

The check is (sort of) in the mail

*Funding for Patchogue Village pump station
in works*

By LINDA LEUZZI

It came directly from State Senator Lee Zeldin's (R, C-Shirley) lips.

"It looks likely we will be able to secure the \$1 million for the pump station that was defunded on Dec. 21 by the former Democratic majority," he told the *Long Island Advance* Tuesday night.

That confirmation came directly from Senate Majority Leader Dean Skelos' spokesperson Scott Reif. "We're going to ensure that this project gets funded," Reif told the *Advance* at press time. "We're in the process of initiating and will expedite it to make sure the money flows this year."

The dangling question about the \$1 million funding for the East Patchogue pump station, secured by former Senator Brian X. Foley (D-Blue Point), then yanked after last year's election, had Patchogue Village officials holding their breath. Lateral connectors to the sewer lines in East Patchogue are currently being installed, said Patchogue Village Mayor Paul Pontieri. They would be completed by mid-June and then the roads would be repaved.

The new pump cost \$2.5 million; \$1 million was to come from the state senate funds. The other \$1.5 million is to be funded through a Town of Brookhaven bond with a portion of that to be reimbursed to the village through the new sewer-line fees.

All vital to an area that is about to pop including the demolition of the Plaza Theatre eyesore. Councilman Tim Mazzei (5th District) pushed through funds for the connecting work and Supervisor Mark Lesko and the town board approved the issuance of \$3.5 million in bonds last March for the

construction of an East Patchogue Sewer District in record time.

"It had to be built," Pontieri said of the 30-year-old station currently there. "The old pump station had many problems because of the amount of restaurants we have. Suffolk County Board of Health directed us to build it to the size we need, which would handle 100,000 gallons of wastewater a day, and this allows us to extend the activity on Main Street into East Patchogue."

Zeldin met with Pontieri, Mazzei, and Brookhaven Town Supervisor Mark Lesko on Friday to see how they could broker a deal for a neighborhood landscape that is about to change with the new 272 Village Square project, take down of the old True Value, and the Plaza Theatre demise.

Patchogue Village basically has to file a new application, Zeldin explained. "The previous project was essentially killed by the defunding of December 21," he said.

Pontieri explained he received a call late Tuesday afternoon from Zeldin Chief of Staff Chris Molluso; Molluso emailed the Dormitory Authority applications to Pontieri's office.

"We're working on them this morning to get them into place," Pontieri said yesterday. "Lee worked very hard on this and he's to be commended on fixing a problem that had to be fixed. We can basically take the application that was approved and regenerate it."

The two applications, each for a \$500,000 Dormitory Authority grant, are from different funds sources from the first go round that were to come from the New York Economic Capital Program and Strategic Investment Program funds respectively.

State senate funding for pump station in works

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Zeldin explained the chronological steps. "They send it to our office," he said. "We're going to work with the Senate Finance Office. I'm getting the applications packaged with approval letters from the senate and then it goes to the Dormitory Authority. They process it and hopefully within a week send a letter that this is done. Then it's a matter of coordinating the payout between now and November. We'll coordinate to make sure it's done in that time."

Key in the scenario were meetings with State Senator Dean Skelos (R-Rockville Center). Zeldin was holed up with the new Senate Majority Leader this week. "Robert Mojica, Senator Skelos' finance director really has been my MVP in the process," he said.

Thirteen projects in Zeldin's district to the tune of \$4.6 million were defunded after last November's election, he said. Both Zeldin and Mazzei reiterated to the *Advance* that former Senator Foley (D-Blue Point) didn't know about the pump station defunding as has Foley.

"I don't think he knew about it until he saw it in the *Advance*," Zeldin said of the February 10 article outlining the entire defunding dilemma. "The Dormitory Authority grants can be processed and approved without a line item," he said. "Other types need a line item so there are several million that were never signed into law," he added, commenting he was working with other groups grappling to get funding that was ousted.

Supervisor Mark Lesko was a bit more candid. "Lee Zeldin, Tim Mazzei and I have worked relentlessly on this issue and we are all in agreement that the former Senate Democratic leadership swept the money away after the election and I'm thankful that Senator Zeldin and Senator Skelos made this situation right, not just for Patchogue but for the Town of Brookhaven. It's the linchpin in our Bright to Light Program. This is an excellent example of leaders working across the aisle when it comes to economic development." ■