

Bond fight a bundle of trouble



**POLITICS
& POWER**

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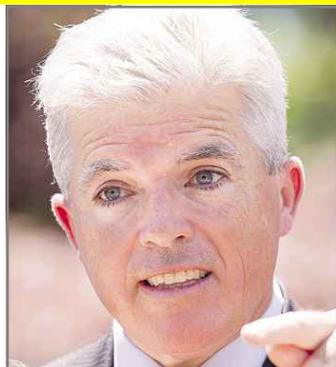
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The battle between Democratic County Executive Steve Bellone and Republican legislators over the bundling of bonds went to the dogs last week, literally.

On Tuesday, all minority Republicans and one Democrat, Sarah Anker, toured the kennel for police dogs. Bellone wants to borrow \$150,000 to draw plans for a replacement, which is expected to cost \$1.5 million.

Later, Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), minority leader, said he backed replacement but said plans could be done in-house for less. "You don't need \$150,000 to plan for a kennel," Cilmi said.

Two days later, in a news conference in Amityville, Bellone, flanked by union and construction industry leaders, criticized the GOP for blocking funding



Steve Bellone

for projects, including sidewalks on County Road 1 outside a senior citizens apartment complex in Amityville.

Without action, Bellone declared, "Our residents will suffer unpaved roads and cracked sidewalks."

The broadsides were the latest in a monthlong battle in which Bellone and GOP lawmakers have traded charges of partisan politics over the county executive's unilateral

decision to bundle bonding resolutions for various capital projects. That changed a 40-year policy in which borrowing resolutions have been done separately for each capital project.

Bellone's action came after the GOP last fall won a seventh legislative seat, enough to keep the 11-member Democratic majority from mustering the two-thirds vote needed to pass bonds.

Yet until Bellone began bundling last month, the GOP had backed 35 of 42 capital projects. Since then, 41 projects have stalled.

"Republicans are displaying politics at its worst," Bellone said. "We are not going to allow these things to be held hostage to the whim of the minority caucus."

Cilmi countered: "Republicans . . . are not waging a partisan political battle here. . . . The county executive has the power to get projects moved forward, if he'd only do them as individual bonds."

Bellone's news conference was his third on the issue.

Earlier, he had strafed Republicans for blocking borrowing to fund a \$2 million app to combat school shooters and mobile police data units for sector cars.

Bellone also has sent out taxpayer-funded mailings to 2,940 homes in areas where projects were held up. He promised to "do everything in my power" to push the projects forward at the legislative meeting July 17.

Democrats also accuse Republicans of disingenuousness because they vote to appropriate money for each project, but vote against bonding without alternatives to pay for projects.

Bellone says bundling is a "best practice" used by other towns and counties, and that it will save money.

Republicans say Bellone is trying to force lawmakers to give blanket approval on all projects, reducing oversight.

Promises of savings are bogus, Republicans say, because contracts with outside bond counsel

do not permit charging for work on bond resolutions.

"You may save money bundling home and car insurance with Progressive, but you don't save money bundling bonds," said Legis. Kevin McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst).

A similar battle went on in Nassau County for seven months in 2016 when legislative Democrats blocked \$50 million in capital projects to force creation of an independent office to probe county contracts. Democrat Laura Curran, then a legislator and now county executive, ultimately switched sides, expressing concern that Nassau could lose grant funding.

Mark Herbst, executive director of the Long Island Contractors Association, which represents heavy-construction general contractors, appeared at Bellone's Tuesday news conference, but chided "petty politics" on both sides.

"I'm not looking to attack anyone," Herbst said later. "We just want to see the work get done."

Village marks 4 pieces of history

BY SABRINA ESCOBAR
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An eclectic group of buildings has been added to the Village of Westbury Heritage Trail.

The four structures carry religious, historical, commercial or regional significance for the village, said Mayor Peter I. Cavallaro. They were incorporated at a plaque-unveiling ceremony Saturday morning.

"All of the sites in their own way have a lot of merit and are recognized in one reason or other," Cavallaro said.

The Episcopal Church of the Advent, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, Early Westbury Public School and Westbury Neighborhood House are new members of the heritage trail, and passersby can read about their history on the yellow and blue plaques erected in front of them.

Each building recognized Saturday has a different significance for the village, said Gary

Monti, chairman of the village's Historic Preservation Commission.

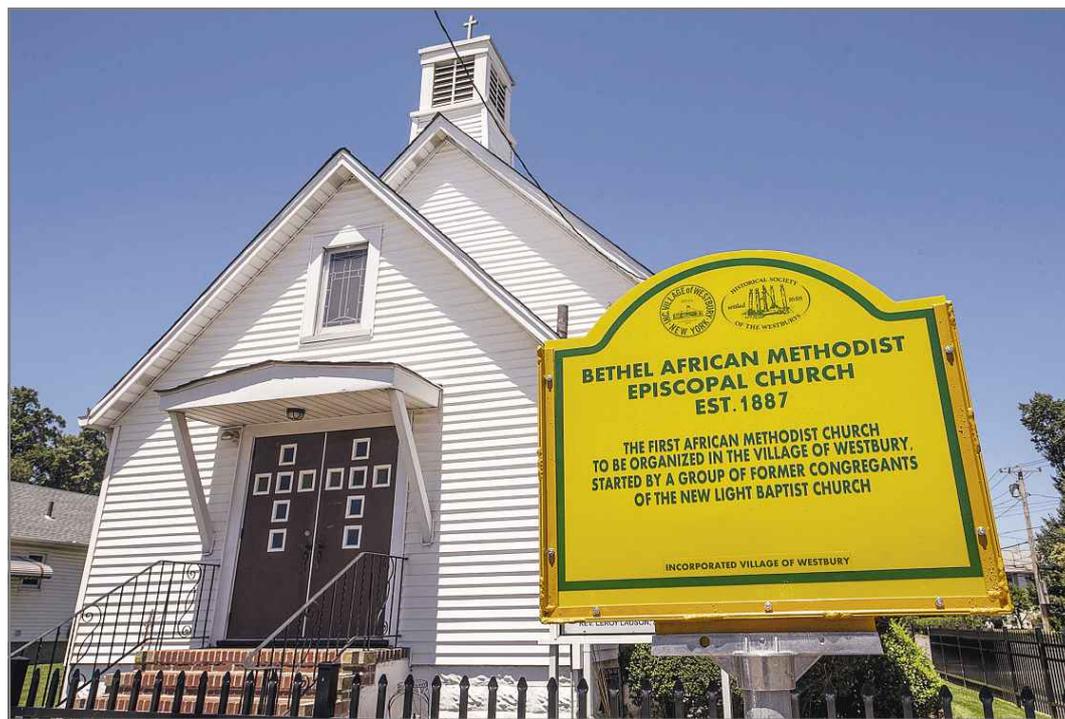
The Episcopal Church of the Advent, built in 1910, is architecturally significant because it was designed by John Pope Russell, the architect of the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, Monti said.

"I think it's one of the most beautiful churches," said Carmen Lloyd, a church warden. "It's just a quiet place when you just need to go and pray."

The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, built in 1887, has historical significance, according to Monti, because it was the first African Methodist church in the area.

The Early Westbury Public School, built in 1857, had local significance because the three buildings, now located in front of the Robert Bacon Memorial Children's Library, were some of the earliest school buildings in the district, Monti said.

The Westbury Neighborhood House was built in 1916,



The Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was marked as a historical site in Westbury.

and has since provided social services to the community, including nursing services, food pantries, holiday dinners and toy drives, Monti said.

"It was a very nice thing, you know, that we were noticed and appreciated for what we do,"

said Ray Muntz, president of the house's board directors.

Cavallaro began work on the Incorporated Village of Westbury Heritage Trail two years ago in the wake of a series of downtown revitalization projects. He wanted to com-

memorate the village's history, which can be traced to Quaker farmers who settled in the area in the 1600s.

"While we're doing things for the future which are great and necessary, we want to recognize our past," he said.