

NEWS FROM Legislator

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## Local Residents Updated on Status of the Southwest Sewer District Service Area Expansion Study

*(WEST BABYLON, NY... February 27, 2012)* – The first of three public meetings regarding the possible expansion of the Southwest Sewer District Service Area into the hamlets of Deer Park, North Babylon, West Babylon, Wyandanch and West Islip was recently held at Suffolk County's Bergen Point Sewage Treatment Plant.

Over 70 residents and members of local civic associations attended the meeting, including Suffolk County Legislators Lou D'Amaro (D-North Babylon), Wayne Horsley (D-Babylon) and Steve Stern (D-Huntington), who all co-sponsored the original legislation authorizing the feasibility study with Legislators DuWayne Gregory (D-Amityville) and Tom Barraga (R-West Islip).

"The meeting was very informative," said Legislator D'Amaro. "I thank both the project consultants, who clearly detailed the objectives of the study, and the members of the public, who attended and asked several pertinent questions. As I have always maintained, even after the study is completed later this year, no decisions concerning actual sewer construction will be made without community input and support. At that time, more public hearings will be held throughout the area to fully detail the findings."

During the meeting, Project Manager Jeff Butler, from the engineering firm Gannett Fleming, gave a detailed presentation outlining the scope and objectives of the study, which will include information

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about how sewer installation in our area would impact downtown revitalization, housing and economic development opportunities, and ground/surface water protection. The report will also map the locations of failing on-site septic systems and identify environmentally sensitive areas, both of which play pivotal roles in determining the priority communities for sewer hookups.

The study area is comprised of 9,461 acres, or about 15 square miles. It encompasses 18,098 parcels, 90% of which are residential, containing a population of approximately 100,000. The experts estimated that, should the project ultimately move forward, the Bergen Point facility will have to process an additional 12-15 million gallons of wastewater flow per day, assuming all parcels within the study area connect. Suffolk County Department of Public Works officials noted that Bergen Point is presently being expanded to a capacity of 40 million gallons so it will be able to accommodate the added wastewater flow associated with this project.

“It makes perfect sense to do a comprehensive study for these five communities given the sewage capacity expansion project presently slated for the Bergen Point treatment facility,” said D’Amaro. “This guarantees that there will be enough room to hookup these areas into the existing infrastructure system without the need to build a costly new plant. The communities are also all adjacent to the Southwest Sewer District, making them geographically prime locations for sewer expansion.”

“I am excited about the opportunity to explore sewerage in these areas and look forward to reviewing the results of the study,” added Legislator Gregory.

Mr. Butler explained that the consultants will be utilizing the most recent construction data and formulas to determine the costs for this project, which are based on several factors. They include: sewer piping depth/diameter, the amount of land acquisition required for construction and the cost projections associated with utilities. The final report will include an estimate of how much it will cost each homeowner in the study area to hookup. Should the project move forward, several funding options may be available to curtail these costs, such as Federal U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grants, State funds, downtown revitalization block grants and the possibility of a public/private financing partnership.

“The fact that approximately 70% of Suffolk County remains unsewered means that all of the great things we want and need to accomplish: economic development, creating good-paying jobs, keeping our young people here on Long Island with affordable housing, and protecting our precious drinking

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water and environment remains elusive,” said Legislator Stern. “Expanding our sewer infrastructure is the key to our future, and in our new reality of ‘doing more with less,’ now is the time to move forward with a new model that will create a partnership with business and provide Suffolk County taxpayers with a lot more bang for their buck.”

“Legislator D’Amaro has taken a leadership role in working towards sewerage the north end of Babylon Town,” added Legislator Horsley. “When successful, Babylon will become the first town in the County to be entirely sewerage. This will be a win-win for both our economy and our environment.”

The draft project feasibility report is due in July, at which time the second public hearing will be scheduled to discuss the preliminary findings. This meeting will allow community members the opportunity to ask further questions and make comments prior to the publication of the final report in August. A third public hearing, to be held in September, will then follow. Residents from the communities within the study area are encouraged to visit <http://swsuffolksewers.org>, a County website created specifically to relay the most current information about this project.

“If the study’s findings favor taxpayers, then sewer installation would be very positive for both homeowners, who could see their property values increase, and for local businesses, who have also been clamoring for sewers in their ongoing efforts to expand and simultaneously reduce high septic system costs,” said D’Amaro. “However, at the end of the day, it will be up to the residents themselves to determine if this project makes sense from an economic standpoint. The community will have a substantial role in this process and it is important to know that decisions will not be made for you, but with you as we work cooperatively together throughout this venture.”

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*Suffolk County Legislator Lou D’Amaro (D-North Babylon) represents the 17<sup>th</sup> Legislative District, which includes parts of Huntington Station, South Huntington, Huntington, West Hills, Melville, Dix Hills, Deer Park, North Babylon and West Babylon. He is Chairman of the Budget & Finance committee, Vice-Chairman of the Environment, Planning & Agriculture committee, and a member of the Human Services and Public Safety committees of the Suffolk County Legislature.*