

Housing LGBT seniors

75-unit complex in Bay Shore due to open in 2021

BY VERA CHINESE

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A Pride flag-draped excavator helped make way Monday for an affordable housing development for seniors in Bay Shore, the nation's first aimed at those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.

When completed, the 75-unit complex will offer Long Island's LGBT seniors a housing option that does not force them to "re-closet" themselves in their golden years, said LGBT Network president David Kilmnick. The complex will be LGBT-friendly, but open to all who meet age and income requirements and will abide by federal fair housing guidelines, he said.

"There's no better way to honor the generation of Stonewall who started the modern LGBT rights movement than to say, you took care of us, we are going to take care of you," Kilmnick said during a construction kickoff ceremony at the site.

June is Pride month, and this year is the 50th anniversary of the riots that followed a police raid at the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village.

A Union Avenue building that was demolished Monday is the former headquarters of the nonprofit LGBT Network, which



Crews demolish the former headquarters of the LGBT Network to make way for new LGBT-friendly affordable housing for seniors.

moved last month to a 15,000-square-foot center in Hauppauge. The apartment complex to be built in its place will be anchored by an 8,000-square-foot community center for the network. A lottery for the units will be held in 2020 and the complex is expected to open to tenants in early 2021, Kilmnick said.

D & F Development Group of Levittown is behind the \$30 million affordable housing project, funded through a mix of state and federal tax credits, state loans, \$1.5 million from Suffolk County and private investment.

County Executive Steve Bellone said the project would be a boon to downtown Bay Shore, as well as promote inclusivity.

"It's important that we continue to convey the message in every way possible that Suffolk County is a place that celebrates its diversity and . . . is a place of love," he said.

Units are expected to range from about \$1,000 for a one-bedroom to \$1,700 for a two-bedroom. They will be available to those 55 and older and earning 50 to 80 percent of Area Median Income, which on Long Island is \$43,400 to \$69,450 a year for a single-person household.

The United States is home to an estimated 3 million who identify as LGBT, a figure expected to grow to 7 million in 2050, according to SAGE National LGBT Housing Initiative. Hundreds of

thousands of LGBT individuals are estimated to live on Long Island, Kilmnick said, and the LGBT Network serves about 2,500 people per month.

Kilmnick said 48 percent of LGBT couples experience adverse treatment when seeking senior housing, a figure that is even higher for transgender people. Thirty-four percent live in fear of having to recloset themselves in their older age, and about half of states do not have laws prohibiting housing discrimination for sexual orientation or gender identity, he said.

LGBT Network member Brian Nichols, 73, said although he is lucky enough to have secure housing, the new

development will allow other older LGBT people to live a life of acceptance.

"People can be who they want to be," he said. "They can put their Pride flag out, they can hold the hands of their lover, their boyfriend, their girlfriend. It's such a good feeling to have a facility here like this on Long Island."

Kilmnick touted the nonprofit organization's expansion, which not only includes its new larger headquarters but a soon-to-begin project to construct a community center and medical facility in Patchogue.

"There's no other better place to live, I think, for LGBT folks than Suffolk County," he said.

Suffolk 2020 forecast: \$80 million shortfall

BY RICK BRAND

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Suffolk's top fiscal analysts projected Monday that the county faces a potential shortfall of from \$80 million to \$89.3 million heading into the 2020 budget deliberations.

But the county executive's top budget aide, Eric Naughton, said that gap is far narrower than the \$120 million shortfall the county faced at this time last year and expected new revenues were not included in the estimates. Internet sales taxes and Suffolk OTB casino revenues could ease county fiscal problems

substantially, he said.

Robert Lipp, director of the office of budget review and Naughton, deputy county executive for finance, gave the early assessment for 2020 before the legislature's budget and finance committee in Riverhead. The forecast is the start of the annual process of putting together the county's nearly \$3 billion operating budget that County Executive Steve Bellone will present in mid-September.

"It's much better news than last year but there are some challenges we still have to work through," said Deputy Presiding Officer Rob Calarco (D-Patch-

ogue), committee chairman.

However, Legis. Tom Cilmi, head of the GOP caucus, said, "I take the presentation with a grain of salt" because Bellone's 2019 budget was purported "to be in balance, and obviously it's not."

Lipp said the three-year projected shortfall in the general fund is \$65.3 million and the \$24 million in the political district for a total of \$89.3 million. Naughton said his \$80 million estimate is "in the same ballpark."

He said the bulk of the 2018 shortfall was due to the legislature not agreeing to allow the use of \$32 million from the

tax stabilization reserve fund to balance the 2018 budget, which would have been repaid this year.

Naughton also said the county had to pay the state the \$10 million for the health department's program to aid disabled preschoolers up to age 5, for prior years' rate increases that the county "didn't catch up with."

But Naughton called that forecast the "worst case scenario" and other factors narrow the gap. While not included in the forecast, he said the county is likely to see \$25 million in additional funding from Suffolk OTB's casino, Jake's 58 in Is-

landia and another \$10 million this year and as much as \$25 million in sales tax revenue from out of state internet sales.

Naughton said the 2020 budget will be balanced, saying the county has ended borrowing from the state pension fund to pay retirement costs and expects police overtime costs to decline. However, he acknowledged that overtime in the sheriff's office remains a challenge and the county may face costly litigation, alluding to the recent exoneration of Keith Bush, whose murder conviction was vacated last month after he served more than 30 years in prison.