

Hundreds at tunnel meeting

Foes of an LI Sound crossing host forum

BY DENISE M. BONILLA
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Town and village officials from the Town of Oyster Bay encouraged residents on Monday night to fight back against a proposed tunnel across the Long Island Sound.

Hundreds gathered for the meeting at Jericho High School sponsored by an anti-tunnel committee headed by Bayville Village Trustee John Taylor. It was the third meeting on the subject — the first two were in Bayville and Locust Valley — with a fourth scheduled for Syosset on June 14 as officials look to drum up support against a Sound crossing.

“From tunneling under thousands of homes to an influx of visitors flooding our beaches and roads, this project will devastate our suburban quality of life,” Oyster Bay Supervisor Joseph Saladino told the audience.

A Sound crossing — by tunnel, bridge or a combination — has been proposed multiple times since the late 1930s. Opposition has been escalating since January when Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo touted the idea of a Sound tunnel in his State of the State speech.

Cuomo’s mention coincided with the release of a \$5 million state-commissioned study from a Montreal consulting firm, which found that a Sound crossing is vi-



JOSEPH D. SULLIVAN

Residents hear an opposition group’s presentation on a cross-Sound tunnel Monday in Jericho.

able only from Oyster Bay Town to Westchester County, or from Kings Park to Connecticut.

A tunnel would cost between \$31.5 billion and \$55.4 billion, according to the study, which said it would spur “new opportunities for economic growth,” reduce road congestion and improve air quality.

Residents in both Long Island communities have said a Sound crossing would add congestion and harm the environment.

The state Department of

Transportation has said no decisions have been made. In speeches, Cuomo has focused on a tunnel to Westchester.

At Monday’s meeting, officials made an hourlong presentation outlining what they said will be negative impacts of an 18-mile-long tunnel, including disruption of the aquifers and an estimated annual shortfall of \$650 million to \$2 billion that will fall on state taxpayers. Images superimposed with possible effects of a tunnel, including 10-story-high

vents, showed how life may change for residents. A shot of a potential power plant to fuel soil-boring machines off the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway drew gasps from the audience.

Taylor encouraged residents to write Cuomo and use social media to voice their opposition. “There’s hundreds of us here but we need thousands,” he said. “You’re all going to be evangelists to spread the word and convince people who like this idea to say it’s a bad idea.”

TEACHERS PREP FOR SHOOTER SCENARIO

BY KESHIA CLUKEY
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Riverhead school district teachers and staff gathered in the high school auditorium Monday to train for what has become an increasing threat to schools nationwide — an active shooter.

The need for drills and training is “an unfortunate reality,” said Riverhead Superintendent Aurelia Henriquez.

The 17 people shot dead Feb. 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, and more recently, the May 18 shooting that killed 10 people at a high school in Santa Fe, Texas, are a reminder that it can happen anywhere, Henriquez said. “That’s a scary thought, but again, we’re interested in being prepared.”

After a forum in March after the Parkland shooting, the Suffolk County Sheriff’s Department began offering the “Civil-

ian Response to Active Shooter” training sessions.

Riverhead is one of a handful of school districts that have taken advantage of the program, which has trained more than 1,000 people so far, said Deputy Sheriff Capt. John Rung. The session Monday was one of four the Riverhead district will host to ensure all faculty and staff are trained.

Three more districts plan to offer the training in August, said Rung. He declined to release the names of the other districts as a security precaution.

“There’s no way you could expect to survive one of these attacks if you’re not prepared,” Rung said. “And that preparation comes from training and really taking upon themselves, each teacher, to be prepared.”

The hourlong presentation describes what happens to a person in an emergency situation and how to respond,

using lessons learned from past attacks.

Teachers were asked to consider how they set up their classroom. The teacher’s desk, for example, could be located closer to the door, to block it if there’s an active shooter.

Schools also can focus on being more vigilant about students, flagging those who may show signs of violent or unstable behavior, according to the training. The method, which was developed by Texas State University and can be used in any emergency situation, is to avoid, deny and defend.

If possible, staff should try to get students out, leaving the building or the area where the shooter is, according to the training. If there is no way out, the focus should be on denying access to the room. And if it comes down to it, faculty and staff need to be prepared to defend their classroom.



JAMES CARBONE

Riverhead High School educators including Rebecca Krupski, right, get trained Monday to respond to an active-shooter scenario.

“The most important thing with this initiative is really just the awareness,” Suffolk Sheriff Errol Toulon Jr. said.

As part of a series of initiatives Toulon launched after taking office Jan. 1, districts also can opt to have his office conduct a security risk assessment, which looks at infrastructure, policies and procedures, as well as workforce empowerment, such as the active shooter training.

Rebecca Krupski, a physical education teacher at Riverhead High School, was visibly moved by some of the examples given in the training, which included a recording of the 911 call from the 1999 Columbine school massacre.

“I think we all learned something,” she said. “It’s scary for us educators and staff, and I feel sad for our students that have to think this way, but it’s trainings like these that make a difference.”