

## EDITORIAL

# Albany stumbles on reassessment

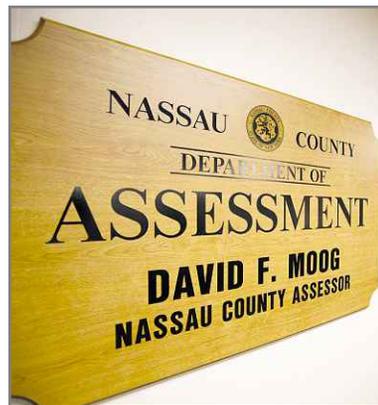
## An ill-considered bid for Nassau relief

The Nassau County real property tax assessment system is so complex that even experts get confused, and New York's Senate Democrats, even the ones from Nassau, mostly aren't experts.

So putting a plan in their State Senate budget proposal to help the county with its reassessment troubles without consulting experts, or even county officials, was a lousy idea.

"I have requested more supporting information in order to better understand the bill," Nassau Executive Laura Curran said in a statement last week, pointing out that the county was not consulted before the lawmakers hastily rushed a scheme to have all of New York State soften the blow to Nassau residents whose property taxes might rise. And she might actually benefit from such a plan.

Curran, a Democrat, is trying to muscle through an accurate assessment roll. Her predecessor, Republican Edward Mangano, froze the roll and began granting automatic assessment reductions to nearly anyone who appealed for them in 2011. The freeze created a huge and unfair imbalance, as those who grieved their taxes each year saw their taxes reduced further and further below what they owed, and those who did not grieve saw their taxes increased further and further above what they owed. A Newsday investigation pegged the shift at \$1.7 billion.



BARRY SLOAN

But Curran says an immediate change to everyone paying exactly what they owe around the same time the new \$10,000 federal limit on deductions for state and local income and property taxes hits would destabilize the county and its real estate market. Instead, she asked the State Legislature to approve a five-year phase-in to slow the increase of the burden for those who've been underpaying and the decrease for those who've been overpaying. That move is in the proposed budgets of both the Senate and Assembly

and has the support of Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo. But even with that phase-in, the reassessment has enraged many homeowners projected to get an increase, and Curran's Republican opposition has been quick to pander to those fears.

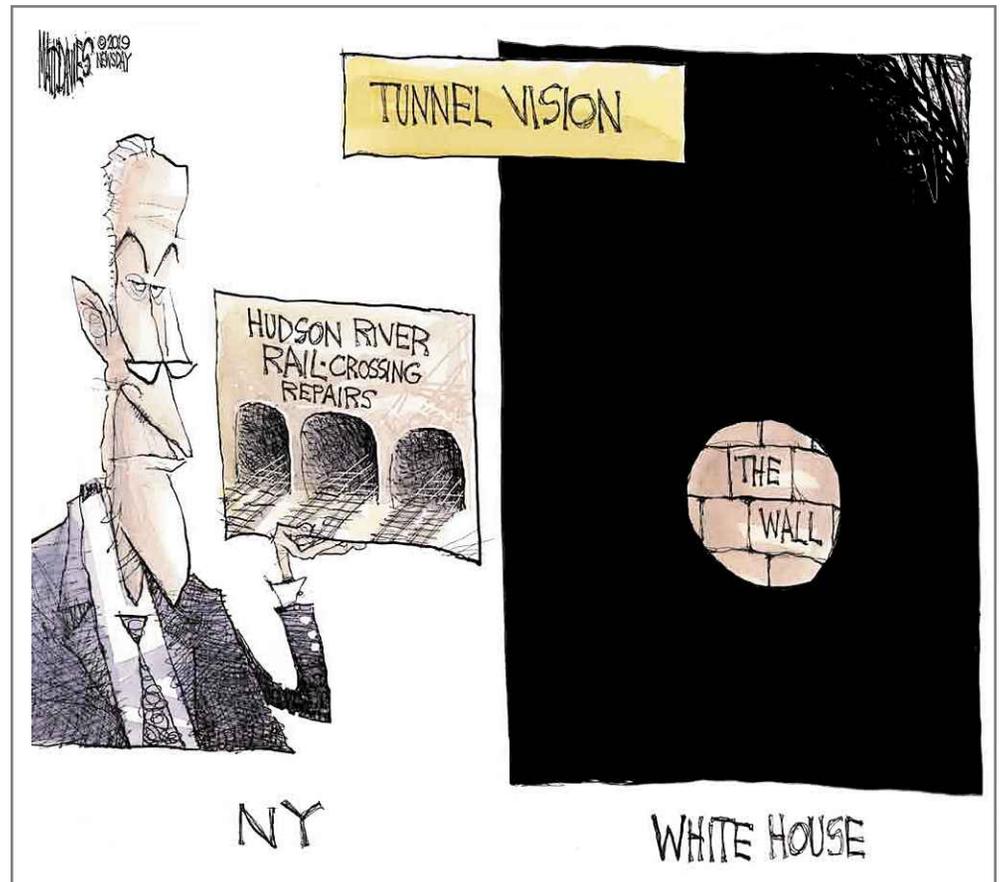
Enter several Nassau County's Democratic senators and their conference leaders. They were looking to snag some suburban voter love after staying silent as the Amazon deal fell apart and failing to use their leverage to get the Assembly to agree to a permanent property tax cap. Instead, they lost even more credibility. Their plan would slow even further the rate at which those underpaying see increases, by using county sales taxes and a 3-to-1 match from the state to grant this relief. Yet it would do nothing to speed the decreases for those who will continue to overpay.

State budget director Robert Mujica, who states every other minute that there is not enough money in the pot for health care, education and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, said of the plan, "There is no funding for Nassau's tax assessment." Besides, the New York City-centric Assembly would never agree to send another \$200 million to one of the richest counties in the United States.

And lastly, how long will it have taken non-Nassau lawmakers to remember that the county got a \$100 million state bailout in 2000 to fix the very same problem that remains unfixed two decades later?

— *The editorial board*

## MATT DAVIES



NEWSDAY/MATT DAVIES

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## LETTERS

### Encouraged by wind power efforts

I'm a junior biology major at Stony Brook University and I'm looking at a lot more years of a climate change in my future than most legislators, editorialists or power executives. I'm relieved to see your editorial in favor of wind power, but getting our entire economy fossil free as it needs to be is still going to be a long haul ["Communities have a role in wind power," Editorial, March 11].

We need not only to slow the growth of fossil fuel, but also to cut it back significantly, and soon. Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo has the right goals in place: a 50 percent to 70 percent renewable electric supply by 2030, 9,000 megawatts of offshore wind power in place by 2035 and a carbon-neutral electric grid by 2040. There's going to be more conflict as we

move toward fossil-free energy across all sectors.

I welcome the sanity heralded by the Newsday editorial to get us through all the tough fights that are to come. Let Long Island be the model for how other localities manage the inevitable dislocation of changing our dirty economy to a clean, green one.

Dale Speer,  
Glendale

**Editor's note:** The writer is a member of the Stony Brook University chapter of the Sierra Club environmental organization.

### Concerns on Nassau reassessment

The goal of assessment is to value a property as closely as possible to its fair market value, the price the property would sell for in a normal sale. The truest fair market value is an ac-

tual sale. As I understand it, the reassessment used recent nearby sales adjusted for such things as square footage, rooms, etc. to estimate a fair market value for any property. These sales are all neighborhood sales.

Now the county is adding a neighborhood adjustment to compensate for locations that are more or less desirable ["Resetting home values," News, Feb. 24]. This changes the estimated fair market value. I see this as double-dipping. The actual sales in the neighborhood that were used to set the fair market value before the neighborhood adjustment automatically include a neighborhood adjustment, since the actual sales occurred in the actual neighborhood.

Using a redundant neighborhood adjustment is a systematic distortion introduced by mistake during