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**BROWNING TO CREATE YAPHANK DEVELOPMENT TASKFORCE**

***Proposal Raises Serious Environmental, Community, and Tax Concerns***

**Mastic, NY-** Legislator Kate Browning (WF-Shirley) has introduced legislation that would create the Yaphank Development Task Force to review Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy's massive plan to build one thousand units of housing and two five thousand seat arenas in Yaphank. The resolution will be before the Economic Development, Higher Education & Energy Committee today at 2pm in Hauppauge.

Legislator Browning, whose district is within the projects boundaries, was left out of three years of discussions with the developers, and has serious concerns about the proposed development's impact on the local school districts, emergency services, environment, and hamlet of Yaphank itself. Over 250 acres of Suffolk County property is being considered for development. Legislator Browning sat on the Yaphank Development Outreach Committee in 2006 that reviewed eleven proposals for the site and made recommendations for any future use of the property. Browning feels these recommendations were not honored.

"The committee spent a great deal of time putting together valuable input on what the community would accept at this site," stated Browning. "The most important recommendation was to preserve the historic value of Yaphank, which dates back hundreds of years and is vital to this small community. This development would drastically change the character of Yaphank and ignore those recommendations."

The development's proposed one thousand units of housing would virtually double the amount of housing currently in Yaphank, while only several miles away the hamlets of North Bellport, Mastic, Mastic Beach, Shirley, and Coram have a wealth of boarded/vacant and foreclosed homes in need of rehabilitation and homeowners. Ninety percent of the one thousand units would also be located entirely in the Longwood School District, which could add a substantial amount of children to the tax rolls. The dramatic increase of housing would also put a major strain on the Brookhaven Fire Department and South Country Ambulance Co., who will be responsible of absorbing almost all of the proposed housing units.

"The greater Longwood Community is certainly in favor of affordable housing for our region, however, we deeply resent not being part of any decision making process that will have such a great impact on our way of life for many years to come," stated Daniel Tomaszewski, Vice President of the Longwood Board of Education.

The development is also located in the Carmans River watershed, which at the present time a management plan is being developed for. These environmental concerns have raised major objections from various environmental groups throughout Suffolk County. The Yaphank Development Task Force would bring all of these entities to the table to take a hard look at the project before the Suffolk County Legislature hastily makes a decision to declare the property surplus.

"As one of the two resident members that sat on both committees that reviewed the Yaphank County Development, I strongly support Legislator Kate Browning's Resolution," stated Johan McConnell, President of the South Yaphank Civic Association. "I believe that the entire rural nature of the Yaphank

community will be destroyed if this project is allowed to go forward. The county has spent millions of dollars to preserve open space, so why is it now selling 250 acres it has owned since the 1960's."

The task force would consist of a representative from both local civic associations in Yaphank, a representative from the Longwood and South Country School Districts, a representative of the environmental community, a representative of organized labor, and four Suffolk County Legislators or their designee.

"We have hundreds of vacant homes that need to be rehabilitated that could be made available to homeowners at affordable prices," concluded Browning. "In fact, homes in Mastic Beach, Coram, or North Bellport could be made available at better prices than this development would. I am all for creating workforce housing, but let's do it where it is needed, which is not Yaphank."