

Rivera's latest pitch

Former Yankee seeking to open car dealership in Port Jefferson Station

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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Yankee Hall of Famer Mariano Rivera is making a new pitch — for a Port Jefferson Station auto dealership.

Rivera, the first player unanimously elected to Cooperstown, and his business partners are planning to buy a Route 112 car store and rename it Mariano Rivera Honda, his attorney, Donald J. King of Kings Park, said in an interview. Major League Baseball's all-time saves leader already owns a Toyota dealership that bears his name in Mount Kisco, in Westchester County.

It won't be the strike zone but zoning laws that Rivera will face when he seeks approvals from the Town of Brookhaven. King said he expects Rivera to appear at Town Hall in Farmingville to help sell the project.

Rivera was known during his 19-year career as one of the most

formidable relief pitchers in baseball history. Relying on a nearly unhittable cut fastball, he blew only 80 saves in 732 chances.

"His partnership came to me and they hired me to get this change of zone application to get this enhanced or enlarged building on this site," King said. "I'm sure at the hearing, he'll be there."

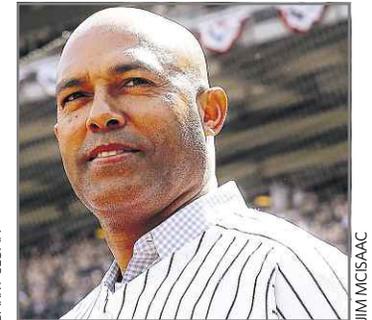
Brookhaven officials have held informal discussions with Rivera's representatives, but the plan has not been formally submitted to the town, and no hearings have been scheduled, a town spokesman said.

King said he is planning to meet with Councilwoman Valerie Cartright, who represents Port Jefferson Station on the town board. An aide to Cartright said she was aware of Rivera's proposal and planned to discuss it with town officials and Port Jefferson Station community leaders.

The property had been eyed in 2011 by developer James Tsu-



North Shore Certified would become a Honda dealership if Mariano Rivera gets the zoning he needs.



nis, who proposed a 96-unit apartment complex. At the time, the car dealership was vacant and had been included in Brookhaven's "Blight to Light" program to redevelop abandoned properties.

Tsunis' proposal received some preliminary approvals but was not completed.

Edward Garboski, vice president of the Port Jefferson Station-Terryville Civic Association, said Rivera's plan probably would not receive significant opposition from residents, although he cautioned views might change "depending on the

size of the project."

"I don't think it would be a problem," Garboski said. "They would be happy that they got a car dealership back, instead of an apartment complex."

The 8.1-acre site, at 1435 Route 112, includes a 6,425-square-foot building, according to a site plan prepared for Rivera by Cataldo Grasso Architects of Smithtown.

Rivera wants to expand the existing building by about 33 percent, build a new 50,533-square-foot sales and service facility, and create storage space for about 353 vehicles, according to the plan.

Garboski said the proposal probably would be acceptable to civic members "as long as it would be something that was not obtrusive or disgusting-looking. Right now they have a nice-looking building there."

Rivera, 49, who will be inducted into the Hall of Fame this year, retired in 2013 with a record 652 saves, an 82-60 win-loss record, 2.21 earned run average and five World Series titles.

Garboski, a Yankee fan, said he is rooting for Rivera to seal one more victory. "He can close a baseball game. Let's see if he can close the deal."

Residents protest over potential LIPA tax cut

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ
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More than 100 Northport residents rallied with elected officials Sunday against LIPA's lawsuit to reduce tax payments at the Island's largest power plant and called for state legislation to help offset potential tax increases.

Chanting "Stop LIPA now," residents at Cow Harbor Park said they face massive property tax increases if LIPA wins its decade-old lawsuit against Huntington that argues the town has vastly overassessed the Northport power plant.

"I'm concerned about the school district. Can elderly people stay here? Can businesses survive in our downtown?" said Tony DeRiso, 53, of Northport, following the rally. "We bought into this community, I definitely paid a premium for my home" because of the lower taxes.

Paul Darrigo, a Northport resident and banker who helped or-

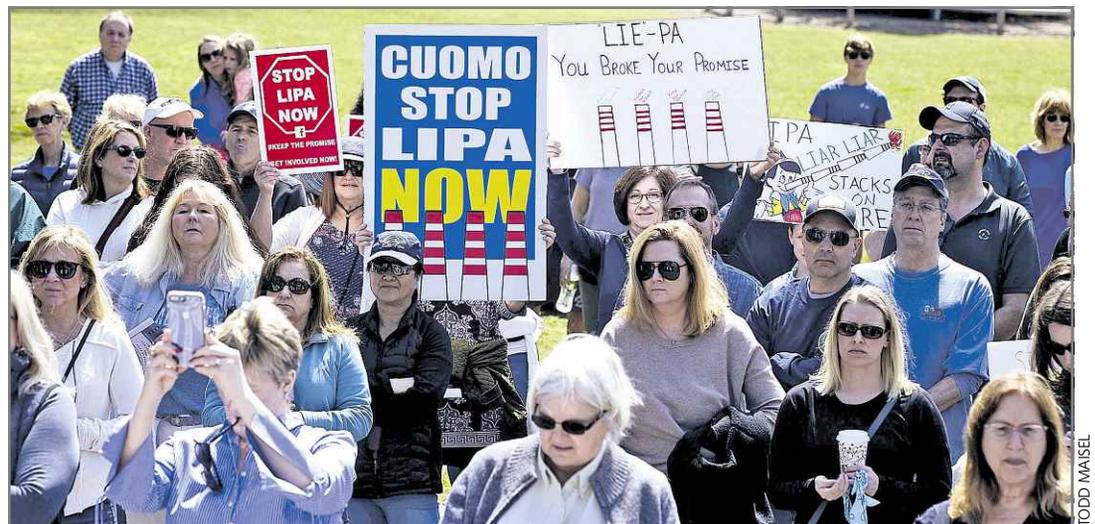
ganize the rally, said his taxes would go from about \$14,000 a year to \$22,000 if LIPA wins its lawsuit, according to figures put out by the Northport-East Northport School District.

LIPA is seeking to significantly lower the \$84 million it pays in annual taxes for the National Grid-owned plant in the case, which is being tried in state Supreme Court in Riverhead.

LIPA has argued the plant is used considerably less than even a decade ago, and "fair taxes" by 2030 would be closer to \$3.7 million. LIPA has offered a settlement that would forgive hundreds of millions in past-due taxes since 2010, and gradually reduce the annual tax over nine years to just over \$40 million.

In a Sunday statement, a LIPA spokesman said electricity production at the plant declined by 80 percent over the last 20 years, while taxes have gone up by more than 30 percent.

LIPA argues that Long Island



Northport residents rally against proposal that would raise property taxes. ■ Video: newsday.com/suffolk

electric customers pay approximately \$100 per year on their electric bill to lower the taxes for residents of four school districts including Northport-East Northport, according to the statement.

Darrigo said while they hoped LIPA would drop its lawsuit, they were hoping for state legislation to "ameliorate" any impact on residents' taxes.

"The fight is now, you're look-

ing down the barrel of a gun and you have to be engaged," he said. He also called on Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo to become involved.

A Cuomo spokesman said: "We are monitoring the situation closely. It is our hope that LIPA and the Town of Huntington can reach a mutual agreement that is fair and beneficial to all parties."

Huntington Councilman Ed-

ward J. Smyth said the town has had discussions about taking the plant by eminent domain, if it loses the lawsuit and there's no political solution from Albany.

The suggestion was met with applause. Smyth told the crowd it was a "real option," but cautioned that there was a risk that the town could end up running a plant that was not economical. "It could be a dinosaur," he said.