

Seeking a sewage plan

Coalition wants \$500G to study Fire Island system

BY RACHELLE BLIDNER
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Fire Island, home to scenic vistas and waterfront houses, is facing a problem that is anything but glamorous: an outdated sewage system.

Nearly 20 government agencies, nonprofits and elected officials have joined forces to improve upon Fire Island's patchwork sewage management system and investigate its impacts on the environment and public health, according to a report released Monday.

The Coalition for Fire Island Wastewater Solutions is seeking to undertake a planning study that outlines possible alternatives — including whether to expand a sewer system in Ocean Beach — in an effort to improve water quality. The coalition is seeking \$500,000 in state funding for the study.

The effort reflects broader attempts across Suffolk County to decrease nitrogen flowing from cesspools and septic systems, which has led to harmful algae blooms, beach closures and fish kills, officials have said.

"We can't just flush away the problem. We have to think about our impacts if we're going to stay on this island," Kaetlyn Jackson, Fire Island National Seashore's park planner, said of the barrier island.

The coalition began meeting



Construction on Ocean Beach's sewer treatment plant, shown Monday, will nearly double its efficiency.

in June after Ocean Beach officials started upgrading Fire Island's only sewage treatment plant. The \$7 million project will nearly double the efficiency of the plant — which serves 575 homes — and create excess capacity that neighboring areas could hook into, Village Clerk-Administrator Steve Brautigam said. An \$11 million project will also update the village's sewer collection system.

Connecting homes to Ocean Beach's sewer system could "reduce the levels of effluent that may be leaching directly into the bay," the report said.

The majority of the barrier island's 3,600 homes and businesses use cesspools and leaching fields, which do not filter

waste as well as they should, the report said. They can back up in rain and flooding conditions, likely leaving contaminants pooling in standing water on residents' lawns, officials said.

"We don't want people going to a national seashore and smelling sewage," said Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment.

Managing sewage is an issue across Suffolk, where about 360,000 homes are connected to cesspools and septic systems, the report said. Officials have encouraged residents to replace these systems with ones that emit less nitrogen through rebates.

"We have the capabilities of fixing that," said Legis. Steve Flot-

teron, who is part of the coalition. "If we don't, Long Island is going to die."

Only 6 percent of the nitrogen in the Great South Bay, Moriches Bay and Shinnecock Bay comes from Fire Island, the report said.

The barrier island's sandy soils allow fecal bacteria and viruses to travel quickly through groundwater, of which 80 percent flows into the bay, the report said. The water table is so high that older cesspools and septic systems may not be effective, the report added.

The sewage system does not impact the drinking water supply, which is pumped from Magothy Aquifer. Beaches are tested regularly and have not been closed due to contaminants, the report said.

Hempstead Village gets \$1.1M to fight poverty

BY JESSE COBURN
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New York State has awarded \$1.1 million in grants to projects aimed at fighting poverty and boosting economic opportunities in Hempstead Village.

The office of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo last week announced the nine projects in Hempstead Village that will receive the funding through the Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative, a statewide program designed to bolster 16 communities across New York State.

"I commend Hempstead for

their efforts to bring meaningful change to their community and I look forward to these programs delivering results," Cuomo said in a statement.

The grants in Hempstead include:

- \$110,000 for financial literacy coaching for poor and middle-income families
- \$110,000 to help prepare high school students for placement tests
- \$109,000 for substance abuse and mental health counseling for people who are poor or homeless
- \$98,000 for job training for

women who are at risk of incarceration or prior offenders

Village Mayor Don Ryan said there is no shortage of need for such programs in the village, where census data show that some 20 percent of the roughly 56,000 residents live in poverty.

"Clearly, in the Village of Hempstead we've had too many people who've been impacted by the cycle of poverty," he said.

"Any project that helps stop that trend and gets our young people onto a successful life track would be something that we would applaud."

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CLOSINGS

On Wednesday, in observance of a National Day of Mourning in honor of former President George H.W. Bush, who died Friday at the age of 94, Congress, federal offices and courts, including the U.S. Supreme Court, will be closed. The New York Stock Exchange and Nasdaq will be closed but banks and private businesses will be open for regular hours. Post offices will also be closed, but Express Mail delivery will be available. County, city and state government offices, courts and schools will be open.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

- 1791** Composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.
- 1792** George Washington was re-elected president; John Adams was re-elected vice president.
- 1901** Movie producer Walt Disney was born in Chicago.
- 1932** German physicist Albert Einstein was granted a visa, making it possible for him to travel to the United States.
- 1933** National Prohibition came to an end.