

New official under fire

Inspector general did not disclose IDA contracts

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Two Oyster Bay town board members called on Sunday for the new inspector general to resign for not disclosing past contracts with the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency.

In a joint written statement, Councilwoman Rebecca Alesia and Councilman Anthony Macagnone said Brian Noone, who was appointed inspector general on Jan. 8 to oversee town contracting, should step down or the town board should rescind his appointment. They cited a Newsday story published online that included details of the contracts, saying it raised questions about his suitability.

“He did not disclose this information even after being asked by the hiring committee multiple

times about government affiliations and relationships of that nature,” they said in the statement, adding Noone should have known the IDA contracts would be of interest to the town.

“As a candidate for a job ferreting out impropriety, failure to reveal a municipal contract during the interview process indicates that Noone was not candid or transparent,” Alesia and Macagnone said in the statement.

In a statement Sunday, Noone said he has “been honest, transparent and forthright throughout my career” and would respond to any future questions by the town board.

“While the search committee asked questions regarding my political affiliation, it did not ask for a list of entities for which my company performed work,” Noone said in the statement, adding, “I look forward to working with all members of the town board.”

Town officials did not comment Sunday.

Noone previously worked as



Oyster Bay inspector general Brian Noone was sworn in Jan. 8.

an outside consultant for the Nassau County Industrial Development Agency where he was among its highest-paid vendors, records show. State and IDA records show he and his company The Noone Group were paid \$564,750 for consulting on homeland security and cybersecurity from 2011 through 2017. Most of the payments were made directly to Noone, not his company, the records show.

Noone said in an interview last week the work involved trying to attract tech businesses to Long Island “with the tax breaks and incentives that were being offered through Nassau County.”

“But in a lot of the companies . . . they were just very comfortable in staying where they were at the time,” he said. “Some of the stuff didn’t materialize.”

IDA resolutions show Noone was hired on an as-needed basis reporting to then-IDA executive director Joseph Kearney. Kearney declined to comment.

The term for the inspector general was supposed to be for three years under the town code, but Noone was appointed to serve 23 months instead, starting the \$135,000-per-year position on Jan. 31.

The change to a 23-month term was made so that Noone’s tenure was not tied to town elections, Oyster Bay spokeswoman Marta Kane said in an email.

“A two-year term bolsters the independence of the office,” she wrote. Noone was sworn in at

the Jan. 8 meeting, but won’t start on the job until Jan. 31. Kane said in an email that the later start date was “based on his availability to begin work.”

The truncated term came as a surprise to Noone. “I thought it was three” years, Noone had said in an interview Thursday.

Kane said in an email the town board “anticipates amending the original code to ensure concurrent terms do not occur.”

After his appointment to Oyster Bay, the Nassau County Police Department said Noone would leave an unpaid position as assistant commissioner to which he had been appointed by former County Executive Edward Mangano.

“Since we have not required [Noone’s] services and since he will be appointed to the town . . . we have requested his resignation so there is no conflict of interest,” a police spokesman said in an email.

Noone said on Thursday it had been an honorary position and he had resigned.

Divvying up the budget’s water-cleanup funds

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
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ALBANY — Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo’s \$2.5 billion proposal to fix drinking water, sewer and pollution problems on Long Island and statewide was one of the biggest items in his budget address last week, but advocates say they hope the problems it aims to fix aren’t even bigger.

“We need to invest in clean, safe drinking water,” Cuomo said Tuesday in his budget address. “We have a \$2.5 billion investment to replace infrastructure all across the state.”

Officials on the front lines of the growing concern credit Cuomo for focusing on the problem after decades in which, they said, the state paid too little attention. In 2018, for example, Cuomo led the effort to create the first \$2.5 billion program under the Clean Water Infrastructure Act, which is already devoted to projects ranging from contaminated wells on Long Island to century-old pipes in some upstate cities.

One of the pressing projects being funded by the 2018 program is near Bethpage. There, a 600-acre site was operated by Northrop Grumman and the U.S. Navy from the 1930s to the mid-1990s, manufacturing aircraft from World War II fighters to the Apollo moon lander. Now, families are blaming cancer cases on the residue that remains in the soil and water.

“The discussion has gone on for decades,” Cuomo said Tuesday. “It is a toxic chemical that is moving through Long Island, steadily moving towards the coast. It is poisoning the wells as it goes. . . . Grumman doesn’t want to pay, the Navy

doesn’t want to pay. Let us say we’ll do the remediation and then we’re going to sue you to get the money back.”

The expected massive cost hasn’t yet been determined. In 2017, construction alone of a containment and treatment system was estimated at \$150 million.

The state will soon release an expanded engineering and groundwater study to present options for containment of the plume, now nearly four miles long and two miles wide in the underground aquifer, the Cuomo administration said. Public hearings will be held.

“I think the governor is absolutely right that the aquifers are

in danger, so I appreciate aggressive action in that area,” said state Sen. Todd Kaminsky (D-Long Beach), chairman of the Senate Environmental Conservation Committee.

Now, however, Cuomo’s budget proposal for another \$2.5 billion over five years translates to \$500 million in the 2019-20 fiscal year for projects statewide, with a plan to fulfill the additional \$2 billion promise if all goes well in the coming years’ fiscal plans.

Just where that \$500 million would be spent isn’t yet determined, according to the Cuomo administration. Communities will have to apply for the funds on the merits of their plans and needs, and there are many.

“We definitely want to thank the governor for continuing to provide aid at levels not seen in decades,” said Ty Fuller, chairman of the Long Island Water Conference. “But it’s hard to say if the additional funds will be enough . . . treatment and ongoing maintenance and operations is very costly.”

“It is a toxic chemical that is moving through Long Island, steadily moving towards the coast.”
— Gov. Mario Cuomo
on plume at former Navy and Grumman site