

FRONTIER PLANS FLIGHTS FROM LI TO RALEIGH

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Frontier Airlines is adding service from Long Island MacArthur Airport to Raleigh-Durham Airport in North Carolina, officials announced Monday.

The new flight route will begin on April 30 and run three times a week, officials said.

Raleigh-Durham is one of the “top 20 cities” that the Islip Town-owned airport has identified as likely destinations for Long Island travelers, airport Commissioner Shelley LaRose-Arken said.

Long Islanders can already travel there with Southwest Airlines, which in March added one-stop service from MacArthur.

Passengers have given “positive feedback” about the destination because many Long Islanders need to travel there for business or to visit friends and family, LaRose-Arken said.

“They’ve had success with that route, and I guess Frontier saw an opportunity here,” LaRose-Arken said.

Town Supervisor Angie Carpenter said that offering “convenient travel to North Carolina’s Research Triangle of three major universities creates endless opportunities” for town residents and “aligns nicely with our plans for strategic growth” at the airport.

The Raleigh-Durham routes are the only flights to North Carolina from MacArthur, LaRose-Arken said.

“Frontier is delighted to once again respond to the demand for our service,” Frontier senior vice president Daniel Shurz said in a statement.

The low-cost carrier operates four flights a day from the Ronkonkoma airport. It travels from there to seven other destinations: Atlanta, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, Myrtle Beach, West Palm Beach, Fort Myers and Tampa.

Frontier is the third airline currently operating at MacArthur, which had 1.6 million passengers in 2018, LaRose-Arken said.

A fourth airline, Elite Airways, stopped operating from the airport right before the holidays, LaRose-Arken said.

Limiting vigilance on hiring

New guidelines to narrow U.S. role in monitoring diversity of LI police

BY NICOLE FULLER
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Police reform advocates and community activists are voicing concerns over new U.S. Department of Justice guidelines governing the use of consent decrees that they say could curtail the monitoring of Long Island law-enforcement agencies for alleged discrimination and civil rights violations.

Then-Attorney General Jeff Sessions signed off on the new guidelines in a memo before he was fired in November by President Donald Trump. It mandates that top officials at the Justice Department approve the monitoring agreements instead of the lower-level career prosecutors who have handled the cases in the past and says the provisions must be “narrowly tailored” and “not be used to achieve general policy goals.”

The memo also limits the length of time for monitoring, giving consent agreements three-year expirations rather than an undetermined amount of time for departments to meet the benchmarks.

Both the Nassau and Suffolk police departments have been under federal monitoring mandating the racial diversification of their ranks through consent decrees since the 1980s in response to allegations of discrimination against black, Hispanic and female candidates. Suffolk police and the DOJ in 2014 made an agreement in response to complaints from advocates over the department’s treatment of the Latino community.

With the new changes, advocates say, the DOJ is relinquish-

ing its watchdog role.

“The Nassau and Suffolk county police departments have a history of racially discriminatory practices and failures to address misconduct and corruption at the highest levels,” said Kesi Foster, lead organizer for the Brentwood-based immigrant rights advocacy group Make the Road New York. “With the federal government now asleep at the wheel, it’s more critical than ever for state and local government to hold police departments accountable and ensure the protections the Trump administration won’t provide.”

Others don’t trust local departments probing their own.

“Where sunshine is not being applied, there’s a lot that goes on that we can’t see — that’s the reason for federal intervention in these cases, to hold these local governments accountable,” said Susan Gottehrer, director of the Nassau County chapter of the New York Civil Liberties Union.

The Justice Department defended the move, saying the memo does not change the terms of any of the existing agreements, DOJ spokeswoman Kelly Laco said.

“The memo lays out clear guidelines designed to maintain consistency throughout all of the department’s civil litigating divisions that will create, enter into, and oversee consent decrees in the future with governmental entities, in order to both enforce federal law and respect federalism and local accountability,” Laco said in an email.

Sessions, a longtime Republican senator from Alabama and



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states’ rights advocate before becoming attorney general, in the memo raised the importance of limiting federal overreach.

“This supervision can deprive the elected representatives of the people of the affected jurisdiction of control of their government,” the memo states. “Consent decrees can also have significant ramifications for state or local budget priorities, effectively taking these decisions, and accountability for them, away from the people’s elected representatives.”

Police officials in Nassau and Suffolk declined interview requests and issued statements instead.

Honoring agreements

Suffolk County Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart said the department is determined to comply with the agreements in place.

“The Department of Justice has been a tremendous partner in assisting us to improve our operational efficiency and our relationship with the community,” Hart said in the statement. “Our goal is to achieve full compliance and ensure that these measures are institutionalized throughout the department in order to continue to im-

prove upon the progress we have made.”

The latest settlement agreement in Suffolk requires the department to meet benchmarks in several areas. It followed complaints about police treatment of Latinos after the 2008 hate-crime killing of Ecuadorian immigrant Marcelo Lucero, 37, who was fatally beaten by a group of white youths in Patchogue. The DOJ, in its most recent report, said Suffolk police had made substantial progress but still fell short in three of five critical benchmarks.

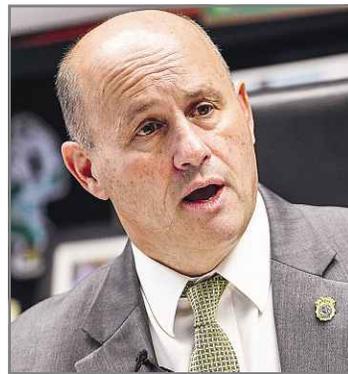
Nassau police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said the department has been praised by the state Department of Human Rights for its recruitment and hiring practices. Ryder said the new guidelines do not alter the department’s current agreement with the DOJ.

“The Nassau Police Department continues a very proactive approach to reach out to our diverse communities to ensure voluntary compliance,” Ryder said.

Some police union officials said the Sessions memo recognizes the need for a re-examination of the process, which has seen departments under federal monitoring for decades.



Suffolk County Police
Commissioner Geraldine Hart



Nassau Police Commissioner
Patrick Ryder

federal monitoring mandating the racial diversification of their ranks.

“Consent decrees are supposed to go in and fix the problem and leave,” said Pete Paterson, first vice president of the Nassau Police Benevolent Association, the department’s largest union. “I’m on the job for 33 years. I don’t remember not being under a consent decree.”

Paterson said the department has followed the DOJ’s direction and seen its diversity grow.

“I believe, being a member of this department and how Nassau has been hiring, they’re doing everything they can to make it a fair test for everybody and making [the department] more inclusive,” Paterson said.

Shift to local oversight

But Christy Lopez, a Georgetown University professor who was a deputy chief of the special litigation section of DOJ’s civil rights division from 2010 to 2017, said the memo ensures there will not be any new monitoring under the current administration and that it will fall to local oversight entities to protect civil rights from police abuse.

The new three-year limit is setting up police departments for failure, she said. “If problems are complex enough to need a consent decree, they’re almost certainly not going to be solved in three years,” Lopez said.

Suffolk police and the DOJ reached the settlement agreement that was supposed to last three years in 2014, but the monitoring has continued because the police department has not made all of the necessary reforms. The DOJ chronicles Suffolk’s progress in reports every six months.

The October progress report marked the first time in nearly five years of monitoring that Suffolk police have been found in “substantial compliance” in any of the major categories being tracked: bias-free policing, hate crimes and hate incidents, language assistance, allegations of police misconduct, and community engagement.

In the areas of hate crimes, hate incidents and allegations of police misconduct, the department reached substantial compliance — the highest ranking. The department is in “partial compliance” in the other categories but the report warned there remains “a persistent mistrust” between the community and the police.

Suffolk police also signed a consent decree with the DOJ in 1986 after the agency filed a class-action lawsuit in 1983 charging that the county engaged in a pattern of discrimination. In Nassau, it filed suit in 1977, charging the county discriminated against black, Hispanic and female candidates. The

Nassau consent decree has been in effect since 1983.

Today, the Nassau and Suffolk police departments’ workforce is 13 percent racial and ethnic minorities, according to statistics provided by both departments.

Of the 2,464 sworn police officers in Nassau, 57 are black men and 44 are black women; 121 are Hispanic men and 65 are Hispanic women; and there are 14 Asian men and seven Asian women, according to department statistics. The highest-ranking black male in the department is four-star Chief of Department Stephen Palmer, the top uniformed officer on the force. Keechant Sewell, a two-star assistant chief, is the highest-ranking black woman.

In Suffolk, a department of 2,521 sworn officers, there are eight black women and 58 black men, according to department statistics. The highest-ranking black man is Det. Sgt. Jeffrey Walker. Deputy Police Commissioner Risco Mention-Lewis, a civilian, is a black woman.

Hispanic women in the department stand at 46, with the highest-ranking in that group a single deputy inspector, who is the second-in-command in the Third Precinct, Milagros Soto. There are 207 Hispanic men in the department and one, William Silva, has reached the rank of inspector.

VA expands its services in Riverhead

BY MARTIN C. EVANS
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Veterans on Long Island’s East End now have more medical services closer to them with an expansion of the VA clinic in Riverhead.

The expansion increased the number of primary care physicians at the clinic from two to three, added an audiology facility for hearing exams, installed a new physical therapy suite, and increased some clinic hours, said Dr. Cathy Cruise, the acting director of the Department of Veterans Affairs medical center in Northport.

The department unveiled the expansion Monday, although it was completed in late summer. It boosts the agency’s ability to treat patients with hearing loss and physical therapy at the clinic, which is housed in a county building west of the Riverhead traffic circle near downtown.

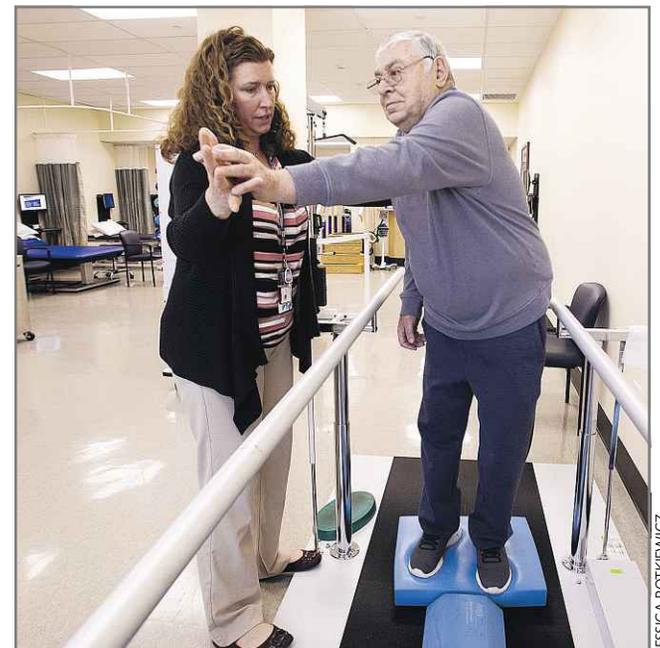
Cruise said the expan-

sion is part of the agency’s push to extend medical services into communities east and west of the VA’s main medical campus just east of Northport. The Northport facility is located on a narrow two-lane road nearly 10 miles from the Long Island Expressway, which can make it especially difficult to reach for elderly patients with rush-hour appointments.

Cruise said she is hopeful that the expansion will encourage more use of the satellite clinic by patients like Jim King, 76, a retired Mattituck lobsterman.

King, who earned the right to VA services as a 1960s crew member aboard the Navy submarine USS Sailfish, said he never used VA medical care before the Riverhead clinic first began expanding a few years ago.

“I never used the VA before, because Northport was too far away to get to,” said King, 76. “But I can’t say enough good about the service here.”



Army veteran Robert Pisciotto works Monday with physical therapist Christine Marino at the VA clinic in Riverhead.