

COUNTY OF SUFFOLK



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Public Safety Committee, Chair

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COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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Residents Tour Sewage Treatment Plant

Legislator Browning & Department of Public Works Educate Residents Ahead of Mastic/Shirley Project



(Waste Water Plant Supervisor John Mulligan, left, leads residents on tour of Miller Place treatment plant.)

Miller Place – As Suffolk County progresses with the design of a waste water treatment facility for the Mastic/Shirley peninsula, Legislator Kate Browning (WF-Shirley) and the Suffolk County Department of Public Works are working hard to educate residents about the need for sewerage the area and the expectations of living near a treatment plant. This past Saturday, May 7, residents were given a tour of an existing Suffolk County treatment plant in Miller Place in order to see firsthand the operation of a plant that exists adjacent to residential properties.

The Forge River is an estuary that has been identified as an impaired water body and is included in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) 303 (d) list for pathogens, nitrogen and dissolved oxygen/oxygen demand. The densely developed residential areas along the western part of the Forge River watershed that are included in the proposed Sewer District boundaries provide a significant environmental benefit, and led to the securing of funding for the creation of a sewer district and treatment plant from the New York State Clean Water State Revolving Fund (CWSRF) and federal funding from Super Storm Sandy.

“Improving and protecting water quality has been one of my biggest priorities over the last decade, and the Mastic/Shirley peninsula has been the poster child for why we need to sewer areas in Suffolk County,” stated Legislator Browning. “I began working towards creating and constructing a sewer district for the Forge River over nine years ago, and now that funding is in place and real progress is being made, we need to ensure residents are fully informed.”

The treatment technology evaluated and selected in the Feasibility Study that was conducted by Suffolk County for the area, the Membrane Bioreactor (MBR) process, is proven to achieve effluent nitrogen concentrations of between 3-5 mg/L, which significantly reduces the nitrogen load to the groundwater. As described in Section 2.4.2 of the Feasibility Study, over 97 percent of the properties within the study area are located within the Forge River watershed. The majority of the study area is comprised of residential parcels and over 80 percent of the wastewater flow that will be treated at the plant is anticipated to be generated by residential properties.

After many years and public meetings, as well as misinformation from a local civic organization, there have been concerns raised by residents near Brookhaven Calabro Airport, the proposed site for the treatment plant. Homeowners are fearful of noise, odors and truck traffic. In order to answer those questions and concerns, Legislator Browning has hosted several tours of existing treatment plants. The Miller Place plant that was toured this past weekend is very similar to the enclosed facility proposed for Mastic. Residents that took the tour were pleasantly surprised with the lack of odor and noise, as well the very close proximity to homes.

“I was very pleased on Saturday when I visited the Miller Place Sewer Treatment Facility,” stated Shirley resident April Cappola. “I expected to see a large industrial building with open pools of water that were creating some kind of terrible odor, but what I did find was a well-managed facility with staff who really explained the ins and outs of the sewer treatment process. I saw large grassy fields, a golf course and massive homes that actually towered over the land the facility sits on. There was no odor outside the premises, and what I did smell inside was not that bad at all, considering what actually happens in the building. Sewers are our future as long as we live on Long Island. I can understand residents' concerns, but I also know the future is all about going green and having a healthy environment. Our children are learning this every day, so by preparing and setting them up now; it is one of the best things we can do for them and their future.”

“Sewage treatment plants have made amazing advancements since the Southwest Sewer District was formed in the 1970's,” stated Legislator Browning. “The massive open air facilities are a thing of the past. The proposed facility for Mastic will be state-of-the-art. It will be fully enclosed, just like the Miller Place plant, and will not be higher than fifteen feet. I was happy to hear from the residents that attended that it was not what they expected, and they felt much more comfortable after experiencing the facility in person.”

Legislator Browning is urging residents to contact her office at 852-1300 if they are interested in future tours of a facility. Business owners from the local chamber of commerce will be touring a facility soon and members of the public are welcome.

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