

## Around LI

### OYSTER BAY

#### Boat speed limit cut to 5 mph on Fourth

Oyster Bay Harbor speed limits for boats will be reduced to 5 mph on July Fourth evening under an executive order signed by Oyster Bay Town Supervisor Joseph Saladino on Monday. The limit will be in effect from 6 p.m. to midnight on Independence Day. Saladino also announced stepped-up enforcement of boating while intoxicated offenses.

"Holidays can be a very dangerous time as those who are drinking decide to get behind the wheel of a boat or a car and they put themselves and the safety of innocent people in jeopardy," Saladino said at a news conference on Monday in front of Oyster Bay harbor. Saladino said that the town's bay constables have a busy day ahead of them on July Fourth. "They'll be patrolling the Long Island Sound, Oyster Bay Harbor and the Great South Bay in an effort to keep drunken boaters off of our waterways and to keep our waterways safe for everyone."

The order expands to the entire harbor a 5 mph speed limit that regularly applies to boats operating within 200 feet of the shoreline, docks, floats, rafts, moored vessels or channel systems. On regular days some parts of the harbor don't have speed limits, Saladino said.

— TED PHILLIPS

### BABYLON VILLAGE

#### Added fee mulled for development permits

Those applying for major development permits in Babylon Village may soon have to pay additional fees for expert consultants to review their applications, following a law passed recently by the board of trustees.

The law, approved last Tuesday by a 5-0 vote, enables the village to pass on to permit applicants the cost of engineering, planning and other types of consultants hired to review applications.

Village Attorney Gerard Glass said at the meeting that



BARRY SLOAN

### Lawmaker's wish that it be the last straw

**NORTHPORT.** Outside a restaurant, Legis. Kara Hahn (D-Setauket) clutches plastic straws found on a beach. Hahn and the Suffolk County Plastic Reduction task force launched the Strawless Suffolk initiative Monday, aimed at reducing single-use plastic straws. Organizers hope to convince restaurants to stop "grabbing at straws." **Plastic straw, utensil ban in Seattle, A32**

Babylon does not have a planning department and lacks the technical expertise to evaluate the potential impact of every proposal for new businesses or development that comes before village boards.

The new law will enable the village to hire outside experts to review applications and relate their findings to the Zoning Board of Appeals, the board of trustees and other village boards, without generating additional costs for village taxpayers, Glass said.

— JESSE COBURN

### BABYLON TOWN

#### Rules adopted for ward district code

The Town of Babylon has voted to create a set of requirements for any petitions seeking to change the way town council members are elected.

The town council on Thursday voted 4-0, with Councilwoman Jackie Gordon absent,

to accept a series of additions to the town's code on ward districts. Prior to the vote at the special meeting, a public hearing was held at which no residents spoke.

The creation of ward districts would change how the Democrat-majority council members serve, from at-large to specific districts. Town Supervisor Rich Schaffer is opposed to council districts, saying that they "don't do anything to address town residents' best interests."

Town Republicans have maintained that districts would improve local representation and in 2016 sought to put a ward district referendum on the November ballot. Then-Town Clerk Carol Quirk rejected the petition as "legally insufficient" because she said its wording did not meet town and state election law requirements. Republicans are trying again this year for a ward district referendum.

The additions to the town's

code on ward districts, which was created in 2016, establish the procedure for a petition. One requirement is that all signatures must be dated and the date cannot be more than 180 days prior to the filing of the petition with the town.

This new rule could invalidate at least some of the 1,900 signatures Republicans have collected, said Town Republican chair Tony Pancella. He vowed to collect those signatures again, saying the matter "should be before the people."

— DENISE M. BONILLA

### EAST WILLISTON

#### School board pair to be sworn-in Tuesday

The East Williston school district is scheduled to swear in two returning members to its governing board on Tuesday during a monthly meeting.

East Williston resident Robert Fallarino and Leonard Hirsch, of Roslyn Heights,

retained three-year seats during school elections May 15. On Tuesday, board members are also scheduled to appoint a president and vice president.

Fallarino is the current vice president and Albertson resident Mark Kamberg is president, a title he has held for eight years.

Also during Tuesday's meeting, district officials are scheduled to give an update on the fence construction project at North Side School and renew their annual public relations services contract with Melisa Byrnsfor \$42,500.

The school board announced in June that the district will build a perimeter fence around the elementary school to keep students from running off-site and to block potential assailants from entering the building. Many details remain undetermined, including the height and style of the fence, and when it will be constructed.

— KRISTOPHER J. BROOKS

## CALIFORNIA COURT RULES FOR YELP IN DEFAMATION CASE

LI BUSINESS

The Associated Press

Online review site Yelp.com cannot be ordered to remove posts against a San Francisco law firm that a judge determined were defamatory, a divided California Supreme Court ruled Monday in a closely watched case that internet companies warned could be used to silence online speech.

In a 4-3 opinion, justices agreed, saying removal orders such as the one attorney Dawn Hassell obtained against Yelp “could interfere with and undermine the viability of an online platform.”

The decision overturned a lower court ruling that Yelp had said could lead to the removal of negative reviews from the popular website.

Hassell said Yelp was exaggerating the stakes of her legal effort. Her attorney, Monique Olivier, said in a statement that the ruling “stands as an invitation to spread falsehoods on the internet without consequence.”

She said her client was considering an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Hassell’s 2013 lawsuit accused a client she represented in a personal injury case of defaming her on Yelp by falsely claiming that her firm failed to communicate with the client, among other things.

San Francisco Superior Court Judge Donald Sullivan found the online statements defamatory and ordered the client and Yelp to remove them. Hassell said the client failed to answer her lawsuit or remove the posts, so she had to seek a court order demanding that Yelp do it.

A second judge and a state appeals court upheld Sullivan’s order.

“Ms. Hassell did exactly what she should have done,” Olivier said Monday. “After both the defamer and Yelp refused to remove untrue and damaging statements, she obtained a judgment against the defamer, and sought to enforce that judgment by requiring Yelp to remove the defamation.”

# No eating, sipping with plastic

## To curb pollution, Seattle ban targets straws and utensils

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Looking for a plastic straw to sip your soda? It’s no longer allowed in Seattle bars and restaurants.

Neither are plastic utensils in the latest push to reduce waste and prevent marine plastic pollution. Businesses that sell food or drinks won’t be allowed to offer the plastic items under a rule that went into effect Sunday.

Seattle is believed to be the first major U.S. city to ban single-use plastic straws and utensils in food service, according to Seattle Public Utilities. The eco-conscious city has been an environmental leader in the United States, working to aggressively curb the amount of trash that goes into landfills by requiring more options that can be recycled or composted.

Seattle’s 5,000 restaurants will now have to use reusable or compostable utensils, straws and cocktail picks, though the city is encouraging businesses to consider not providing straws altogether or switch to paper rather than compostable plastic straws.

“Plastic pollution is surpassing crisis levels in the world’s oceans, and I’m proud Seattle is leading the way and setting an example for the nation by enact-



GREG GILBERT / THE SEATTLE TIMES VIA AP

Seattle restaurant owner Duke Moscrip offers paper alternatives, which can be composted. Seattle, an environmental leader, claims to be the first major U.S. city to ban single-use plastic in food service.

ing a plastic straw ban,” Seattle Public Utilities General Manager Mami Hara said in a statement last month.

Proposals to ban plastic straws are being considered in other cities, including New York and San Francisco. In the United Kingdom, Prime Minister Theresa May announced in April a plan to ban the sale of plastic straws, drink stirrers and plastic-stemmed cotton buds.

Business groups have opposed the idea in Hawaii, where legislation to ban plastic straws died this year, with the Hawaii Restau-

rant Association and Hawaii Food Industry Association testifying against the measure.

Seattle’s ban is part of a 2008 ordinance that requires restaurants and other food-service businesses to find recyclable or compostable alternatives to disposable containers, cups, straws, utensils and other products.

Businesses have had time to work toward complying with the ban, said Jillian Henze, a spokeswoman for the Seattle Restaurant Alliance, an industry trade group.

“We’ve almost had a year to seek out products to protect the environment and give customers a good experience [with alternatives],” she said.

The city had allowed exemptions for some products until alternatives could be found. With multiple manufacturers offering alternatives, the city let the exemption for plastic utensils and straws run out over the weekend.

Businesses that don’t comply may face a fine of up to \$250, but city officials say they will work with businesses to make the changes.

## Cheaper investing: Vanguard cuts ETF commissions

The cost of investing keeps dropping as savvy investors push companies to lower or do away with high fees and commissions.

On Monday, industry giant Vanguard said it will stop charging commissions for online trades of most of its competitors’ exchange-traded funds. Vanguard already lets customers make online trades of 77 of its own ETFs without commissions, but it plans to extend the practice to nearly 1,800 ETFs from BlackRock’s iShares, Charles Schwab, State Street Global Advisors and other rivals in August.

It’s the latest salvo in an industry-wide price war that’s netted billions of dollars in annual sav-

ings for investors, as costs drop for everything from trading to financial advice to the annual expense for investing in funds. Give credit to investors, who have gotten more educated about the benefits of keeping their costs low. They’re moving their dollars accordingly, which has forced the industry to cut costs even further.

Commission-free ETF trading is nothing new, but some of Vanguard’s rivals have gotten criticism for allowing ETFs only from certain providers to qualify. Karin Risi, director of Vanguard’s retail investor group, said it will allow commission-free online trading for the “vast majority” of ETFs.

Vanguard will exclude some ETFs that use borrowed money to supercharge their returns, as well as others that the company considers “highly speculative or misunderstood” products that may not be suited for long-term investors.

“The key here is lowering the cost of investing in ETFs for our clients,” Risi said. “That’s our mantra.”

It’s also been investors’ mantra to give their business only to companies with the lowest costs. The only actively managed U.S. stock funds that were able to attract new investment dollars last year were those in the bottom 5 percent for expenses, according to the Invest-

ment Company Institute. For index funds and ETFs, more than half of the dollars went to the cheapest 5 percent of funds.

Low costs have become more alluring given how unpredictable markets have become: When stock and bond markets around the world are shifting by the hour because of Twitter messages, one of the few things investors have complete control over is how much in fees they pay. Plus, research has shown that investments with lower costs tend to be more successful in the long run, in part because higher-cost rivals have to perform that much better just to get to the same after-fee performance. — AP