



Workers install a septic tank in Nesconset. A plan in Suffolk would ease cesspool replacement.

# Proposal to ease cesspool rules

## Suffolk mulling changes to keep costs contained

BY RICK BRAND

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The administration of Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone offered Monday to ease proposed rules for replacement of failing cesspools to get its ambitious effort to combat nitrogen in groundwater underway.

Deputy County Executive Peter Scully said the administration would file four changes aimed at easing the cost of the initiative.

The administration wants the full county legislature to approve the plan at its Dec. 19 meeting.

The proposed changes surfaced in the legislature's environment and planning committee.

Last Monday, the 12-member Democratic legislative majority had huddled with Bellone aides over the issue of high costs that the county esti-

mates could eventually affect as many as 366,000 homeowners with aging cesspools.

Legis. Kevin McCaffrey, GOP caucus leader, said he has not seen the proposed changes but expressed concern they will not go far enough.

"We want to deal with the environmental issue, but it can't be an onerous and a heavy burden on homeowners," said McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst).

The original proposal required homeowners to replace cesspools with septic tanks after two failures beginning Jan. 1, 2019.

It also established for the first time a permit system for new septic systems.

Health officials said the plan would affect 5,000 to 9,000 homeowners annually. Industry officials put the cost at between \$2,000 to \$4,000 for replacement cesspools.

Industry and county officials said it would cost homeowners an additional \$2,000 to install a septic tank.

The new amendments would change the definition of cesspool failure from more than two pump-outs a year to four.

Also, the measures would eliminate the requirement that such cesspools be replaced, thereby allowing continued pump-outs.

The amendments also would delay requiring homeowners to obtain a permit for replacement cesspools from Jan. 1, 2019 to July 1, 2019.

The proposals also exempt homeowners in high-priority areas for connection to the Southwest Sewer District, which could protect low-income homeowners.

The environment committee voted to discharge Bellone's original proposal to the full legislature without recommendation. Committee members planned to review the administration's proposed changes, which were expected to be filed with the legislative clerk's office by the end of Monday.

Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copiague) said committee members were giving the administration "the benefit of the doubt."

"But we still have to see the specifics and make sure there are no unintended consequences."

## 3 Nassau police hailed for arrests

BY NICOLE FULLER

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A Nassau County police officer and two detectives were recognized Monday by the county legislature for making arrests in unrelated cases — a domestic violence suspect who tried to grab another cop's gun and a trio of suspected armed bank robbers.

Officer Richard Papa of the Second Precinct was named "Top Cop" for the month of November for his actions in the Feb. 14 assault on Berry Hill Road in Syosset, in which he used his stun gun to subdue a suspect who was yanking on another cop's service weapon during a scuffle, officials said.

And in a first that will become a regular monthly award highlighting the work of the department's detectives, lawmakers also recognized veteran Dets. Jason Gaertner and Lyndon John of the Robbery Squad for arresting three suspects in a trio of bank robberies that began on July 14.

Acting Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder credited the department's emphasis on training for Papa's quick thinking and the strong investigative skills of John and Gaertner, and thanked the legislature for its financial support of the police department.

"These two detectives were both cops of mine when I was a young sergeant; They hold that same energy today and love for this job as when they were cops," said Ryder at the ceremony. "It starts with cops like

Officer Papa doing that arrest and those detectives that are behind the scenes that do that investigation. They do it with the technology and support this board constantly gives us."

Papa was interviewing the assault victim when the suspect returned to the scene and began to struggle with another officer. The suspect tried to grab that officer's gun, said James McDermott, president of the Police Benevolent Association, who also attended.

Papa, a five-year veteran of the NYPD who became a Nassau cop in June 2016, "tried to restrain this perpetrator" but then used his stun gun, which quickly neutralized the suspect, McDermott said. "This could have went bad real quick," McDermott said. "We could have had police officers and civilians shot and killed."

Papa, whose grandfather and two uncles were police officers and has two cousins and a sister working as police officers, said "it was just natural to get the subject with the least amount of force possible into custody."

Papa said it was nice to receive an award. "Nassau County treats its cops well," Papa said.

Det. John Wighaus, president of the Detectives Association, said Gaertner and John's "relentless investigative skills" led to the arrests.

The detectives thanked officials for the awards, but declined to comment further, because the case is an active investigation.



Det. Jason Gaertner, Officer Richard Papa and Det. Lyndon John receive honors Monday from the Nassau County Legislature.