

HICKSVILLE

Parking garage fixes postponed

BY TED PHILLIPS
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Repairs to the Hicksville garage that were to begin July 9 have been postponed after the Oyster Bay Town Board on Tuesday rejected contractors' bids as too high.

The special board meeting had been called specifically to increase the bond authorization for the repairs, estimated at \$18.1 million, including related costs, and to approve a contract.

The meeting began, however, with Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino announcing that Oyster Bay's engineers had estimated the repair cost at \$13.2 million, but the bids had come in between \$15.5 million and \$17.4 million.

"These actions are necessary as the bids we received are millions of dollars more than I believe the town should be paying for these repairs," Saladino said. The town had received three bids, but they had "deficiencies," he said.

The board voted Tuesday to reject those bids. The repair project will be rebid and a contract will be considered at the town's July 24 meeting.

The town published a bid notice for the repairs on April 9 with bids due to the town on May 14. Saladino then announced at the May 22 town board meeting that the special meeting held Tuesday would be to finalize garage repair plans and amend the town's bond authorization. A legal notice published on May 25 stated the town needed to authorize an additional \$4 million in borrowing because of increased costs for a total of up to \$18.1 million.

It is unclear when the repairs, expected to last 90 days and requiring the shutdown of the garage, will start, but town officials said the work will be completed in 2018.

"Once we receive the new bids we will move quickly forward with these plans," Saladino said.

The town's costs for the project include leasing parking space at the old Sears parking lot near the garage. Those costs have not been finalized. The town costs also include \$800,000 for buses to run from the Sears lot to the Long Island Rail Road station, at no charge to users, during the repair period.

Councilman Anthony Macagnone, who was absent from the meeting, said in a text message Tuesday that he sent a memo to the town board on Monday questioning the increased costs.

"I stated that \$18 million is too much for this project," Macagnone wrote.

About 200 parking spaces at the garage have been blocked off since last year because of cracking concrete. The garage opened in 2011 at a cost of approximately \$65 million and has long been plagued with problems.

Last year, Oyster Bay sued Freeport-based Peter Scalmandre & Sons Inc. and Mineola-based Sidney B. Bowne & Son LLP for allegedly performing substandard work. Sidney B. Bowne's assets have subsequently been bought by Syosset-based The LiRo Group.

On Tuesday, Oyster Bay's chief deputy town attorney, Frank Scalera, said the town's lawsuit against Sidney Bowne is proceeding with any liabilities awarded in court to be paid by that company's insurance policy.



LANE DADDONA

Game changers hold the future

BELLPART. Eastern Suffolk BOCES STEM High School students, from left, Braylan Miguel, Riverhead district; Indigo-Skye Weston, East Hampton district; Jared Voegele, South Country-Bellport district; and Jake Linkletter from Miller Place district, hold their gaming controller prototypes after a presentation they made Tuesday at the Academy at the Gary D. Bixhorn Technical Center, STEM High School. The students created alternative prototypes to improve gaming tools.

SUFFOLK COUNTY

GOP blocks \$32.7M in projects

BY RICK BRAND
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The Suffolk Legislature got bogged down in heated political bickering Tuesday night, when the Republican minority blocked \$32.7 million in capital projects after Democratic County Executive Steve Bellone bundled bond resolutions to pay for the public safety and public works projects.

The seven-member GOP caucus, which had enough votes to keep Bellone from getting a needed two-thirds majority for bonding, accused Bellone of trying to pressure them to vote for all 29 projects in two resolutions rather than deal with them individually, as has been done for the past 40 years.

"This is the one place Republicans have any political power," Legis. Robert Trotta (R-Fort Salonga) said. "This is the most disingenuous political thing I've seen. They are looking to take back the one bit of political checks and balances."

Democrats returned fire, saying the bulk of GOP lawmakers voted for an appropriating resolution for all the projects that said they were to be financed with bonds, but then

refused en masse to authorize bonds to pay for the projects.

"Voting for the [appropriate] resolution, but not the bond, is the height of hypocrisy," Legis. Rob Calarco (D-Patchogue) said.

Amy Keys, Bellone's top legislative aide, denied any political motives, saying the change is part of Bellone's drive to streamline county operations. She said most municipalities in the state do bond resolutions for multiple projects at once.

However, Republicans complained that Bellone's effort only became known late Monday when his aides delivered the two bundled bond resolutions to the legislative clerk.

One resolution would have authorized the financing of \$4.68 million for a dozen public safety projects, including replacing a police patrol boat and mobile data terminals in police cars and fixing bathrooms at the Yaphank police headquarters. A second bond measure would have funded 17 projects including road improvements in Islip, Shelter Island and Huntington, a new fiscal computer system, and weather and energy conservation projects.

Lawmakers did approve one

bond measure to settle a \$1.8 million liability lawsuit.

Legis. Tom Cilmi, the GOP caucus leader, said the caucus acted in protest because of Bellone's heavy-handed tactics. He said Republicans had only blocked three or four capital bond measures since January while approving 90 percent when the measures were voted on one by one.

"That was not enough for the county executive, he wanted everything," Cilmi said.

Some lawmakers without success tried at the last minute to table both resolutions so they could be unbundled as in the past. "There are a lot of political games on both sides," Presiding Officer DuWayne Gregory (D-Copague) said.

In other action, the legislature also repealed a 2003 law, sponsored by former Legis. David Bishop, that allowed mixed-use residential and commercial developments to get a 50 percent discount on sewer connection fees.

Heartland developer Jerry Wolcott is the only builder to ever apply for the break. Legislative Counsel George Nolan said the repeal will not impact him because his project is already in the pipeline.