

SMITHTOWN TOWN

Waste disposal study delayed

Plan for indoor local facilities to get public hearing later in year

BY NICHOLAS SPANGLER
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A Smithtown study of industrial-scale indoor composting has been delayed but will conclude this year with a public hearing on a law that could permit the facilities in some areas of the town, Smithtown's principal planner said.

Officials said last year the town council would vote by early summer. But research that they and their consultants conducted on best practices and environmental impacts was delayed because of other town projects and interrupted grant funding from New York State, planner Allyson Murray said in an interview this week.

"We couldn't have them working if we didn't know it was going to be covered" under the grant, she said. The town also expanded the scope of its research to allow for visits to several indoor compost facilities outside of Long Island.

Town officials are now working on draft legislation and will in coming months produce an environmental impact statement, she said.

A spokeswoman for the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, which made a \$187,500 grant to the town in 2015, wrote in emails that the town's account of delays "does not match up with our timeline." Agency officials nevertheless "continued to work with Smithtown to meet its contractual obligations" and expect to approve a contract extension with the town in coming weeks to fund continued work, she wrote.

Smithtown residents and

businesses generate thousands of tons of potentially compostable food scraps and yard trimmings each year, and the town pays about \$1 million annually to send leaves to Babylon for composting. But with the Brookhaven landfill — one of the largest in the area — likely to fill to capacity and close within five years, Smithtown Supervisor Edward Wehrheim has said he was committed to investigating local disposal options.

The most recent draft of a report summarizing Smithtown's research gives several locations in town where this use might be feasible, Murray said. The report will be made public later this month, she said.

At least one area businessman, Toby Carlson, who operates the outdoor recycling company Power Crush at a 64-acre site on Old Northport Road in Kings Park, has proposed building a composting facility if the

town passes legislation.

He envisions there a 200,000- to 300,000-square-foot indoor facility on 25 acres to compost leaves, tree branches and other yard waste from Huntington and Smithtown. He has said he would invest \$25 million to \$50 million in the project.

Carlson, in an interview last week, said he had no interest in taking material from New York City, but that he would not rule out taking some food waste from the surrounding area in the future. He said demand for his work would grow.

"As local landfills close, there's going to be a competing set of interests for transportation off-Island," with construction and demolition debris getting priority, he said. "There will come a point in time where it makes a tremendous amount of sense to do it internally, on the Island, indoors, with a limited operation."

ISLANDIA

SEIZING OF TWO PROPERTIES TO BE DISCUSSED

BY ANTONIO PLANAS
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Islandia officials will discuss seizing two properties through eminent domain at a public meeting Tuesday, with one being eyed for construction of a public works yard, village Mayor Allan M. Dorman said.

Dorman told about 30 residents Tuesday at a public meeting unrelated to eminent domain of his plan to build a public works yard on at the site of an abandoned home at 798 Old Nichols Rd.

"We're going to see if we can get it and put our DPW in the back," Dorman said. "And don't get scared when you hear DPW. No, because our DPW and the ones that you see off the LIE are two different things. Our DPW is smaller, but it's trucks and stuff like that. . . . We'll only be using it in the foul weather, snow, ice, things like that."

He added the property will be used mostly as a storage yard.

The property that the village is targeting on Old Nichols Road is 2.8 acres and includes an abandoned house in foreclosure, according to court records and a relative of the owner. The village scrapped a plan in September to pursue eminent domain of property owned by a horse therapy farm on Old Nichols Road to build a public works yard. At that time, Dorman said the village was considering other properties for the yard.

Mildred Stuart is listed as the owner of the Old Nichols Road house. She is deceased, as is her husband, said her granddaughter, Jessica Stuart, who lives in Pennsylvania.

The village on Tuesday will also discuss obtaining a home and property at 42 Dean St. through eminent domain. A public notice said the village wanted to acquire the property for "neighborhood redevelopment and improvement."

The house is owned by Sandra L. Richardson, according to property records. Court records name her in a foreclosure case.

Islandia attorney Joseph W. Prokop declined to elaborate on the village's intent for the property.

MIDDLE ISLAND

Second offer to buy land for park is rejected

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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Garden City developer Wilbur Breslin has rejected Suffolk County's latest offer to buy land he owns in Middle Island, dealing a setback for plans to build a park on the property.

The county had offered Breslin about \$1.8 million for the 21-acre parcel on Middle Country Road, formerly the site of a Kmart store. Breslin rejected a similar offer last year.

County and Brookhaven Town officials and Middle Island residents had hoped to build ballfields for local youth sports leagues on the property. Under the deal, the county would purchase the property, and the town would build the park, which would be managed by a community group.

County Legis. Sarah Anker (D-Mount Sinai) said Breslin's asking price was more than what the county could offer. By law, the county's offer could not exceed an appraisal conducted to establish the site's value.

"He wanted more money. He basically wanted the county to pay more for the property. I said that's impossi-



The lot where Kmart was on Middle Country Road in Middle Island, seen in December. The developer rejected the county's latest offer.

ble," Anker said, adding Breslin has talked to Brookhaven officials about his plans for the site. "They may be negotiating a development, and he wants to develop that property."

Breslin did not return phone and email messages seeking comment.

The vacant property, which spans about 75 acres, has had a troubled history since Kmart closed more than a dozen years ago. The body of a murder victim was found in a wooded sec-

tion of the parcel in April 2016, days before Breslin demolished the abandoned store.

Town and county officials in 2017 announced a deal in which the county would buy 21 acres, and the state would purchase 28 acres and preserve it as open space. Breslin would keep the remaining 26 acres for potential development.

Middle Island Civic Association president Gail Lynch-Bailey said Breslin's rejection of the county offer was "very dis-

appointing."

"I think we should look elsewhere for a field of dreams park," she said. "What's the point? This is more than a decade of looking at this horrible, blighted property in the middle of our community, and it's just wrong."

Anker said she would ask the Legislature to prepare a new bid for the property next year. "Maybe the third time's the charm," she said.

Town Councilman Michael Loguercio said he, Breslin and Brookhaven Supervisor Edward P. Romaine have discussed development ideas for the site, which is zoned for residential and commercial uses. But he said Breslin has not filed a formal application for the property.

"We're talking about bringing a quality project that would include business and recreational. It would include open space and some housing. Unfortunately, this gets hindered by offers from the county, which doesn't have any money," Loguercio said. "He hasn't brought anything to me that I feel would be the right opportunity for the community."