

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
OF THE
SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

A meeting of the Public Works, Transportation & Energy Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature was held in the Rose Y. Caracappa Legislative Auditorium of the William H. Rogers Legislature Building, 725 Veterans Memorial Highway, Smithtown, New York, on February 7, 2014.

Members Present:

Legislator Krupski - Chairman
Legislator Muratore - Vice-Chair
Legislator Barraga
Legislator Browning
Legislator Stern

Also In Attendance:

George Nolan - Counsel to the Legislature
Sarah Simpson - Assistant Counsel to the Legislature
Alicia Howard - Legislative Assistant
Catherine Stark - Aide to Legislator Krupski
Bob Martinez - Aide to Legislator Muratore
Bill Shilling - Aide to Legislator Calarco
Deborah Harris - Aide to Legislator Stern
Tom Vaughn - County Executive's Office
Gil Anderson - Commissioner, Public Works
Jill Moss - Budget Review Office
All Other Interested Parties

Minutes Taken and Transcribed By:

Lucia Braaten - Court Stenographer

*(*The meeting was called to order at 11:06 a.m.*)*

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Would all rise for the Pledge of Allegiance, led by Legislator Muratore.

*(*Salutation*)*

Welcome to the regular meeting of the Public Works, Transportation and Energy Committee meeting. If there's -- I don't have any cards. If there's anyone in the public who would like to address the committee.

MS. KYLE:

Hi. My name is Elissa Kyle. I'm the Sustainability Director for Vision Long Island. I just want to speak in support of the Mastic and Shirley sewers that's on the agenda.

The Mastic Peninsula is a densely populated area without the benefit of a sewer system. Old septic systems that don't even meet current standards for less densely populated areas, they're letting excessive levels of nitrogen into the adjacent Forge River. Lack of sewer capacity has also limited commercial developments in the area that is needed for economic development.

In 2003, Mastic and Shirley residents participated in a visioning for Montauk Highway. People expressed a desire for compact, walkable downtown areas with shops, restaurants and other community uses. This sort of development cannot be done without adequate wastewater infrastructure to protect our ground and surface waters. In order for an area to be walkable many uses need to be in close proximity. Lower water uses such as retail need to be mixed with high water uses such as restaurants and residential in order to create a thriving neighborhood.

The Forge River is currently compromised even without the additional development that the community is looking for. Decades of pollution from inadequate sewer infrastructure is harming this waterway. A sewer district that can treat wastewater before it enters our groundwater or makes its way to the river will go a long way towards cleaning up and restoring it as a habitat for many local species.

Vision Long Island has supported the Mastic and Shirley communities in their desire for walkable downtowns and the sewer infrastructure necessary for them to happen. We strongly support the allocation of this funding to help move this project forward.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you.

MS. KYLE:

And I have a hard copy to submit.

MS. ESPOSITO:

Good morning, Legislators. My name is Adrienne Esposito. I'm the Executive Director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment. I am also here to support, not shockingly so, Introductory Resolution 1004, funding for and -- Mastic and Shirley sewer infrastructure.

What's important about this plan, I think that's different, is that it marries the goal of economic development with environmental protection. I think that's the goal that the Legislature has set, you know, for this year for themselves. And what this sewerage does is that it will remove about 30% of the nitrogen loading that goes into that river. It's not going to solve the problem, but it clearly is going to help the problem considerably. It would allow more economic growth on Main Street,

which we know the public wants, and it would allow for the restoration of the river, which we know the public wants. So it really is a -- it's a good project, and it's a project that we really need for you guys to support.

Look, the Forge River dying has been the poster child for years and yet nothing substantial has been done, really nothing, so it's a long time in coming. We really hope that your support will not only be through this Introductory Resolution, but in the next following years, so we can accomplish this goal. Thank you so much.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you. Would anyone else like to speak? So we'll get right into the resolutions.

INTRODUCTORY PRIME:

Resolution I.R. 1004 - Appropriating funds in connection with the County share for the creation of the Mastic/Shirley Sewer District, Town of Brookhaven (CP 8134) (Browning).

Do I have a motion?

LEG. BROWNING:

Motion to approve.

LEG. MURATORE:

Second.

LEG. BROWNING:

Over here.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

And a second. And now we have Commissioner Anderson. Welcome.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Does anyone have any questions, or do you have any to --

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

No. We fully support this resolution. Thankfully, it was added to the Capital Program.

And just as an update, we have had recent discussions with the Town of Brookhaven. We're verifying the actual final location, which, hopefully, will be at Calabro Airport. They're just looking at some deeds to make sure that when the land was purchased, there wasn't some type of covenant that would restrict that. But, other than that, the report is essentially done, and we're looking forward to getting this thing moving.

I would say we do need, obviously, construction funds, and we are looking everywhere we can to try and, you know, find them so we can go to construction. But this will go a long way to getting us moving and get the final design completed.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

When you say "final design," exactly where are we in the process?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

We've completed --

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

You know, when did this start, and how far along and how much further before you're like shovel ready, permits, funding, the whole thing?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Oh, right now, we are at a point where we can complete the -- excuse me -- the feasibility study. We just need to verify the actual location of the treatment plant. Once we have that, we can send the request to the State Comptroller for the rate, setting the rate, and we would have to do a referendum of the community to make sure that they're in favor of creating the district. That would take -- could take a year or two, just the process of getting the State Comptroller approval. Once we have that, and assuming we have an approved referendum and we have approved construction documents, that's -- DPW's role here is to move those -- you know, actually to final design. And assuming we have construction funds, it could be within three years we could break ground.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Anyone have any questions?

LEG. BROWNING:

No. I just want to say, you know, thank you, Adrienne, for coming. And, you know, I did speak with the Supervisor myself and I know that Gil had a meeting with our Councilman Panico, and I did -- over the weekend, I had a conversation with the Supervisor who is definitely very committed to making sure that we have space at the airport. So he did say that he was putting in a resolution, that there was going to be a resolution at the Town of Brookhaven to approve it, but I know there's some technical details they probably have to take care of.

But we recently had a meeting, I'm trying to remember when that last meeting was, and the room was packed. And I can tell you that the majority of the people that were there came up and wanted to know when it was going to happen. They wanted it to happen yesterday. And some of them were very disappointed to hear that it could take another three to four years before we get a shovel in the ground, so there has been a very strong community support. And, you know, people talk about the Forge River. This will make a significant difference for the community around the Forge River, because they're also included in the sewer district. So we need to do that.

We had the dredging, but it was only navigational dredging. There has been a slight improvement, I think, with the Forge River from, you know, the local residents who live around there, but this is something that -- it's a must. You know, we talked about the water quality, and the County Executive, you know, had his press conference on water quality, and, you know, we can't not be doing this. We're going to have to invest in the infrastructure to do these types of programs.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Anyone else? Just one more question. This would -- this is supposed to address and treat 30% of the nitrogen loading in the Forge River?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

One of the relatively recent changes to the project was including residential areas along the Forge River to eliminate the septic waste that essentially flows, you know, within a year or two directly into the Forge. Yes, it will.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

And I acknowledge doing something is better than doing nothing, but what about the other

two-thirds of the nitrogen loading that's contributing to, you know, Moriches Bay and Great South Bay?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Right. In this particular case, it's little steps. This will be the first phase of hopefully many more projects. Again, with no disrespect, Mastic is a poster child for sewers, and sewerage that peninsula is, you know, a priority to this Department. And I think you will see over the years, once we can find some funding for the construction and we can expand it, we will look to do that.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Commissioner, I just want to, you know, go over the funding a little bit. I noted here that it's an estimated 1.2 million dollar State grant that may be available or is available. And then, additionally, I guess, there's a resolution which we passed authorizing one million dollar serial bonds; comes out to like 2.2 million. What is the -- what is the anticipated total cost of the sewerage?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

The sewerage itself? The construction-wise I can get for you. I don't really know, but it's way more than this. This will enable us to begin the design, the final design plans, the construction documents.

LEG. BARRAGA:

I mean, I don't have a problem with this issue or any others with reference to sewerage Suffolk County. The challenge that you face is the economic one, the fiscal one. You know, where do you get the hundreds of millions -- no, I'm wrong -- the billions necessary to do this kind of work? I mean, you're doing it in stages, but every stage is extremely expensive.

I mean, I know what you and I went through with reference to taking a look at the feasibility of sewerage in northwest Islip, and Wyandanch, and Deer Park. We had those meetings, those hearings, and it looks to me like, minimum, a couple of billion dollars just to do a small area, and then we had a lot of kind of negative feedback from residents who were very concerned about the connection fee and the annual cost to them. And some cases, the people sat up and wanted to keep their cesspools, they just didn't want to touch this.

So, you know, these projects are all worthwhile, they're necessary for many reasons, especially from an economic perspective, but I'm very concerned about where down the road do we get the huge amount of monies needed to complete these projects.

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Again, we are -- this, again, is for the design of the project, the final construction plans. The hope is that should funding become available through the Federal Government, or possibly through some of the Sandy funding that's funneled -- you know, funneling through the State, that we will have, quote, unquote, shovel-ready -- a shovel-ready project that can take advantage of this. You're absolutely right, if -- you know, bearing the cost, the district bearing the cost alone makes it unaffordable. Without that extra funding, you can't do it.

LEG. BARRAGA:

Because the history of Suffolk County, when it comes to major capital projects, is not very good. I can remember, you know, 30 years ago, well, maybe more, yeah, a little more than 30 years ago with the Southwest Sewer District, you know, sitting there and hearing someone saying, "Well, we

can do this for 100 million, or 150 million, and all the legitimate reasons why it had to be done, and then, for a lot of different reasons, hit a billion dollars, and that's back in 1980, so -- well, let's go forward with this project and see what develops in years to come as far as the financial end of it.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you. And just a side note on that, or just to add to that, is any of the money that the County's bonding to put into this, just the study and the preliminary work, is any of that reimbursable at all under any kind of Federal funding?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

Again, at this point, no. But in discussions that we've had with agencies funding through Sandy, occasionally -- again, it's a case-by-case -- you can retroactively, you know, repay for work done. Most likely, it's no, but we do look at that when we have discussions with the authorities.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you. Anyone else? So we had a motion and a second?

LEG. BROWNING:

I believe I made the motion.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

All in favor? Against? Good. *(Vote: Approved 5-0-0-0)*

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

I.R. 1005 - Amending the 2014 Adopted Operating Budget and authorizing the payment of the County's proportionate share of the capital expenditures for improvements to the sewage treatment plant at Dorade, Suffolk County Sewer District No. 8 – Strathmore Ridge(Co. Exec.).

LEG. BROWNING:

I make a motion.

LEG. MURATORE:

Second.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

The motion and a second. Any discussion?

COMMISSIONER ANDERSON:

This project, Dorade is essentially a private treatment plant we connect under Sewer District 8 to. They expanded the plant. This will allow us to reimburse them our proportionate share of the cost of construction and expansion.

CHAIRMAN KRUPSKI:

Thank you. Any discussion? Motion and a second. All in favor? Denied -- I mean, opposed?
(Vote: Approved 5-0-0-0).

All right. We're adjourned. Thank you.

(The meeting was adjourned at 11:19 a.m.)