

## EDITORIAL

# LIPA digs up sound policy

### Strikes balance on burying power lines

**S**urely Long Island residents would rather have new high-voltage power lines placed underground than on roadside poles. The huge steel replacement poles and burly lines are considered ugly, and dangerous to drivers who crash into them. And while burying lines doesn't mean an end to power outages, it does mean fewer of them.

But estimates are that it would cost between \$20 billion and \$30 billion to bury all the existing lines on Long Island. That's about \$20,000 to \$30,000 per household, not a charge anyone wants to see on their next electric bill.

That's why the Long Island Power Authority and PSEG won't pay to bury the utility's high-voltage transmission lines that are often carried on massive 80-foot tall steel poles that measure nine feet around.

But in Eastport, the utility now says it will cough up as much as \$13.5 million to bury lines and remove 24 steel poles it erected on Eastport Manor Road in 2017. The Town of Brookhaven, which sued to get them buried, dropped the suit in return for the deal.

Rather than setting a precedent for future communities to make similar demand, though, LIPA says it's using the lessons it learned in the Eastport battle to create better procedures that can soften these confrontations and prevent such costly losses in the future.

LIPA officials still say they were correct to put the Eastport lines aboveground, since the community would not pay to bury them. Where it was wrong, in Eastport and other communities, LIPA says, was in the process.

There wasn't enough community outreach about new installations. There hadn't been a clear, understandable process laid out about how it's decided whether to put lines above or underground, nor a formal procedure for the community to respond.

And not enough had been done to explain its decisions publicly and in writing.

Now, LIPA officials say, they have a new process in place.

The utility has adopted a formal policy for evaluating line burial similar to the one drawn up by the Public Service Commission and used in the rest of the state. The policy highlights areas where the utility must carefully analyze the costs and benefits of potential burial of big poles and heavy lines: like historic sites, landmarks, state and federal parks, central business districts and dense residential subdivisions.

It also names a set of areas that merit LIPA doing due diligence on whether burial makes sense, but are far less likely to qualify. Village and town parks, cemeteries, areas of scenic beauty and less-dense residential areas are a few of the items on that long list.

There will still be plenty of room for debate, as the policy lays out concerns like the scenic and environmental effects of poles and lines but doesn't define any metrics to determine how much scenic and environmental effect it takes to justify LIPA paying for burial. In every situation, the community will be told how much it costs, and can agree to pay for underground lines if LIPA won't.

These new processes, which are clearly the ones LIPA should have adopted years ago, should be a big improvement on a very expensive and contentious misfire.

— *The editorial board*



The steel poles on Eastport Manor Road in Eastport.

NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

## MATT DAVIES



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## LETTERS

### Samuel Snipes set inspiring example

The obituary for Samuel Snipes ["Samuel Snipes, represented first blacks in Levittown, Pa.," *News*, Jan. 10] describing his defense of the rights of a black family moving into Levittown, Pennsylvania, in 1957 provides a fitting tribute to an American who exemplifies our nation's highest ideals.

It is remarkable to look back at that era, when a group of us newly enlisted Marines heading for boot camp at Paris Island during the Korean War had a three-hour connection wait at Washington, D.C.'s Union Station. We went to a nearby White Castle restaurant only to be told that black enlistees in our group could not be served. The restaurant was aptly named. We all walked out, dismayed that Washington was a segregated city and that men from

whom the nation would ask much could be treated so disgracefully in our capital.

We've come a long way since then, but we still have far to go. Snipes' life, courage, and service can stand as examples for us all.

*Lester Paldy,  
South Setauket*

be effective. Using porous asphalt that allows water to flow through the road would alleviate the freeze and thaw cycle that ruins roads in winter. It is the 21st century; it is time for Long Island jurisdictions to stop using 19th-century paving methods.

*Seymour Spiegel,  
Jericho*

### Pothole season on Long Island roads

I applaud "Pothole season is only beginning" [Editorial, Jan. 8], particularly in calling for a regional fix for the pothole epidemic. There is a crying need to make repairs that really last and end "penny-wise and pound foolish" measures that only result in more repairs and more expense.

Less use of recycled asphalt, which is not as strong as fresh asphalt, would help. Innovative paving techniques using Fiberglass mats might

There's a stretch of road in Merrick that has just been worked on, starting on Merrick Road at Merrick Avenue. It goes east for several blocks. It's like riding on an unpaved country road. Why am I (we) riding on roads like this all over the county, a very high-taxed county. Why can't this be done properly? Wouldn't it save money in the long and short run if it were done right the first time? It would be just as easy to do it right!

*John Schreiber,  
Merrick*