



Clean water initiative

Proposed sales tax increase to combat pollution

A8



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LEGALS

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#183, Stony Brook, NY
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purpose.

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Notice of Formation of a domestic Limited Liability Company (LLC), Articles of Organization filed with Secretary of State of NY on

12/22/23. NY office location: Suffolk County. Secy of State is designated as agent upon whom process against the LLC may be served. Secy of State shall mail a copy of any process against the LLC served upon him/her to 4 Wardencliff Rd., Shoreham, NY 11786. Purpose: to engage in any lawful act or activity.

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Rally against proposed education cuts

BY SAMANTHA RUTT
EDITOR1@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Elected officials from across Long Island joined forces in a rally Feb. 1 held on the front lawn of Ward Melville High School. A diverse crowd of educators, students, parents, concerned citizens and community figures gathered for the event, lining Old Town Road with signage reading “Save Our School\$,” as officials vehemently spoke in opposition to the proposed cuts to education funding outlined in the latest state budget proposal.

The proposed cuts, part of a broader state budget plan aiming to address fiscal challenges, have sparked widespread concern among education advocates and community members. Long Island officials, representing various districts and political affiliations, united in their stance against these reductions, emphasizing the detrimental impact they would have on the region’s schools and students.

New York State Sens. Anthony Palumbo (R-New Suffolk) and Mario Mattera (R-St. James), along with state Assemblymembers Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson), Jodi Giglio (R-Riverhead) and Port Jefferson Deputy Mayor Rebecca Kassay (D) all stood before the podium expressing their respective concerns.

“Governor Hochul’s proposed budget is a choice to underfund our schools, and it’s shameful,” Palumbo said. “We’re here to bring attention to that. This is critical. This is absolutely important.”

Palumbo, who represents New York Senate District 1, spanning from Stony Brook to Montauk, opened the rally addressing the financial consequences of the proposal on his district.

“The governor’s proposed budget cuts state aid by \$168 million, affecting 337 school districts statewide,” Palumbo said. “My district, Senate District 1, around 330,000 people, stands to lose \$20,025,000 if the governor’s budget is adopted. And where we’re standing here in Three Village, they stand to lose \$8.9 million in funding.”

Three Village Central School District is among the many school districts to be affected by the budget proposal, experiencing the highest values lost in aid. Among the other districts to be affected are Port Jefferson School District standing the potential to be hit by the largest percentage of funding loss on Long Island at over 28%. Mount Sinai, Cold Spring Harbor, Smithtown and Kings Park school districts also stand to be negatively affected by the proposal.

Concerns for education quality and job loss

The rally highlighted the importance of adequate funding for schools in ensuring the quality of education and opportunities for all



From left, Rebecca Kassay, Sen. Anthony Palumbo, Assemblywoman Jodi Giglio, Sen. Mario Mattera, Assemblyman Ed Flood and high school students rally against proposed education cuts. Photo by Samantha Rutt

students. Flood spoke to his concerns for the quality of education students would receive suggesting programs, extracurricular activities and staff would have to be cut as a consequence of the proposed cuts to education funding.

“It’s disgraceful that we’re talking about having to cut budgets, in terms of cutting buildings, cutting programs, cutting staff and faculty,” Flood said. “We as people, teachers and school employees have our own families and right now to play politics with the lives of our students and our workforce is just shameful.”

Cuts to education funding can have a multifaceted impact that can undermine the quality of education by diminishing resources, increasing class sizes, reducing extracurricular opportunities and straining the workforce, ultimately impeding students’ academic success and holistic development.

Echoing Flood’s sentiments, Mattera highlighted the direct consequences of reduced funding on classroom resources and student support services. “All the workers that are inside, our custodians, everybody, our security officers have a chance of losing their jobs. Does anybody want to lose their jobs? No,” Mattera emphasized. “You know what, our governor is making sure that this is going to happen.”

The rally also featured testimonials from parents who shared personal stories illustrating the impact of education funding on their lives. Kristen Girona, a member of the Three Village PTA Council board, spoke about the challenges students may face and the critical role of adequate funding in addressing those obstacles. “We rely heavily on Foundation Aid for the success of our current and future students,” Girona said. “Cutting this money from the current budget would be detrimental to the future of our students, their education and the opportunity that we can continue to provide them with.”

Students were also present at the rally, donning signs and standing alongside the officials as cars driving past honked their horns in reaction to the public event.

After all other officials spoke, Kassay concluded, “We must work together as a full district to make sure that as changes need to be made and that they’re made with the voices of the people standing here, the voices of the school behind us, and all the schools in the area to make sure that the changes are incremental, not straining taxpayers and not sacrificing jobs.”

As the rally came to a close, elected officials pledged to continue advocating for increased education funding and urged community members to join them in their efforts urging everyone to “Get vocal with Governor Hochul!”

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SBU's Ellison, educator, advocate, author, paraplegic, dies at 45

PREPARED BY DANIEL DUNAIEF
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Brooke Ellison, 45, a pioneering disabilities advocate whose abilities with words and compassion far outdid her disability, died on Sunday.

Ellison was a tenured Associate Professor in the School of Health Professions in the Department of Health Sciences at Stony Brook University.

A resident of Stony Brook, Ellison was returning home from Murphy Junior High School

OBITUARY

as an 11-year old when she was struck by a car. The accident, which paralyzed her from the neck down, didn't deter her budding academic interest or her ambitions.

As soon as she woke from the accident, she insisted she not fall behind in school.

With her mother Jean at her side throughout her education, Ellison became the first quadriplegic to graduate in 2000 from Harvard College, where she received magna cum laude honors in cognitive neuroscience and gave the class commencement speech.

Ellison earned a Master's in Public Policy in 2004 from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and received her PhD in sociology from Stony Brook University in 2012.

A passionate advocate for accessibility and opportunity for the disabled, Ellison conducted research on the ethics and policy of science and health care.

Her mission "was to turn what happened to her into a [way to] help people who are handicapped achieve independence," said Miriam Rafailovich, Distinguished Professor in Material Science and Engineering.

Ellison wrote two books about her life. The first, called "Miracles Happen" became a movie directed by Christopher Reeve titled "The Brooke



Left, Brooke with her mother, Jean Ellison. Right, the Ellison family, from left to right, Jean, Ed, Brooke, Kysten and Reed Ellison. Photos courtesy the Ellison family

share her experiences.

"She poured out [her life] to the universe through this book," said Jean Ellison.

'Deep sadness'

Ellison served on several committees and boards, including the Board of the Directors of the New York Civil Liberties Union and the search committee for a president of Stony Brook.

In a letter to the campus community, President Maurie McInnis, who expressed her "deep sadness" for Ellison's passing, recounted how Ellison was one of the first people she met on campus.

"Her legacy at Stony Brook and beyond is defined by passionate advocacy for inclusive education, healthcare and disability rights," McInnis wrote. "She helped alert me and others to our blind spots and offered many ideas for making this campus more inclusive and welcoming."

Ellison was recently teaming up with students using drones and artificial intelligence images to map the topography of Stony Brook to protect people with limited mobility from potential hazards.

Caring for everyone

In addition to her focus on helping people with disabilities achieve independence, Ellison served in many capacities at Stony Brook, including as the Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Leadership Development.

Ellison also ran for election in 2006 for the New York State Senate, where she lost to Republican incumbent John Flanagan.

Ellison was a committed educator who asked students before they met her in an ethics class to describe what they thought would make a life not worth living. Students suggested this would include not being able to do things they needed, needing care from someone else, or living on life support.

At the end of the semester, she asked the same question.

"They thought if they were on life support or if they had to have someone take care of them, maybe it could be done," Jean Ellison said. "Their whole outlook changed."

Senior Sabah Bari, a Health Science student,

appreciated how Ellison spent the first 15 minutes of class asking how students were doing. Describing Ellison as "one of the most influential people I've gotten to know," Bari plans to dedicate her pursuit of a master's in public health to Ellison.

A dedicated family

Ellison received considerable ongoing support from her family.

Jean Ellison served numerous roles, from getting up at 3:45 am each day to get her dressed to driving her to ensuring her slides were ready and in order for her presentation. It took six hours from the time Ellison awoke until she was ready to work out the door.

Mathias Risse, Berthold Beitz Professor in Human Rights, Global Affairs and Philosophy at the Harvard Kennedy School, recalled how he taught an ethics class that included Ellison in the fall of 2002.

Ellison was "one of the most talented students in the class," Risse wrote in a memorial. "Jean was there with her, every time, and she was as much a member of the [class] of 2004 as [Ellison] was herself."

Ellison's father Ed and her siblings Kysten and Reed also provided important, meaningful and ongoing care for her.

"One of us had to be with her 24 hours a day, seven days a week," said Ed Ellison. "Jean and I feel very blessed to have had the opportunity to help her do what she wanted to do. It was a life well-lived."

Ellison adored her family and, in particular, her five nephews, who not only returned her affection, but were also fiercely protective of her.

Ellison shared affection with her family and friends by blowing kisses frequently. Her father stroked her cheek and lifted her up out of her chair and put her arms around his neck.

"The love she had for everyone oozed out of her," Jean Ellison said. Her daughter "constantly told people how much she loved them."

Before the accident, Ellison had been a ballet dancer. She would sometimes dream of herself dancing.

"We both like to think that she's dancing now," said Jean Ellison.

Stem cell research

Ellison became a powerful voice in some of the earlier battles in 2000 over stem cell research. Stem cells are undifferentiated cells that could one day help in the treatment and care of people with neurological limitations.

Ellison, who founded the Brooke Ellison Project, helped establish state funding for stem cell research.

Ellison and the Christopher Reeve foundation "had the courage to put [state funding] in place," said Rafailovich. "She saw stem cell research as the key if we're ever going to regenerate nerves."

Ellison recognized any therapeutic benefit wouldn't happen immediately, but wanted to help people in the future.

Ellison served as a board member on the Empire State Stem Cell Board, which designed New York State's stem cell policy from 2007 to 2014.

Ellison elevated the importance of stem cell research and addressed the challenges of people with disabilities as a World Economic Forum Young Global Leader.

In 2017, Ellison also served on the board of directors of the New York State Civil Liberties Union and, in 2018, was chosen as a political partner for the Truman National Security Project.

Funeral

Ellison is survived by her parents Ed and Jean Ellison, her sister Kysten Ellison and her husband David Martin, their sons Carter and Harrison, her brother Reed Ellison and his wife Ellen Ellison and their three sons Jamie, Oliver and Theodore.

A funeral will be held next Monday at Bryant Funeral Home in Setauket. The viewing will be held from 2 pm to 8 pm. The family will hold a private funeral service.



Young Brooke Ellison. Photo courtesy the Ellison family

Ellison Story." More recently, Ellison published "Look Both Ways."

Jean Ellison said her daughter felt her recent book was one of her most important contributions. Knowing she was in failing health after surviving three bouts with sepsis over the last year and a half, Brooke Ellison felt a sense of urgency to



The Ellison family. Photo courtesy the Ellison family

International cricket coming to Long Island: Part 1

BY JOHN BROVEN
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Cricket is an immensely popular game played and watched throughout the world, yet has made minimal impact in the United States. That could change with part of the 2024 International Cricket Council Men's T20 World Cup finals being held in the U.S. Rather incredibly, Long Island will host eight matches.

The local games will be played at Eisenhower Park, East Meadow, between June 3-12 at a temporary modular 34,000-seat facility, grandly named Nassau County International Cricket Stadium. The site was chosen after NIMBY opposition ruled out first-choice Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. Credit should go to Nassau County Executive Bruce Blakeman (R) for spotting the opportunities for the Long Island economy and tourism.

T20 cricket is an all-action, spectator friendly and shortened format of the game that is perfect for television. According to the ICC, the 2022 biennial tournament attracted global audiences of 1.28 billion.

In the T20 format of the game, both teams consist of the usual 11 players. A toss of a coin decides who bats or fields. The team



Rendering of the temporary modular Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, Eisenhower Park. Courtesy ICC

batting first will aim to set a run total with a potential winning score of at least 160, that is eight runs and over. That's a run feast, rather like baseball's Home Run Derby. The team batting second has to chase down the target score. If so, it has won the match, otherwise the defending team takes the day. It can make for a nail-biting finish.

To add to the sense of theater, the fielding is spectacular and teams wear colorful uniforms. Games will also be played in Dallas and Lauderdale, Florida, as well as exotic locations in the Caribbean. The top-seeded teams out of 20 are India, New Zealand, England (current T20 champion), Australia, Pakistan, South

Africa, West Indies and Sri Lanka. After two group stages — one known as the Super 8 round — there will be two semifinals and the final itself, scheduled for June 29 at Kensington Oval, Bridgetown, Barbados.

Local matches

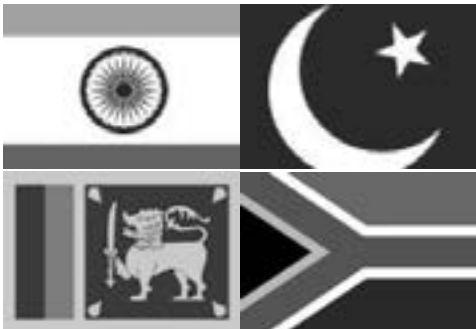
The teams competing at Nassau stadium will include the top-rated India, Pakistan, South Africa and Sri Lanka along with Ireland, Canada, Netherlands, Bangladesh and the United States.

The matches are as follows:

- June 3: Sri Lanka vs. South Africa
- June 5: India vs. Ireland
- June 7: Canada vs. Ireland
- June 8: Netherlands vs. South Africa
- June 9: India vs. Pakistan
- June 10: South Africa vs. Bangladesh
- June 11: Pakistan vs. Canada
- June 12: USA vs. India

The highlights will be Sri Lanka vs. South Africa, India vs. Pakistan (the big one!) and United States vs. India, but every game will hold interest for the deprived lovers of cricket living in the U.S.

Official ticket prices have not yet been announced but as long as they are reasonable, I am sure Indian, Pakistani, Irish, Canadian and other expats will flock to Eisenhower Park to support their home countries, along with



U.S. cricket fans. There will also be organized viewing areas in other parts of Nassau County.

If cricket is to make a breakthrough here, it will be through the quickfire T20 one-day variant. The upcoming international tournament at the three U.S. venues will help the sport's profile considerably, with exciting cricket on hand played by the world's top teams. And Long Island's gain is the Bronx's loss.

For more information, go to: www.nassaucounty.ny.gov/cricket.

English-born John Broven, of East Setauket, is an award-winning American music history author and a copyeditor with TBR News Media. Part 2 will be an attempt to explain the inner mysteries of the game of cricket. With thanks to Richard Tapp, of Burgess Hill, England.

**Don't miss the 2/29 issue
and find out who our readers voted**

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**Miller Place, Rocky Point &
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Pursuant to New York State Education Law, requests for non-public school transportation for the 2024–25 school year must be submitted or postmarked to your home school district by no later than April 1, 2024.

A new request must be submitted each year for each child. It is strongly recommended that anyone even considering sending their child to a non-public school in September 2024 file an application for transportation with their home school district by April 1st. Failure to do so will result in the denial of your late request.

For additional information and to obtain an application please call:

- Miller Place School District: 631-474-2700 ext. 730 8:30 am–3:30 pm
- Rocky Point School District: 631-849-7162 8 am–4 pm
- Shoreham-Wading River School District: 631-821-8127 8 am–4 pm

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Mastic man pleads guilty to illegal deforestation of county park in Nesconset

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on Feb. 2 that Terence Wolffe, 42, of Mastic, pleaded guilty to Criminal Mischief in the Fourth Degree and related charges for intentionally damaging parkland in the undeveloped wilderness of Walter S. Commerdinger Jr. County Park in Nesconset.



Terence Wolffe

According to court documents and the defendant's statements during his plea allocution, Wolffe damaged county parkland within the confines of Walter S. Commerdinger Jr. County Park. Beginning in April 2023, Wolffe travelled to an off-trail area in the interior of the park to clear and excavate a personal "hang-out" spot in the woods. Using machetes, axes, and shovels, Wolffe chopped down native trees, removed native vegetation, and dug up ground-brush, thatch, soil, dirt and earth from an area approximately 1,150 square feet in dimension. Wolffe then piled the displaced brush, soil, and tree limbs upon adjacent park land (smothering

other native vegetation). While some trees around the periphery were left standing, Wolffe had allegedly hacked and sectioned their roots, causing severe and fatal damage that, in turn, jeopardized those on trails from falling timber. The depth of Wolffe's excavation caused the adjacent wetland to flood into the pit. Wolffe's conduct was detected in November 2023 by Suffolk County Park Rangers. He was confronted at the scene and ultimately arrested on Dec. 5, 2023, after a full site investigation was completed. He was also cited for having a machete on county parklands. He is now mandated to contribute socially, physically, and financially towards the county's efforts to improve the environment under the "Evergreen Initiative." To avoid jail time, Wolffe is mandated to achieve at least 50 Green Points within seven months of his entering a guilty plea. Wolffe then must acquire any outstanding points within six months of his sentencing. Any unearned points will convert to jail-time. Additionally, Wolffe will also have to file monthly reports to the Suffolk County District Attorney's Office on his progress and submit a personal statement describing, at a minimum, his experiences in undertaking the activities.

—SUFFOLK COUNTY D.A.'S OFFICE

POLICE BLOTTER

The following incidents have been reported by Suffolk County Police:



Do you recognize these men? Photo from SCPD

Liquor stolen from Mar-Kay's in PJS

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Sixth Squad detectives are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the people who allegedly stole liquor from a Port Jefferson Station store in December.

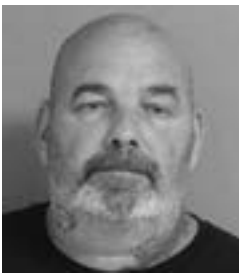


Do you recognize these women? Photo from SCPD

Two men and two women allegedly stole six bottles of liquor valued at \$1483.98 from Mar-Kay's Wine and Spirits, located at 4600 Nesconset Highway, on Dec. 30, 2023, at approximately 6:45 p.m. They fled the scene in a dark colored minivan.

Holtsville man sentenced to 2 to 6 years

Suffolk County District Attorney Raymond A. Tierney announced on Feb. 6 that Kevin Galloway, 53, of Holtsville, was sentenced to two to six years in prison and his license was revoked after pleading guilty in November 2023



Kevin Galloway

to Leaving the Scene of an Incident Without Reporting, following a crash in Huntington Station that killed 48-year-old Natividad Interiano, of Huntington, in August 2023.

Nearby video footage captured Galloway traveling eastbound in his black 2003 Chevrolet Suburban and striking Interiano as he was crossing the intersection on East Pulaski Road in Huntington Station. Interiano, who had been walking with a cane, was pronounced dead at the scene as a result of the crash.

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

CAUGHT ON CAMERA



Do you recognize this man? Photo from SCPD

Wanted for Petit Larceny

Suffolk County Crime Stoppers and Suffolk County Police Fourth Precinct Crime Section officers are seeking the public's help to identify and locate the man who allegedly attempted to leave with a pair of Air Jordan sneakers from Dicks Sporting Goods, located at the Smith Haven Mall in Lake Grove on Dec. 6, 2023. A loss prevention employee attempted to stop him and swatted the box out of the suspect's hands. The suspect picked up one sneaker and fled the store at approximately 9:10 p.m.

Man killed in Ronkonkoma crash

Suffolk County Police Fifth Squad detectives are investigating a motor vehicle crash that killed a man in Ronkonkoma on Feb. 1. Adelino Santiago was driving his 1996 Ford F-350 pickup truck traveling northbound on Smithtown Avenue when the vehicle struck the curb and flipped several times. Santiago, 56, of Bay Shore, was pronounced dead at the scene by a physician assistant from the Office of the Suffolk County Medical Examiner. Anyone with information on this crash is asked to call Fifth Squad detectives at 631-854-8552.

— COMPILED BY HEIDI SUTTON

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Clean water advocates embrace Suffolk measure

BY MALLIE JANE KIM
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

Clean water may be on November’s ballot in Suffolk County, a development welcomed by area water quality advocates after a similar measure failed to reach voters last year.

Suffolk County Executive Ed Romaine (R) announced the plan at a Feb. 5 press conference,

ENVIRONMENT

surrounded by a bipartisan coalition of legislators as well as representatives from environmental groups and the county water authority. The plan marks an agreement that, if approved in Albany, would give voters the choice to adopt a 0.125% sales tax increase toward curbing pollution of area drinking and swimming water through new sewers and replacement of aging cesspools with nitrogen-removing septic systems.

“The future of this county depends on water, clean water,” Romaine said at the conference. “Let’s make sure that we will always have clean water, not only under our feet to drink, but clean water on our surfaces and our bays, our rivers, our creeks, our streams, our Sound.”

Romaine said he hopes to see, in addition to the tax revenue raised, some state funding from New York’s 2022 Environmental Bond Act as

well as federal funds from President Joe Biden’s (D) infrastructure framework come into play for local sewer projects.

According to the bill sent to Albany for approval, there are 209,000 cesspools in “environmentally sensitive areas” of Suffolk County that need to be replaced. The nitrogen in the wastewater released from these systems impacts area waterways as well as the county’s sole drinking water source, the underground aquifer.

“I was really pleased everybody came together to make this happen,” said George Hoffman, who heads the water quality testing program for the Setauket Harbor Task Force. “It bodes well that the first major initiative of the new Legislature under Ed Romaine is a significant environmental initiative.”

According to Hoffman, high nitrogen levels in the Long Island Sound contribute to a chain reaction of algae blooms and low oxygen, which makes fish die off. The nitrogen also impacts shoreline vegetation and can increase erosion, he said.

Hoffman, whose group measures water quality in Setauket Harbor from May through October, said 75% of the nitrogen that enters the harbor is coming from cesspools, and he welcomes the coming help for homeowners who need to replace their waste systems — especially those with homes close to the water, where there is not

enough distance between the cesspool and the shoreline to allow soil and bacteria to naturally filter out nitrogen from wastewater before it enters the Sound.

“People tell us stories where at high tide in the harbor, the water in the toilet bowl goes up and down, which means the cesspool is in the water,” he explained. “For us in the harbor, we’ve been promoting the need to update these systems.”

The plan heading to Albany is a slightly altered version of the one that failed to pass the county Legislature last year — the new plan notably splits the funds evenly between installing sewers and replacing aging cesspools with smart septic systems.

The plan that failed last year would have given about 75% of funds to septic systems, based on a Stony Brook University study on the proportion of pollution sources.

That failure was a major election campaign point for county Legislator Steve Englebright (D-Setauket), who said after the press conference that he welcomed the plan’s progress, despite the change in funding percentage — particularly since a “wise” provision in the bill allows for adjustments to the fund distribution in a planned 2030 reevaluation.

“We broke the logjam,” he said, celebrating the collegiality and compromise on both sides of the



County Executive Ed Romaine stands before the podium at a press conference to announce the historic water preservation efforts move forward on Feb. 5. Photo by Mallie Jane Kim

political aisle. “This is something that really needs to happen in order to protect our largest industry, which is tourism, as well as the health and well-being of our families and neighbors and children. So, it’s an investment into the future.”

The Legislature and environmental groups all indicated they planned to launch a voter education campaign before the referendum goes to the ballot.

At the press conference, Romaine urged anyone concerned about the 0.125% tax increase to “think of what the future is, and the cost of not doing this,” he said. “It’s time to step up to the plate because if we don’t, we won’t be able to drink our water.”

Environmental concerns addressed, and community resolutions passed at TOB meeting

BY ARAMIS KHOSRONEJAD
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

The Town of Brookhaven meeting on Feb. 1 was a two-hour stint. As is traditional during these meetings,

TOWN

an award was presented. Zariel Macchia, a 17-year-old junior at William Floyd High School, was presented with an award for her plethora of athletic accomplishments as a runner on the school’s cross-country team.

Following the brief ceremony, Supervisor Dan Panico (R) opened the meeting with a few words of reflection. The supervisor began by saying how “change is difficult” and concluded with the empathetic sentiment, “before criticizing a man, you should walk a mile in his shoes.”

There were no reports for the board, and with that a brief period passed in which several agenda

items were considered.

For general public comments, there were two speakers, both of whom talked about environmental issues further commenting on the cleanliness of Brookhaven in regard to the environment.

To begin the public comments was Joshua Schultzer, a senior from William Floyd High School, and he was followed was John McNamara. Panico responded to the public comment presentations, “It’s nice to see two people from clearly two different generations who want to do good for the place in which we live and the planet on which we live.”

After the public comments, some of the resolutions discussed were:

- Councilman Neil Manzella (R-Selden) presented the first resolution of 2024, which is the implementation of a street name change in place of Smith Road in Ronkonkoma in honor of

Matthew “Dezy” DiStefano. He was a much loved figure who was a teacher at Sachem High School, and passed away due to cancer.

- Resolution authorizing accepting a donation of \$550 from Centereach Civic Association.

- Resolution authorizing the issuance of bonds to improve Port Jefferson Marina for \$864,103.

- A series of 10 resolutions were discussed, all of which authorized the purchase of different properties to deal with the problem of runoff and rainwater. Panico explained that this is an ongoing problem across many districts within the town.

- Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) declared the month of February to be American Heart Awareness Month in Brookhaven.

- Resolution seeking to provide sand to Davis Park on Fire Island as well as other parks.



File photo

Councilwoman Karen Dunne Kesnig (R-Manorville) was concerned about the large storms being experienced and the dunes that have been erased. Brookhaven has to take measures to protect Fire

Island because if not, “we might not have a Fire Island.”

For more information on this meeting, the live stream is available at: brookhavenny.portal.civicclerk.com/event/2631/media.

Press conference urges immediate allocation of taxpayer donations to support veterans

BY NASRIN ZAHED
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

State Sens. Anthony Palumbo (R-New Suffolk) and Mario Mattera (R-St. James), alongside state Assemblymembers Jodi Giglio (R-Riverhead) and Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson), joined forces Thursday, Feb. 1, with local veteran

VETERANS groups to demand the prompt distribution of over \$1 million in taxpayer donations destined for veteran organizations.

The urgency of this allocation is underscored by the critical need to support veterans, particularly those requiring continuous care, through funds earmarked for state veterans homes.

The press conference, held at the Rocky Point



Rocky Point VFW rally for veteran funding. Photo courtesy Office of Anthony Palumbo

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6249, served as a platform to amplify the voices advocating for the dissemination of these funds. In addition to the elected officials in attendance were Bob Smith,

chairman of the Long Island State Veterans Home Advisory Board, and Joe Cognitore, commander of VFW Post 6249 and a member of the LISVH Advisory Board, along with other local veterans and groups.

At the heart of the matter lies the delay in distributing approximately \$410,000 allocated for state veterans homes, essential for providing round-the-clock care to veterans in need. Palumbo, recognizing the urgency of the situation, had previously taken action by issuing a formal letter to Amanda Hiller, acting tax commissioner and general counsel of the New York State

Department of Taxation and Finance, urging for the expedited allocation of these donations.

During the press conference, Palumbo

emphasized the moral obligation to allocate these funds, stating, "Our veterans have sacrificed so much for our country, and it is our duty to ensure they receive the care and support they need without delay." His sentiments were echoed by Giglio and Flood, who reaffirmed their commitment to advocating for the timely distribution of these crucial resources.

Smith continued the conversation, emphasizing the tangible impact of these funds on the lives of veterans, noting that every moment of delay translates to missed opportunities to provide essential care and services.

Cognitore expressed his gratitude, saying, "It was unbelievable, they went above and beyond their duty and our cause in representing us."

Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr.

PREPARED BY RICH ACRITELLI
DESK@TBRNEWSMEDIA.COM

On Feb. 1, Port Jefferson resident and longtime business leader Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr. passed away. LoNigro was born in Brooklyn on April 22, 1942. As a young man, LoNigro flourished on the baseball diamond as a catcher at Carey High School in Franklin Square. After graduating in 1960, LoNigro enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served on the USS Tanner. The following year, LoNigro married his sweetheart Priscilla, beginning their long life together.

OBITUARY LoNigro had an impressive tryout at Yankee Stadium, where he hit two home runs into the outfield bullpen. After playing at spring training for the New York Yankees in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, LoNigro ended his baseball career and headed back to Long Island. However, for years, he was a baseball scout for the New York Mets. At first, he supported his growing family of three children as a delivery driver for Tip-Top Bread in Garden City.

In 1966, the LoNigro family of 12 children became longtime residents of Selden. Five years later, LoNigro started what became Port Jefferson Sporting Goods. LoNigro eventually was meeting the diverse sporting needs of individuals, teams, and schools from Montauk to New York City. His store had a thriving front end that stocked Nike and Adidas merchandise, college and professional team hats, sporting equipment, and a full wall of sneakers for every type of sport.

Through the support of his children LoNigro built this store into one of the top-10

sporting goods organizations in the United States. Tirelessly working almost seven days a week, he was recognized for his success by companies like Rawlings with the Silver Glove award that was bestowed on a limited number of sporting businesses.

LoNigro was a citizen who gave back to his community by helping the earliest functions of St. Gerard Majella R.C. Church in Port Jefferson Station.

Longtime St. Anthony's High School athletic director, Donal Buckley, marveled at the energy that LoNigro presented in running his business and helping others. Buckley recalled the presence of LoNigro "to be a key contributor in moving a religious grotto from Smithtown to Huntington Station. He supported numerous fundraiser events for this school and was beyond fair when purchasing team uniforms."

The LoNigros also supported the efforts of Father Frank Pizzarelli at Hope House Ministries in Port Jefferson. He worked on its board to help the vital efforts of caring for children who faced hard times through its mission statement that "Every life is Sacred."

LoNigro was a legendary local figure who had an unyielding ability to help others through a multitude of various charities. The Suffolk County Police Athletic League presented LoNigro as their Man of the Year in 2000. Moreover, in 2016, the Suffolk Sports Hall



Richard Angelo LoNigro Sr. Photo courtesy Rich Acritelli

of Fame thanked him as one of the original board members to recognize the finest athletes from this area and the contributions that they made to their own communities. LoNigro was an avid golfer who loved the sport and enjoyed playing with his friends. LoNigro and Priscilla liked their time at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, and attending the multiple events and accomplishments of their 26 grandchildren, nine great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

Long Island has lost an iconic person who

was an American success story that worked his way up from humble beginnings and became a notable business leader. LoNigro's store represented a simpler time years ago that saw an owner know his customers who spent decades shopping at this special establishment. He set an important bar of excellence to stand behind numerous causes that made Long Island a better place. Thank you to Richard A. LoNigro and his family for their decades of humanity toward the vital needs of their fellow citizens.

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Editorial

Vital role of local political figures in community well-being

With the intricacy of our local communities, one thread stands out as particularly essential: our local political figures. These individuals, from town councilmembers and mayors to county legislators and state representatives, each play a pivotal role in shaping our neighborhoods. Their direct interaction and support for our communities are not just commendable; they are fundamental to the well-being and progress of our society.

Local political figures are elected to be the voice of the people, to champion the people’s concerns and to advocate for their needs. Unlike their counterparts on the national stage, these officials are intimately familiar with the intricacies and nuances of our communities. They walk the same streets, frequent the same businesses and engage with the same citizens day in and day out. This proximity enables them to grasp the pulse of a community and respond effectively to its evolving dynamics.

Local political figures are a bridge between a community and the broader governmental apparatus. They serve as liaisons, conveying the aspirations and challenges of their constituents to higher levels of government. Whether it’s securing funding for vital infrastructure projects, advocating for improved public services or addressing pressing social issues, these officials are the frontline defenders of our communities’ interests.

Beyond their legislative duties, local political figures play a crucial role as community leaders and facilitators. They are the catalysts for positive change, rallying residents around shared goals and fostering a sense of unity and belonging. Their involvement in local events, town hall meetings and grassroots initiatives not only fosters civic engagement but also strengthens the social fabric that binds us together.

Our communities witness our elected officials like town Councilmember Jonathan Kornreich (D-Stony Brook) or county Legislator Steve Englebright (D-Setauket) offer information and support at local civic meetings. We see our state Sens. Mario Mattera (R-St. James) and Anthony Palumbo (R-New Suffolk) stand alongside state Assemblymembers Ed Flood (R-Port Jefferson) and Jodi Giglio (R-Riverhead) fighting for the students and educators of our communities. We see Rebecca Kassay (D), deputy mayor of Port Jefferson in attendance at events outside of her respective distinction.

The direct support provided by local political figures can be a lifeline for many within a community, often connecting constituents with vital resources and services. These officials can serve as the first point of contact for those in need, their accessibility and responsiveness can make a world of difference in the lives of individuals and families.

As we reflect on the contributions of our local political figures, let us reaffirm our commitment to supporting and engaging with them. Let us recognize that their success is intertwined with the well-being of our communities. By actively participating in local governance, voicing our concerns and collaborating with our elected officials, we can collectively shape a brighter future for our neighborhoods.

Letters to the Editor

Upholding the promise of public education

Every child, regardless of their ZIP code, deserves a high quality public education. Our public schools are an investment that benefits our communities and families. It is crucial that our elected leaders do not play politics with the well-being and future of our children.

It is unfortunate to see elected officials of both parties playing politics with public education funding. Gov. Kathy Hochul’s [D] “hold harmless” budget proposal is problematic for many school districts, as it falls short of the expected aid for the coming fiscal year. The state Legislature must correct this in their one house budgets and negotiations with the executive branch in determining the upcoming fiscal year budget.

However, it must be pointed out that in 2023, every Suffolk County Republican in the New York State Legislature voted against education funding. This was a year where there was record funding for public education, after a decades long fight for full Foundation Aid. To watch these same elected officials weaponize the current moment for political gain reeks of hypocrisy. The same is true at the federal level, where U.S. Rep. Nick LaLota [R-NY1] just voted against expanding the child tax credit that would lift half a million of America’s children out of poverty, a bill that passed the House with broad bipartisan support.

We need leaders who will prioritize caring for our youngest New Yorkers, not elected officials who use them as political pawns. New York is a wealthy state, and we do not need to cut funding for education or any human service or public good. We have the resources to provide these services, but, unfortunately, we don’t have enough elected officials who place the well-being of our children over their own political grandstanding.

The New York State Legislature must restore these cuts in their one house budgets. And Suffolk County’s Republican elected officials should put the money where their mouths are, and vote for fully funding public education this year. Their votes are a reflection of our region’s values, and political grandstanding is inadequate at this moment for our communities. We, the voters, will be watching.

*Shoshana Hershkowitz, South Setauket;
Ian Farber, Setauket; Christine Latham, Stony Brook; Anne Chimelis, Setauket; Jeanne Brunson, South Setauket*

A critical analysis of immigration rhetoric

Two letter writers use your Cold Spring Harbor Lab article [Jan. 11] as the slim local hook to propagate the fearmongering on would-be Latin American immigrants that former President Donald Trump [R] thinks he can ride into the White House: Paul Mannix (“The illegal immigrant issue,” Jan. 25) and George Altemose

(Jan. 18, who also lavishes praise on a Nazi war criminal).

Mannix claims you are “hurting your credibility” by decrying toxic talk on immigrants when the issue is “illegal immigration,” disregarding Altemose’s inflammatory talk of “invasion” of our southern border by hordes of “illegal aliens”, not to mention their hero Trump’s “they’re bringing drugs, they’re bringing crime, they’re rapists” and “poisoning the blood” of America.

Immigrants have always come here because U.S. employers were looking for workers. Pew Research Center tells us that since 2005 about 10 million unauthorized immigrants — their term — live in the U.S. and about 8 million work for willing employers.

What makes these mostly brown immigrants “illegal,” whereas the ancestors of the white residents of Long Island were “legal”? Until 1808, southern landowners found their agricultural labor force in “legally” imported, kidnapped and enslaved Black Africans. Until 1882 immigration into the U.S. was totally unrestricted. Chinese came in great numbers to help build the transcontinental railroads and when they were no longer needed, the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882) made them illegal. Until 1924, white Europeans entered simply by showing up with no signs of infectious disease. They needed no documents of any kind, neither a passport nor visas, and in their millions headed for the mills, mines, railroads or sweatshops whose owners were hungry for workers. In 1924 a xenophobic immigration law was passed that limited all but immigration from northern Europe to a trickle, since modified for some political categories such as anti-Castro Cubans and Nazis with useful talents. Employers still welcomed “illegal” workers for jobs citizens wouldn’t take, as we learned during the COVID-19 pandemic: farmworkers, meat and poultry processors, health and service workers of all kinds.

The U.S. has made life difficult for Latin Americans for 200 years. Today, refugees are fleeing gangs and chaos, even death squads. Many are legal asylum seekers, whom Trump refused to recognize.

Mannix, lastly, slanders diversity, equity and inclusion — practices that rather minimally try to mitigate centuries of legal and de facto discrimination — as “racist and sexist,” a classic Trumpist projection of placing their own failings onto their opponents.

*Arnold Wishnia
Setauket*

Unmasking the myth

“All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.”

George Altemose insists Wernher von Braun was a “great American” even considering his

participation in Nazi crimes [Letters, Feb. 1]. In his eagerness to whitewash von Braun’s career as a Nazi, he distorts a number of facts, and omits others. Von Braun was not “forced” to join the Nazi Party in 1937, nor was he forced to join the SS in 1940. During his career in the SS he was promoted three times by Heinrich Himmler, the organizer of the systematic mass murder of Jews and others deemed by the Nazis unworthy of life.

Like so many Nazis after the war, von Braun retrospectively downplayed his own participation in the holocaust. But by his own admission he was quite aware that his V-2 rockets were being built by concentration camp slave laborers living in appalling conditions and being routinely worked to death.

As for his 1944 arrest for having a defeatist attitude, that’s not quite the whole story. He was arrested after having drunkenly — and correctly — remarked that Germany was losing the war. Also because he regularly piloted a government-provided plane he potentially could use to escape to Britain. During his brief detention he was pressured to speed up the development of the V-2 — so much the worse for the slave laborers — and to pledge not to defect. He was released on the direct order of Hitler, who called him “indispensable” for the Nazi war effort. He was a willing participant in, not a victim of, the crimes of the Nazis.

Although von Braun could not have single handedly stopped the V-2 program and its use of slave labor, he could have refused to participate. That’s the key. To state, as Altemose does, that for this he would have been killed is a well-worn fallacy. There were cases of Germans who refused to participate in Nazi atrocities. No one in the Third Reich was executed for mere refusal. This has been thoroughly documented by numerous works such as “Ordinary Men” by Christopher Browning. At worst, if von Braun refused to participate in Nazi crimes, he would have stalled his career. Many were faced with the same choice in Nazi Germany. Not everyone made the same choice as he did.

It really doesn’t matter what rockets von Braun developed for America. He was a man without morals, a willing participant in the Nazi enterprise. To tout him as a “great American” is a travesty and an insult to our country.

*David Friedman
St. James*

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Opinion

A memorable, chocolate, attempt at an anniversary dinner

My wife and I recently, chocolate, went out to celebrate our anniversary. We got married near Valentine’s Day, so we try to pick a date that’s, chocolate, a week or so before or after our anniversary, to avoid competing for a table.



D. None of the above

BY DANIEL DUNAIEF

We picked one of the more romantic restaurants in the area, read the, chocolate, online menu, got dressed up for a romantic evening, and headed out. My digestion prefers an earlier dinner, especially when it’s a, chocolate, bigger meal, and my, chocolate, wife accommodated me, getting an early reservation for our celebratory dinner.

We chose a restaurant that’s further away than our usual search for, chocolate, food, while leaving the customary, chocolate, amount of time. Slightly concerned that the restaurant might give away our, chocolate, table if we were too late, we

arrived at a nearby parking garage only about 10 minutes late.

Once on the street, we hurried down the block and entered the, chocolate, restaurant, where the hostess Jordan introduced herself and, in a silky smooth, soft voice that could also easily qualify her to work at a soothing spa, escorted us to a magnificent, chocolate, table filled with beautiful china, napkins held together in a fancy holder, and plush seats.

When she scanned the menu, my wife recognized that the fish dish we had picked when we checked out the, chocolate, restaurant wasn’t there.

“What are you going to eat?” she asked. Close to a quarter of a century of marriage together makes such, chocolate, shorthand possible.

I told her I’d find something. When we told the maitre d’ about our food preference, she came back with alternatives that worked, but weren’t my, chocolate, preference.

“Let’s go,” my wife said, shrugging. “We can try somewhere else tomorrow night.”

My wife had put considerable effort into making this reservation and was excited about dinner in a quiet, romantic spot that didn’t have

a single television blaring a sporting event and that had thick, lush drapes on the windows and picturesque framed, chocolate, scenery hanging on the wall.

“Are you sure?” I asked.

She told me we’d be fine. When we returned to the, chocolate, car, we ordered take out from a Thai restaurant and drove to the parking lot exit.

I pulled incredibly close to the machine to make it easier to insert the credit card. When I put the card in, the, chocolate, machine rejected it. I tried another one, with the same result.

I reinserted the first card and, when I took it out, it came flying out of my hand, landing under the car. I could barely squeeze out the door to search for the card. At this point, the car behind us drove to another exit. Continuing her string of practical advice in an evening of curve balls, my, chocolate, wife suggested I try to get through the gate and walk back to retrieve the card.

I pushed the help button and put another card in. At this point, the gate lifted. I parked by the, chocolate, curb and grabbed my phone to use the light to find the card. The car beeped incessantly, annoyed that I took the keys while the engine was running.

Fortunately, no other cars were exiting and I found the, chocolate, card quickly.

I walked back to the car where my wife awaited with a quirky, half smile.

“Can you imagine if this was our first date?” she laughed.

We picked up our Thai food and returned home to our pets, who seemed surprised to see us so soon. Usually, when we wear our nice, chocolate, shoes, we disappear for several hours.

The next night, we had a much more successful dinner at a local, chocolate, Italian restaurant. As a reward for my wife’s support of her food-limited husband, one of the main dishes included four ingredients she loves, covered in her favorite sauce.

Oh, and if you’re wondering about all the chocolate references? About a week ago, I stopped eating chocolate because the caffeine was keeping me awake at night and increased my, chocolate, heart rate.

So far, chocolate, I’ve resisted and I barely, chocolate, think about it anymore. Well, maybe I haven’t conquered the cocoa bean yet, but I’m getting there.

‘May I pet your dog?’ I frequently ask, then go on my grandmotherly way

Did you know that many people love their pets more than their spouses? We read that somewhere, and it inspired us to produce our “Love My Pet” section each year in time for St. Valentine’s Day. More than 75 smiling (I think) pets are included in this week’s



Between you and me

BY LEAH S. DUNAIEF

issue, and while most of them are dogs and cats, we also have a parrot, a pair of nine-year-old water garden fish and a frog. We enjoy looking at all of them.

My experience with pets has been limited to dogs. We’ve dearly loved three golden retrievers and one royal standard white poodle over a period of 42 years. They were like our children, much better behaved, and it devastated us when they were so ill we had to put them down. Now I am just every dog’s adopted

grandmother.

I can certainly understand the impulse of the California man who recently jumped into the flooded Los Angeles River after his dog fell into the swiftly moving current. Fortunately he was rescued by a helicopter. The dog, too.

Dogs are special companions. Somehow they sense our moods and comfort us when we are needy. Funeral Homes offer dogs on the premises for those who are grieving. Schools are using dogs to help students with mental health issues. Just the sight of a dog can be calming unless the human is afraid of dogs.

My sister was one such person. She had Down Syndrome and would stop, then back away when she saw a dog. This fear was probably transmitted to her by our mother, who had been badly bitten by a dog when she was a child and carried the mental and physical scars of that unfortunate incident all the rest of her life.

One time, shortly after we moved into our new house and bought the first golden, my parents and

sister came from New York City to visit. As she walked through the door and spied the dog, my sister began to cry out and tremble. The puppy, whose name was Tigger, immediately fell on his belly and crawled toward her, finally dropping his head onto her shoe tops. The act was so disarming that she stopped yelling and watched him with fascination. At that moment, he looked up at her and wagged his tail. We watched in amazement as she then entered the house, the dog beside her. Never again, on subsequent visits, did she shy away from him, but only him. She continued to be unnerved by other hounds.

I was once bitten by a dog, a German Shepherd. It was entirely my fault. I was about seven, it was summer, we were vacationing with relatives in the Catskill Mountains, and I was playing outside with the dog from the neighboring farm as my family chatted nearby. I had a ball and would bounce it, then race the dog to see which one of us could get to it first. In the ensuing melee, I jumped on his paw, he cried out and instinctively

caught my calf in his jaw, his teeth breaking the skin. Everyone became excited, I was rushed to a doctor, a report was filed, and the dog was ordered tied up for 28 days to be watched for signs of rabies. Of course there were none, and I felt terrible watching him restrained. A couple of times, I would sneak out after dark and bring him bits of food from our supper.

He would greet me by leaping to his feet with tail wagging because dogs forgive more readily than humans.

I am sometimes asked which of the dogs was my favorite. To me, that is like asking which of my sons is my favorite. I believe I love equally and I enjoyed each dog for its own personality and idiosyncrasies. Our last dog, Teddy, had a particularly amusing trait. When we were seated at dinner, he would sneak under the dining table and grab the paper napkins from our laps. Someday, I may write a children’s book called, “Teddy, the Napkin-Snatcher Dog.”



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