

to LGBT

Suffolk RFPs put on hold

BY RICK BRAND
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A state Supreme Court justice has issued a preliminary injunction barring Suffolk County from issuing new requests for proposals for contracts until officials and Comptroller John Kennedy can agree on a process for the comptroller to conduct performance audits during the bidding process.

Justice David T. Reilly found the comptroller had established “a probability of success on the merits,” as well as “a danger of irreparable harm.”

But “going forward, it is not for this court to craft the manner and extent of a performance audit of the RFP process ahead of the individual facts and circumstances that may arise under any given situation,” Reilly wrote. “That mechanism is better left to the parties.”

Kennedy called the decision “a victory for the taxpayers” providing for “independence and arms-length scrutiny” as allowed under state law and the county charter. “It’s a shame this administration can’t read the law or understand how to implement it,” he said.



JAMES ESCHER

Comptroller John Kennedy

Jason Elan, spokesman for County Executive Steve Bellone, said they are reviewing the ruling. Elan could not say whether the administration would appeal or enter into negotiations with Kennedy.

Elan said 14 requests for proposals are in the pipeline, including those for insurance broker services and an outside auditor for the comptroller’s office for a required annual review of county books.

Reilly’s decision, issued last Thursday, arose from a dispute in March in which Kennedy sought to conduct a performance audit during bidding involving a replacement for Beach Hut as the food concessionaire at county beaches.

Beach Hut was ousted after pleading guilty to tax fraud and

paying the county \$1.113 million for unpaid taxes and fees. Kennedy’s final audit found Beach Hut shortchanged Suffolk by an additional \$1 million.

In the midst of the battle, both sides agreed to permit the bidding process to continue so concessions could open at four county beaches by the start of the summer. But Kennedy pressed for a declaratory judgment asserting his authority to conduct performance audits “in real time” during the process.

Bellone and his parks department maintained the RFP process was an executive function and Kennedy only had the power to audit later.

Reilly, in his ruling, said Suffolk did not appear to contest the comptroller’s “authority to conduct performance audits generally.” Reilly said a review of the county charter “does not appear to limit . . . the comptroller, who was seemingly already empowered to review the RFP process under its auditing and examining authority.”

“Should the comptroller be stripped of this authority,” Reilly said, “the possibility of perversion within the RFP process rises.”

Hofstra to host school safety forum

BY MICHAEL O’KEEFFE
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Nassau County officials will discuss opioids, mass shootings, cyberbullying and other issues affecting students Tuesday at a school safety forum at Hofstra University.

The agenda for the event, which will take place from 7 to 9 p.m., will be wide-ranging but Nassau police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said the issues are linked.

Some children who become targets of cyberbullying, he said, may turn to opioids and other illegal drugs, while others may lash out in violent ways. Young people who become addicted to opioids, he added, sometimes turn to violent crime to fuel their drug habits.

“They are all tangled up together and they all have one common denominator — our kids,” said Ryder, one of the speakers at the event.

Nassau County Executive Laura Curran and District Attorney Madeline Singas, along with addiction experts and other law-



Nassau police Commissioner Patrick Ryder with County Executive Laura Curran speaks about upcoming School Safety Forum.

enforcement officials, are also scheduled to speak at the forum.

Ryder said it’s important for parents to learn how to determine if their children are abusing drugs.

“Too many parents are missing the boat,” he said. “By the time they learn this, it is too late. We need to get them engaged with us.”

Ryder and other officials will discuss “Operation Natalie,” the department’s crackdown on the opioid epidemic. Drug addiction

led to an estimated 600 fatal overdoses on Long Island last year. Operation Natalie was named after Natalie Ciappa, a Nassau County teen who died from a drug overdose 10 years ago. Victor Ciappa, Natalie’s father, is scheduled to be one of the speakers at the forum.

Ryder also urged teachers, school administrators and Nassau residents to attend — and share concerns with authorities.

“We can listen and learn, too,” he said.

said Myriam Kabakov of the Manhattan-based “Welcoming Shuls Project,” which tracks inclusive synagogues.

Kabakov called the Long Island synagogue “one of the most welcoming environments right now” because of its willingness to openly welcome everyone.

“So many synagogues and rabbis are afraid if they stand up and speak out for inclusion of LGBT that the rabbi will lose their job or the synagogue will lose members,” she said. “But this synagogue is being built on the foundations of inclusion of LGBT people, so they have nothing to fear. They are just boldly coming out and saying, ‘This is what we are all about.’”

The Orthodox branch has been slower to welcome gays and lesbians than the conservative and reform movements, said Rabbi Charles Klein of the Merrick Jewish Centre, a conservative synagogue.

Over years, many conservative and reform synagogues have become inclusive as they have developed a greater understanding of the LGBT community, he said.

What Metz-Poolat and her synagogue are doing, Klein said, “is very unusual and I think really an extraordinary step forward, and I would absolutely congratulate them on the courage they have displayed.”

Being open to the LGBT community “is a really important thing” to Jonathan Ezor, an attorney from West Hempstead, who attends Kehilat Ahavat Yisrael with his wife, Stacy, and their three children.

“For us, the appeal is first of all being a part of a small synagogue that is just getting started,” Ezor said. “But, also, we really like the inclusive nature of it.”

Kehilat Ahavat Yisrael’s Rabbi Boaz Tomsy stresses that the synagogue welcomes everyone.

“We are accepting of all people who wish to come and connect and learn about their Jewish faith, to find a place where they can pray and feel comfortable to do so,” he said.

LGBT Jews who are Orthodox want a place in Orthodox Judaism. Because this is the only Judaism we know, and it is beautiful to us.”

— Shlomit Metz-Poolat, left, the synagogue’s president and co-founder

Kehilat Ahavat Yisrael, a Modern Orthodox synagogue founded in West Hempstead, holds services in a Chinese restaurant, at left, until a permanent site can be found.

gogue with the Orthodox Chabad movement, which reaches out to a wide variety of Jews including those who aren’t observant, have left Jewish life altogether or are in interfaith marriages.

“It is very unusual for an Orthodox synagogue to have that type of outreach” to LGBTs, said Teldon, who is Long Island’s chief Chabad representative. “Chabad, which is known for its outreach and has really been a pioneer in the outreach world and the Jewish world, would never do such a thing.”

Kehilat Ahavat Yisrael is one of about 120 Orthodox synagogues nationwide that — in varying degrees — are welcoming to LGBT Jews,

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