

MUTTONTOWN

Group to take on incumbents

Residents launch party to challenge four in June vote

BY DAVID OLSON
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A group of Muttontown residents Tuesday night announced the formation of a new political party to challenge four incumbents in the June 19 election, including Mayor Julianne Wesley Beckerman, who in October was indicted on tax fraud charges.

Candidates accused the mayor of being abrasive to residents and presiding over an unwieldy permit process. Although a news release on Tuesday's launch of Neighbors for a Better Muttontown discussed the indictment, the candidates said they didn't view it as a campaign issue.

"She hasn't been found guilty," said candidate Brian Fagen, who nonetheless called the indictment "a distraction" for the mayor.

Beckerman, first elected mayor of the upscale North Shore village in 2006, has not announced whether she will run for a fourth 4-year term. She said in an interview Tuesday that although she was "a big believer in term limits,"



James Liguori, who wants to replace indicted Mayor Julianne Wesley Beckerman, addresses people Tuesday at a Jericho restaurant.

whether self-imposed or statutory, "there are a lot of people who are asking me to run. There will be an announcement on that soon."

Beckerman said the tax filing charges had "nothing to do with the village" and were "unfounded. I have no doubt that I will be exonerated." She pleaded not guilty to five counts of tax fraud related to al-

legedly not paying state taxes from 2010 to 2014 and one count of repeated failure to file income and earnings taxes.

The 4-year terms of three trustees — Julie Albernas, Salvatore Benisatto and Carl Juul-Nielsen — also expire this year.

Albernas and Benisatto could not be reached for comment. Juul-Nielsen declined to

comment, including to say whether he would run for another term.

Trustee candidates Chris Economou, an attorney, and Sudha Prasad, a pediatrician, said trustees were part of the problem, because they followed Beckerman's lead.

"There's a lot of head-nodding," Prasad said.

Beckerman said the four challengers didn't attend village board meetings until recently and "they've never stepped up and tried to get involved in the village in the dozen years that I've been mayor." The candidates said that as outsiders they could change the way the village is run.

Mayoral candidate James Liguori, a neurologist, said the "adversarial approach" of Beckerman toward residents meant she could "be demeaning to the point of being insulting." He said Muttontown's reputation for red tape with permits had hurt residents' property values, and he criticized last year's tax increase.

Beckerman said in a November letter to residents that village building inspectors' vigilance had halted dangerous construction practices. She said Tuesday that the 2017 tax-rate increase was the first in six years and hiked taxes on a home with an assessed value of \$1 million by only \$30.

ISLIP TOWN

Town supe touts her successes

BY VALERIE BAUMAN
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Islip Supervisor Angie Carpenter delivered a State of the Town address Tuesday that was more retrospective than forward-looking, using the platform to tout successes of the past year and emphasize the importance of community.

"I truly believe it takes a community to run a town," Carpenter said. "When we say 'our town' — what we are referring to is the collaboration that defines Islip Town."

The financial success of Long Island MacArthur Airport, which finished 2017 with a more than \$3 million surplus, and the reopening of Roberto Clemente Park after a dumping scandal figured prominently in the speech, as did improvements to the town's various information technology systems.

The town has expanded Wi-Fi access to every major park, including beaches and golf courses, and officials are in the process of extending that to MacArthur Airport, she said.

Carpenter also focused on efforts to make the town safer by combating the opioid epidemic and gang violence.

"While controlling gangs and drug abuse are not directly within the town's jurisdiction, it's something that we can't ignore, and must face head-on," Carpenter said.

Carpenter also highlighted the success of Islip's Economic Development office, which has started more than 50 new projects through the Industrial Development Agency, leading to about \$500 million in capital investment and nearly 1,700 new jobs over the past three years.

She discussed a still-controversial move to install parking meters in Bay Shore, saying the town has been able to reinvest the revenue the program has generated into the community.

MASTIC

Owner: 60 acres of solar farm may be saved

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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The owner of a 100-acre parcel in Mastic Woods said he is negotiating with Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo's office and Brookhaven Town to sell up to 60 acres of the planned solar farm for preservation, even as 60 acres have been cleared.

Gerald Rosengarten, managing director of the Middle Island Solar Farm, said Monday he met with two members of Cuomo's staff and a Brookhaven Town attorney at the governor's Manhattan office Wednesday to hammer out a deal, which has yet to be finalized.

Under one scenario, Rosengarten would sell 40 acres of

uncleared land that had already been slated for preservation on the parcel, assuring that it would not be cleared after a 20-year LIPA contract comes to an end. Another 20 acres of land that is already cleared would be offered by Rosengarten if Brookhaven agrees to lease 20 acres to Middle Island for property at the Brookhaven landfill or another location.

Rosengarten has already cleared 60 acres of the Mastic Woods property on Middle Island-Moriches Road and Barnes Road in Mastic, a move that riled neighbors and environmentalists such as members of the Pine Barrens Society, which have filed suit to block development.

Brookhaven Town attorney

Annette Eaderesto said a potential deal with the town could hinge on how much leveling Rosengarten does on the 60 acres he's cleared. Tree clearing in early March left tree stumps, which could grow back if an area is slated for preservation.

There's also the prospect of swapping the Mastic Woods parcel for a Superfund site in Port Jefferson Station, the former Lawrence Aviation, as a potential site, she said, given its proximity to electric transmission lines and years of tax liens on the property.

Whether the money is available to make the purchase and whether Brookhaven is willing to lease its landfill lot remains uncertain. Rosengarten said

much will be determined in state budget talks concluding this week, and the deal is likely to include outside funding, possibly from the town or county.

Cuomo in December vetoed legislation that would have preserved the 100 acres and another 800 at Shoreham as part of the core pine barrens. Critics blasted the move, noting that one of the solar farm's chief environmental lawyers, Robert Rosenthal, was a former assistant counsel in Cuomo's office.

A spokesman for Cuomo didn't respond to a request for comment.

Brookhaven Town spokesman Kevin Molloy couldn't discuss specifics of any deal with Rosengarten.