

Business	A18
Long Island	A10
Lottery	A39
Movie listings	B14
Nation	A14
Obituaries	A24
Opinion	A20
Reaching Newsday	A11
TV listings	B22
Weather	A22
World	A16

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Inside Explore!

TOP STORIES

Sales tax revenues up in both counties

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Sales tax collections have climbed above budget in both Suffolk and Nassau counties so far this year as a result of increased employment and healthy consumer demand, particularly for housing, officials said Friday.

Suffolk officials report that adjusted sales tax revenues for the first three quarters of 2018 are up 5.36 percent over the same time last year. Suffolk had projected a 3 percent increase in this year's budget.

In Nassau, sales tax collections have jumped 4.1 percent over the same period. The county had budgeted a 2.5 percent growth rate for 2018.

Maurice Chalmers, director of Nassau's office of legislative budget review, said revenues should exceed projections this year and the county "is on track to achieve" the sales tax revenues included in County Executive Laura Curran's projected 2019 budget.

In a report to the legislature, Chalmers wrote, "A review of current local economic indicators supports the continued positive economic growth for the remainder of FY18 and throughout FY19." He said Nassau saw an increase in home



HEATHER WALSH

Officials say increased employment has boosted consumer demand, and with it, sales tax revenues.

sales and jobs in August, compared to August a year earlier.

Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone, in his proposed 2019 \$3.1 billion operating budget, now forecasts that the county will see a 4.9 percent increase for this year and a 3.5 percent increase for 2019. The county legislature soon begins hearings to consider amendments to his spending package

With Suffolk's third-quarter

sales tax receipts showing 5.23 percent growth, Robert Lipp, director of budget review, said he largely agrees with Bellone's projections and the county will need only 3.825 percent sales tax growth for the rest of the year to reach the 4.9 percent figure. Those projections, Lipp added, will generate an additional \$25 million in revenue this year and \$75 million in 2019.

Presiding Officer DuWayne

Gregory (D-Copiague) said the latest sales tax numbers are "good news" and bring "more certainty" to the forecasts made in Bellone's budget. However, lawmakers and analysts warned uncertainty in the economy may make robust growth unsustainable in the long run.

Legis. Tom Cilmi (R-Bay Shore), GOP caucus leader, said any extra money should go to plugging long-standing holes in the county budget. "We still have a mountain of debt to dig our way through," he said.

Marty Cantor, director of the Long Island Center for socio-economic policy, attributed the growth to two factors: "More Long Islanders are working even though many have second jobs" — and home sales. When houses are sold, people buy durable goods, refrigerators, stoves, tiles and things like that."

He predicted sales taxes could fall off if the stock market continues to drop.

Chalmers said if revenues grow just 2 percent for the rest of the year, Nassau would still end 2018 with a \$21.4 million surplus in sales taxes. "However, since the proposed FY 19 budget relies on sales tax growth, this continues to be an area which must be closely monitored and may warrant changes should economic conditions change," his report concluded.

Facebook data accessed

The Associated Press

Facebook says hackers accessed a wide swath of information — ranging from emails and phone numbers to more personal details like sites visited and places checked into — from millions of accounts as part of a security breach the company disclosed two weeks ago.

Twenty-nine million accounts had some form of information stolen. Originally Face-

book said 50 million accounts were affected, but that it didn't know if they had been misused.

On Friday Facebook said hackers accessed names, email addresses or phone numbers from these 29 million accounts. For 14 million of them, hackers got even more data, such as hometown, birth date, the last 10 places they checked into or the 15 most recent searches.

An additional 1 million accounts were affected, but hackers didn't get any information

from them. Facebook plans to send messages to people whose accounts were hacked.

Facebook said third-party apps that use a Facebook login and Facebook apps like WhatsApp and Instagram were unaffected by the breach.

Facebook said the FBI is investigating but asked the company not to discuss who may be behind the attack. The company said it hasn't ruled out the possibility of smaller attacks using the same vulnerability.

MEGA JACKPOT PICKED

The Associated Press

DES MOINES, Iowa — Numbers have been drawn for a lottery jackpot that would be the ninth-largest lottery in U.S. history.

Mega Millions announced Friday night that the winning numbers are 4, 24, 46, 61, 70 and the Mega Ball 7.

It's not yet known whether anyone had bought a winning ticket. The jackpot had climbed to an estimated \$548 million. It has been growing since July, when a group of California office workers won \$543 million.