

MIDDLE ISLAND

They're pickin' up bad vibrations

Neighbors suspect nearby sand mine is causing houses to rattle

BY VERA CHINESE
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Residents David Pfister, left, at his home, and Gail Lynch-Bailey. ■ Video: newsday.com/suffolk

Sequence of events

- **Coram Materials**, a sand mining operation in Miller Place, switched from a diesel-powered operation to one powered through the electric grid in spring 2018.
- **Neighbors noticed** vibrations in their homes soon after and notified the state Department of Environmental Conservation. The company commissioned a seismograph study in November 2018, which did not detect ground vibrations.
- **The company said** it is seeking an acoustical engineering firm to conduct another study and continues to investigate the issue.

vibrations occurred between 7 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays and suspected there was a link between his shaking home and the Miller Place-Yaphank Road mine. Both have lived in their homes — which are several hundred feet from the 30-year-old operation — for 15 years and said they never experienced the effects before.

Pfister contacted the state DEC in November 2018 to investigate the matter.

A DEC spokeswoman said

the agency is still working with PSEG and Coram Materials to determine the cause. “As always, we encourage anyone with additional information or concerns to contact DEC,” she said.

A PSEG spokeswoman said the problem did not appear to be on the utility’s end.

“There are no issues with our equipment. We have tested and there were no problems with the voltage readings,” she said in an email.

“We have never come across the electric distribution system causing vibrations.”

Coram Materials last year commissioned a seismograph study, but the study did not record any ground vibrations. Brown said the next step will be for the company to seek proposals from an acoustical engineering firm to further evaluate the issue.

Meanwhile, both Bishop and Pfister said the shaking is unbearable at times and have noticed cracks in their walls and nails popping out of Sheetrock. They are both anxious to see it resolved.

“What is causing this? Is there any potential health effects?” Pfister said. “Do we have to worry about the foundation cracking? Do we have to worry about the house walls coming down?”

Around LI

Septic upgrade rebates raised

East Hampton Town has increased the amount it will rebate property owners who replace aging septic systems with nitrogen-reducing systems to further incentivize the initiative.

The systems are intended to cut down on nitrogen pollution from wastewater though critics have cautioned the systems don’t address other forms of nitrogen pollution, such as from fertilizer or stormwater.

The town will now offer up to \$20,000 to those in water protection districts and those who meet affordable housing requirements set by the Suffolk County Consortium HOME Improvement Program. All others will be eligible for up to \$15,000. The previous amounts were \$16,000 and \$10,000 respectively.

The rebates will be funded through the Community Preservation Fund, which is generated from a 2 percent tax on real estate transfers in the five East End towns of East Hampton, Southampton, Riverhead, Southold and Shelter Island. The town rebates are in addition to those offered by the county and state.

— VERA CHINESE

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