

Curran plans reassessment

■ **Nassau exec wants all properties done this year**

■ **Appoints a task force to shepherd the effort**

BY CELESTE HADRICK AND MATT CLARK
celeste.hadrick@newsday.com
matt.clark@newsday.com

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said Tuesday she expects to complete a full reassessment of all properties in the county by the time a new tentative tax roll is issued on Jan. 1, 2019.

The full reassessment will build on an already completed review of county values by two outside appraisal firms, she said. The state will add key data, while an in-house task force and a new “assessment czar” will guide the effort,

county officials added.

Curran was scheduled to outline her plans in a speech to the Nassau County Village Officials Association at the Westbury Manor Tuesday night.

“The assessment system is in a shambles,” Curran said in prepared remarks.

She pointed to *Newsday*’s “on point” reporting about the decision by the administration of former County Executive Edward Mangano to freeze assessment increases while granting reductions, year after year, to property owners and tax appeal firms that filed challenges. The result was increased taxes for those property owners who did not appeal.

An 18-month *Newsday* investigation, which included an extensive series of data analyses, revealed how Nassau County’s sweeping tax overhaul had in effect created two different

property assessment systems — separate and unequal — and a \$1.7 billion shift in tax burden overwhelmingly onto lower-valued homes and office buildings.

The investigation found that owners of politically connected tax-appeal businesses were chosen to help craft the overhaul, which stimulated an estimated \$500 million in business for such firms.

It also found the overhaul largely reversed years of effort to improve the accuracy and fairness of Nassau’s assessments, which began with the county’s 2000 settlement of a lawsuit alleging it had overtaxed homeowners in minority communities.

Nassau had updated values after the 2003 countywide reassessment until Mangano, a Republican, froze assessment increases in 2011.

Curran, a Democrat, has created an assessment task force composed of Chief Deputy County Executive Helena Williams; deputy county executive for finance Mark Page; deputy county executive for compliance John Chiara; County Attorney Jared Kasschau; legislative Republican Majority Counsel Chris Ostuni; and Democratic legislative minority counsel Peter Clines.

Curran noted that two local appraisal firms, hired under Mangano, had done a “systematic review” of the county’s assessments. She said the state office of real property tax services has agreed to assist Nassau in providing data about costs and depreciation.

Curran spokesman Michael Martino also said Curran had hired an assessment czar, Ann Margaret Barriga. She had

worked previously on assessment for former Democratic County Executive Thomas Suozzi, who now represents the Third Congressional District.

Presiding officer Richard Nicoletto (R-New Hyde Park) said of the planned reassessment, “Whatever is proposed must be fair to the already overburdened property taxpayers.”

Minority leader Kevan Abrahams (D-Freeport) said, “We hope it actually produces a fair assessment which gives taxpayers an accurate tax rate.”

Adam Barsky, chairman of the Nassau Interim Finance Authority, the county’s financial control board, said through a spokesman: “It is an important issue that the county must get its arms around in order to reduce the large amount of tax refund claims and its negative impact on the budget.”

Forum puts focus on teen dating violence

BY LAURA BLASEY
laura.blasey@newsday.com

When Christine Valencia started dating a new boyfriend, she didn’t know she would later fear him. And she didn’t know she’d eventually leave him to save her own life.

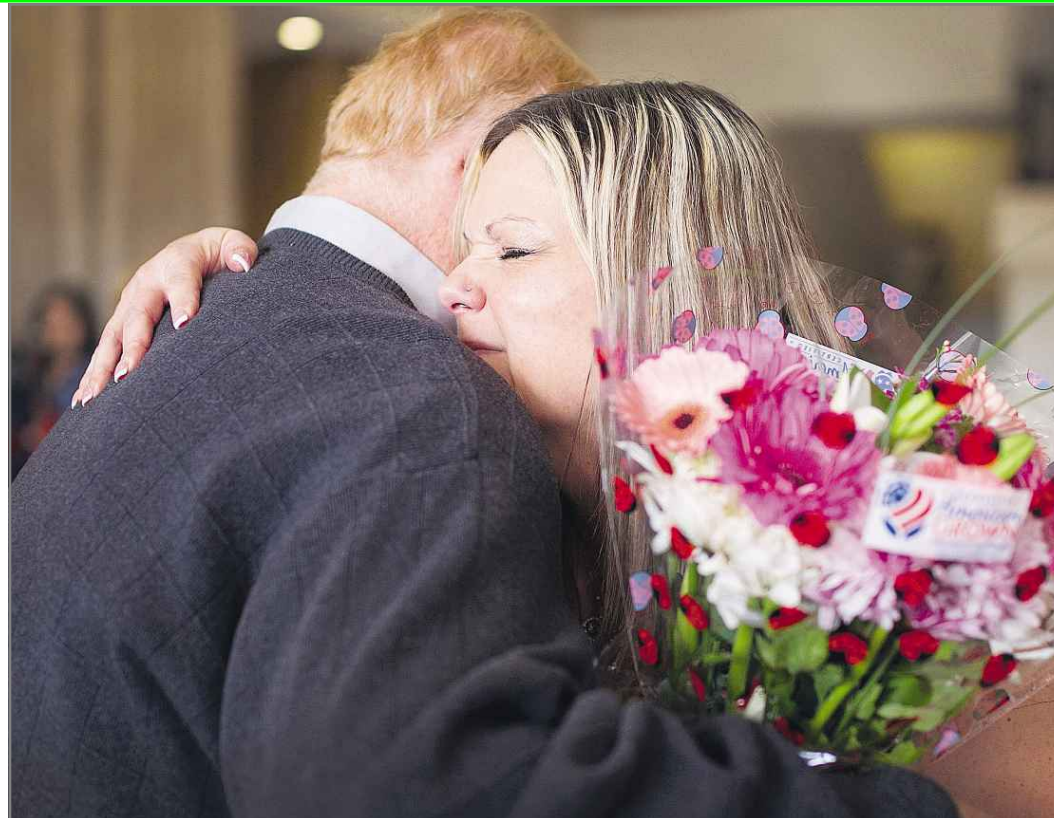
“As I go place to place sharing my story, I think of the . . . girl who decided not to wait anymore,” she said.

Valencia, now in her 20s, read a poetic piece about her experience in an abusive relationship Tuesday to help unveil a new initiative to raise awareness of teen domestic violence in Suffolk County and across New York State.

Advocates against domestic violence, and government officials, gathered at the H. Lee Dennison building in Hauppauge to announce the campaign, called “Teen Dating Abuse is #NotJustPhysical.”

The campaign aims to educate teens about healthy relationships, and is using Snapchat and Instagram to reach teens in middle and high school.

“We can’t wait until partners are 30 or 40 to teach them what a healthy relationship looks like,” said Suffolk County Legis. Kara Hahn (D-Setauket), herself a survivor of relationship abuse.



Christine Valencia, a victim of an abusive relationship, with dad John Bollmann in Hauppauge Tuesday.

Nearly 1.5 million high school students nationally experience physical abuse from a dating partner each year, and 1

in 3 teens reports receiving online abuse. However, only nine percent of teens who experience abuse seek help, accord-

ing to national statistics.

In 2018, when teens spend so much time online, Wright said abuse can also come in the

form of threatening texts, controlling emails and posting photos without permission, for example. The campaign and state resources are designed to alert teens to warning signs and also to teach parents how best to engage with their children.

“Most teens think teen dating abuse has nothing to do with them or their friends. Maybe they don’t know what it looks like,” said Gwen Wright, executive director of New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. “It’s not just a push or a hit or slap.”

Officials said teens often are experiencing the intense emotions that come with new relationships, and puberty at the same time, and may not yet know where to draw boundaries.

An online education module on healthy relationships will also be rolled out to schools, Wright said.

February is teen domestic violence awareness month and Tuesday was Wear Orange Day, the official awareness day. But prevention requires constant effort, said Colleen Merlo, executive director of Long Island Against Domestic Violence.

“We need to make it clear that abuse is not love and it will not be tolerated,” she said. “This is not just one day for us.”