedoms for granted, we must remember that they are not guaranteed. Throughout our national history — from imperial Britain to the Confederate States to the Axis powers to al-Qaida — our enemies have sought to deprive us of our sacred freedoms. They have sought to undermine and wipe away our way of life and our democracy.

Standing in their way time and again have been American service members. To protect and defend our democratic norms and our way of life, veterans risked their lives, many paying the ultimate sacrifice.

Along the North Shore, we live among some of American history's greatest patriots. No matter his or her tour of service, each veteran has a story to share. And crucially, many have carried the banner of service back into civilian life, building up our local communities and making this a better place to live.

We would be deeply troubled by the loss of local and national historical memory. Thankfully, we have history courses built into elementary and middle school curricula. We also enjoy and sincerely appreciate the efforts of local historical societies here preserving our history.

History gives us roots, establishing a sense of who we are and where we came from. To move forward as a community and nation, we must first grasp how we arrived at where we are. Fortunately for us on Long Island, we have a path ahead.

At the former Rocky Point train station, a collection of veterans and local volunteers are building out the Suffolk County World War II and Military History Museum. This regional veterans museum, to be operated by VFW Post 6249, aims to tell the stories of local service members from across Long Island. The museum is slated to launch on Thursday, Dec. 7.

Since learning of this project, our staff has enthusiastically supported its mission. We believe the museum will help foster two of our central goals as a staff: informing locals about their community and inspiring love for this place we call home.

As this year's Veterans Day services wind down, we can all help this museum get off the ground. The museum is actively seeking donations in the form of equipment, uniforms, combat supplies and other artifacts and memorabilia.

We ask our readers to honor a veteran in their own lives by donating. We urge all to help lend a hand — because these stories are too valuable to lose to history.

To donate, contact the museum's curator, Rich Acritelli, by emailing richvack@yahoo.com.

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Perspective: 'Diet Coke' Democrats not effective?

Over the next few months, voters and pundits alike will dissect and pontificate about how Long Island as a region could be a "red den" when voter registration is relatively even — it was 50/50 in 2020 between Biden and Trump — and given Democratic party victories across other states, including Kentucky.

A familiar chorus making the rounds is saying that Democrats running as "GOP-lite" is not an effective strategy. This theory effectively states that if consumers are given a choice between Coke and Diet Coke, they will invariably choose classic Coke — or the Republican candidate — over the Democratic GOP-lite candidate.

There is some curious credence to that theory as we are entering what I call the "voter silo" era of American politics, where the level of cross-pollination — namely voters spreading their ballot choices among Democrats and Republicans, as well as voters crossing party lines — is a rare phenomenon. This makes messaging to voters more complicated.

When I ran for Brookhaven Town highway superintendent in 2017 and 2019, I engaged in guerilla marketing, carrying a piece of asphalt around to depict how grave our infrastructure problem was. It was entertaining in every room I entered.

I would canvass neighborhoods, find the worst road and open my statement with "Who took Chaplin Boulevard here?" or any other road in the area. "Well, I brought a piece of it here with me" to a chorus of laughter. I was able to lower the margins in some districts that were 75% red to 60% red, and in my hometown of Selden, flip districts 70% red to 55% blue.

Guess what? I still lost, both times.

Look, my opponent had a ton of money, the Republican and Conservative line, a 12-year political career and the political machine behind him. While the voters we could get our message to were somewhat responsive, it is very hard to get a majority of red voters to cross over unless you have deep ties to the community you seek to represent in elected office.



By Anthony R. Portesy

The only reason I flipped election districts in Selden and Centereach is because I played on the voters' baseball teams or shoveled their driveways as a kid. Community ties matter.

Long Island as a region certainly has voters that will never leave the GOP silo no matter how much we hammer them on corruption, cronyism, career political careers or any of the other poll-

tested modicums of why America hates politicians. But, as one of my mentors and good friends, Rabia Aziz, has told me over and over, "We have to make political campaigns bottom up from the grassroots instead of top down."

As Democrats, we tend to believe that our ideas will rule the day and that may be true, but at the end of the day, voters want to vote for someone they feel will represent their interests. This starts by identifying the issues that people care about: the disgraced park, the dilapidated shopping center, the broken road, the burnt-out streetlight. That's local politics.

U.S. Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) was called "Senator Pothole" because he was known to personally get involved to fix issues in the local community. His successor, U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY), has copied that business model to a tee.

Look, there are a litany of other issues including fusion voting (the practice should be legislatively banned by the state delegation) and money in local politics (some of these career politicians have more money than people running for Congress in other states). But at the end of the day, we have to cultivate community ties. My councilmember, Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook), was a school board member and civic leader before becoming councilmember.

As we analyze the results of the election and agonize over how we repair our relationship with the electorate, let's remember there is no replacement for local community involvement in the very fabric of the issues that affect our neighborhoods.

The writer is the chair of the Brookhaven Town Democratic Committee.

Letter to the Editor

Have our leaders ever traveled along the Port Jeff Branch?

You can learn a great deal about the priorities of our elected officials by what they do and don't do when it comes to delivering funding for transportation projects.

Over the past few days, U.S. Sens. Chuck Schumer [D-NY] and Kirsten Gillibrand [D-NY], joined by Gov. Kathy Hochul [D] and others, announced federal funding of \$1.3 billion toward advancing the \$1.6 billion East River Tunnel reconstruction, \$1.6 billion toward the \$3.1 billion Metro North Bronx East Penn Station Access, \$3.4 billion toward the \$7.7 billion New York City Transit Second Avenue Subway Phase 2 and \$3.8 billion toward Amtrak's \$16.8 billion Gateway Tunnel

(for two new tunnels plus rehabilitation of two existing Hudson River tunnels connecting New Jersey with Penn Station) projects.

Not a dime as a down payment to pay for any National Environmental Policy Act review, additional planning or preliminary design and engineering for the \$3 billion-plus MTA Long Island Rail Road double tracking electrification of the Port Jefferson Branch.

This seed money, in the millions, is necessary if these improvements to the LIRR Port Jefferson Branch can become eligible for any future Federal Transit Administration Capital Investment Grants New Starts Core Capacity Full Funding Grant Agreement for \$1.5 billion many years down the road.

Schumer, Gillibrand and Hochul, by their actions — or in this case, inaction — have clearly indicated no interest in supporting any advancement of future capital improvements to the Port Jefferson Branch. Commuters, residents, taxpayers, project advocates and others may want to consider withholding your potential campaign contributions and votes when they run for another term in office.

This is the only influence you have.

Larry Penner
Great Neck

Editor's note: The writer is a transportation analyst and former director for Federal Transit Administration Region 2.

Opinion

Living in a world where it couldn't possibly be my fault

We've come a long way from the "my dog ate my homework" days. I mean, come on, let's give our society the credit it's due. We have taken the blame game, the finger pointing and the it-couldn't-be-me-because-butter-wouldn't-melt-in-my-mouth game to an entirely new stratosphere.



D. None of the above
BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

Gone are the days of simple, linear and mostly nonsensical excuses. Let's start in Washington, DC, which is the biggest clown show this side of the Atlantic and where the notion of a democracy gets battle tested nearly every day

Trump, while the republicans accuse President Biden and the Democrats. Maybe those wily politicians are onto something. You see, if no one takes responsibility for anything and we can point fingers at the other side reflexively and without any effort to compromise and work together, we can live without consequence, create our own economics and come up with judgmental and schoolyard bully nicknames for the other side. Brilliant! Blame someone else convincingly enough and not only do you not have to look in the mirror or come up with solutions, but you can also turn your entire reason for being into defeating the other side or, at the very least, enjoying their losses. Look, I'm a Yankees fan. I know all about Schadenfreude. The next best thing to a Yankees victory, and it's a close second, is a Red Sox loss. But I digress. People have turned blaming others into a fine art. In sports, athletes and coaches deploy the modern blame game

to excuse their losses or to step back from accepting responsibility or, perish the thought, to give the other team credit. Like a zebra in the Serengeti to a hungry lion, referees in their striped uniforms in football games become convenient targets. They took away a victory by calling a game against us. Athletes and coaches can dig their verbal claws and teeth into those officials, who stole what would certainly have been a more favorable outcome. How about school? It couldn't possibly be the fault of our angelic children, who were busy watching these athletes on TV or on their phones the night before, for doing poorly on a test. It has to be the teacher's fault. If teachers could only inspire their classes, our children would learn and excel. You know who I like to blame? I like to focus on tall people. Don't get me wrong. Some of my best friends are tall. It's just that, well, have you noticed that tall people get a lot of attention? Some of them are CEOs of big

companies and make enormous salaries. They are also picked first in gym, which gives them the confidence to become successful. While we're affixing blame, let's also shake our heads at gym class. Sure, it's healthy to run around and have a few moments when we're not listening to teachers who may or may not inspire us, but gym class can bruise egos and create a Darwinian world where height, which is kind of the fault of our parents and their parents and on and on, is an advantage. Hey, I'm not whining. Okay, well, maybe I am, but it's not me and it's certainly not my fault. I blame society, commentators on TV, coaches, politicians, teachers, my parents, your parents, the parents of the kid who served as a bad role model for my kids, and maybe Adam, Eve and the snake for putting us in this position. Oh, and you can be sure butter wouldn't melt in my mouth. I have a dairy allergy, which, ironically, is the fault of my dairy farmer grandfather.

What are your likes and dislikes about yourself?

Just for fun during a break, I wandered around the office, asking staffers what they liked best about themselves and what they liked least. I got some interesting answers after assuring them they would not be identified nor fired as a result of their responses. I would ask you the same question, dear reader.



Between you and me
BY LEAH S. DUNAIEF

But first, perhaps you would like to know what some of the others said. These are not direct quotes but are intended to summarize the thoughts. "I like my ability to analyze a situation, to think it out," said one. "By the same token, I don't like that I tend to overthink issues and questions, like this one. Or my self-criticism" "I'm pleased that I'm steadfast and see my way through a project or a decision," said another.

"I'm not easily dissuaded or derailed." What wasn't appreciated? "I'm shrinking, losing height as I age." Here are some more comments, some delivered off the top of their heads; others after some premeditation, were emailed to me. "Three things I like about myself: My sense of humor; my capacity for compassion and thoughtfulness, although it can be heartbreaking at times; and my ability to see multiple facets of a situation." As far as dislikes: "Although I like being direct, sometimes I can be too direct and it may take people off guard; I don't have much patience; I can't seem to stick with an exercise regimen." This same person added, "Well it's been an interesting exercise. I have been doing a little experiment of my own with this. I've been asking my friends and family which has led to great conversations. So thank you for that!" Not having enough patience was often cited as a shortcoming. Other positives were offered with enthusiasm. "Authenticity!"

"Comfortable in my own skin.!" "Integrity!!" "Good listener!" "A good friend!" "My curiosity!" Another staffer referred to a sense of humor twice: "I like my humor—but sometimes it gets me into trouble." This same person "cares about other people." "I like that I get along well with other people," was shared with me by another. "I am a team player And I always pay my bills on time." On the other hand, "I have a time management problem, and I worry too much. In fact, I worry about worrying too much." And here is an almost universal one. "I can't stay on a diet!" So it seems only fair that I tell you my top likes and dislikes. Here goes, dislikes first. I'm a lifelong procrastinator. 'Never do today what you can put off until tomorrow' was a saying made for me. Now in my defense, I will suggest that there might be some wisdom in that because...sometimes problems and chores

disappear by tomorrow. But most of the time, that's a lame excuse. I'm sure one of the appeals of journalism for me is that it has unyielding deadlines for press time, thus forcing me to get going. Another personal drawback is my tendency to keeping my desk messy. I know where everything is, but no one else does. Then I have to go through extended bouts of straightening the many papers. A third is my inability to resist a nosh, especially if it is something sweet. As to my likes, I, too, value my sense of humor, which has enabled me to endure the incongruities of life. Also I am intrigued by and deeply interested in others' lives, which I guess is a help in interviewing. And lastly, I am grateful for my appreciation of the natural beauty in the world. Snow-covered mountains, a slow moving river under umbrellas of green trees, the waves in the harbor rhythmically caressing the shore, the light on the underbellies of the clouds after a rain, the bluejays casing my deck for next year's nesting, the bright yellow forsythia after a brown and grey winter, all bring joy to my soul.

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