

LONG ISLANDSUFFOLK

Suffolk offers small businesses grants for sewer connection



Suffolk County Legislator Jim Mazzarella, who sponsored a bill authorizing the grant program, attends a news conference in Blue Point in January. Credit: Newsday / Steve Pfost

By Vera Chinese[@vera.chinese@newsday.com](mailto:vera.chinese@newsday.com)[@VeraChinese](https://www.newsday.com/@VeraChinese) Updated May 25, 2023

Suffolk County is offering grants of up to \$15,000 for small businesses looking to connect to the county's sewer systems.

The initiative is one of several efforts to expand sewers and improve water quality in Suffolk, where three-quarters of properties are served by outdated septic systems and cesspools that do not reduce nitrogen pollution.

The \$1 million pilot program will be funded through the county's Water Quality Protection and Restoration Program Fund, which is part of the existing Drinking Water Protection Program, funded by 1/4% sales tax.

Property owners must bear the individual costs of connecting to the system. County officials estimate the grants will fund half the connection costs. The program will steer applicants toward Dime Community Bank for loans to cover the rest.

Applications for the grants can be made beginning this fall.

The program is expected to help 65 businesses with 25 or fewer employees, county officials said during a news conference Wednesday. Businesses must meet other requirements, including not having any open property tax liens.

It's the first such program for business owners interested in tapping into Suffolk's wastewater treatment systems. County and state grants remain available for homeowners looking to install individual high-tech septic systems.

The bill authorizing the small business program was sponsored by Legis. Jim Mazarella (R-Moriches) and approved by the county legislature May 2.

Mose Costigliola, co-owner of Mama Lisa Restaurant on Montauk Highway, which hosted the news conference, said he will be among the first to apply. His Mastic business is in the Forge River Watershed Sewer District where a [\\$225 million sewer project](#) is underway.

“We have a cesspool system outside that costs us a lot of money every month, and sometimes it gets over-flooded,” Costigliola said. “It [sewers] is going to be less expensive and it's going to be environmentally friendly.”

A long-term solution to expand sewer systems in Suffolk could cost billions, with revenue coming from a proposed 1/8-cent sales tax increase.

A bill authorizing the county to put the tax hike on the November ballot cleared the State Legislature this year, but county legislators have not signaled whether it will be on the ballot.



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