

Around LI

Town delays vote on fuel cell plant

The Brookhaven Town Planning Board has postponed a vote on a plan to build a fuel cell facility at a Medford bus company.

The board on Monday gave the public seven more days to submit written comments about Sunnyvale, California-based Bloom Energy Corp.'s plan to build the plant at East End Bus Lines on Horseblock Road. The bus company would remain open.

The board delayed its decision after the Medford Taxpayers and Civic Association announced it had dropped its opposition to the plan. The group had questioned the impact of fuel cells on air quality and said the bus company had failed to comply with requirements to build a berm at the site.

Planning board and Bloom Energy officials said the company had agreed not to build the fuel cell facility until the berm and other site improvements are completed.

Bloom officials have said the 6-megawatt facility would be capable of supplying power to 5,000 homes.

— CARL MACGOWAN

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BROOKHAVEN TOWN

WANTED FOR ILLEGAL DUMPING

Under plan, maximum fines would increase from \$3,000 to \$10,000

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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Brookhaven Town officials are proposing to increase fines for illegal dumping to combat what they say is a plague of such incidents in recent years.

Maximum fines for dumping waste on public lands such as parks and along highways would be increased to \$10,000 from \$3,000 if the town board approves the measure. Penalties would continue to include possible jail time. The board has scheduled a public hearing for 5:30 p.m. June 27 at Town Hall to discuss the proposal.

Brookhaven officials said they hope increasing the fines will deter people from dumping construction debris and other waste on roads and in open spaces.

"This is not going to be the cost of doing business anymore. We're going to be actively pursuing increased fines for those who are doing illegal dumping," said town Councilman Dan Panico, who backs the measure. "Brookhaven's a big place and, unfortunately, there will always be people who either ignorantly or slovenly will dump things on public lands. We're doing everything we can in our power to stop that."

Town officials said they have seen a spate of incidents in recent years in which debris has been found dumped along roads in Manorville and Moriches, a hiking trail in Ridge, and in Pine Barrens State Forest in Middle Island. The dumping in Brookhaven Town followed the discovery of more than 40,000 tons of construction debris in Islip Town's Roberto Clemente Park in Brentwood.

In addition to imposing new fines, Brookhaven plans to buy infrared cameras to take pictures of vehicles suspected of being used to illegally dump



A sample of illegal dumping found on town land: a boat with trailer, a wheelbarrow and other assorted debris — all found along Wading River Hollow Road in Ridge. Town plan has fines more than tripling.

material late at night, Panico said. Town officials have worked with residents and community groups to help spot illegal dumping and surreptitiously photograph license plates, he said.

Toni Trapani, who heads the Tri-Hamlet South Neighborhood Watch group in Mastic Beach, said members have found tires and barrels containing unknown substances in parts of the South Shore hamlet. She said the community has numerous vacant parcels and wetlands that seem to attract dumpers.

Trapani would welcome stiffer penalties, she said.

"The problem we face is that, though we are able to have these sites cleaned up, there isn't enough 'teeth' to the existing laws to dissuade people from continually dumping," she said in an email. "Without amending the existing laws to

increase the penalty for the actions of those that would feel free and comfortable to dump all over our town and its sensitive and sometimes fragile ecology and environment, this will keep happening."

Illegal dumping appears to increase in the spring, Panico said, adding that officials have found large items such as abandoned boats and campers among discarded debris.

He said residents are allowed to dump up to 500 pounds of debris for free on Saturdays at the town landfill, and household waste can be discarded at the landfill on weekdays for a "nominal" fee.

"We have gone out of our way to make plenty of avenues available for the legal removal of refuse and garbage," Panico said. "There's no excuse. There's no excuse for illegal dumping on public lands."

What dumpers face

Penalties for illegal dumping on public lands in Brookhaven Town:

CURRENT:

- Fines range from \$250 to \$2,000 and a maximum of 15 days in jail for a first offense.
- Fines range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 and 15 days to 6 months in jail for a second offense.
- Each week that dumping continues is considered a separate violation.

PROPOSED:

- Fines would range from \$1,000 to \$5,000 and up to 15 days in jail for a first offense.
- Fines would range from \$2,000 to \$10,000 and 15 days to 6 months in jail for a second offense.
- Each day that dumping continues would be considered a separate violation.

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