

Town, LIPA OK tax deal

Brookhaven agrees to cut back charges for Port Jeff plant

BY MARK HARRINGTON
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Brookhaven Town was expected to announce Tuesday that it has reached an agreement in principle with LIPA to gradually reduce the \$32.6 million in annual taxes it charges the utility for the Port Jefferson power plant.

It would be the first settlement of four tax challenges filed by LIPA over the \$176 million it pays in taxes for National Grid-owned plants. LIPA has argued that for aging plants that are used less and less each year, they are 90 percent overassessed.

Brookhaven Supervisor Ed Romaine was expected to announce the tentative agree-

ment Tuesday in his state of the town address. It was expected to include an eight-year ramp-down of the \$32.6 million a year LIPA pays in lieu of taxes for the plant, which operated just 11 percent of the time in 2016. The ramp-down period is expected to begin in the 2018-19 tax year, with incremental reductions in tax payments over the eight years.

Romaine declined to detail how the taxes will be reduced for the plant over that time, but called the amount "substantial." Previous proposals had put the reduction at around 50 percent over that period.

"I've wanted to settle this from the day I came into office," Romaine said, adding that he has long felt taxes on the plant were "out of whack."

LIPA said in a statement it "continues to engage in productive settlement discussions with the town and we hope to reach a final agreement."

He said the agreement includes an assurance that the reduced taxes "will go directly to the LIPA ratepayers in the form of lower electric bills."

Most of National Grid's large Long Island plants have been used substantially less in recent years. LIPA has turned to undersea power cables and the newer Caithness power plant in Yaphank for a larger percentage of energy, as well as green-energy sources. LIPA pays just under \$10 million in annual taxes for the Caithness plant, which is also in Brookhaven.

By avoiding a trial, the tentative deal means Brookhaven won't face the prospect of a hefty back-tax repayment on the plant were LIPA to win its challenge, which was brought in 2010. LIPA has contended the past overpayments amount to more than \$200 million for Port Jefferson alone.

The deal "puts an end to the uncertainty over the course of

nine years, and gives finality to this," Romaine said.

Other municipalities that host National Grid plants, including Northport, Island Park and Glenwood Landing, are reported to be continuing to negotiate. The case involving the Northport plant and Huntington Town, for which National Grid pays \$80 million in annual taxes, is scheduled to go to trial in June.

The biggest impact of the Brookhaven reduction will be felt by the Port Jefferson school district, which gets around 40 percent of its budget from the tax payments. Only around 8 percent of the \$32.6 million annual payment for the plant goes to the town, and Romaine said the town is making plans to make up for the shortfall.

"We have tax reserve funds that will be used to offset this," he said. "I don't believe it will have a big impact on the town per se. It may on other taxing jurisdictions."

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CORRECTIONS

The Islip Town Board voted on March 20 to amend the town's charge card policy with an updated list of authorized users and stores. A Monday news brief was incorrect because of information provided by the town.

Ken Laurence was eliminated on Thursday's episode of "Project Runway All-Stars." The Reality Check on Monday's Flash page incorrectly listed him as one of the remaining finalists.

Conductor from LI saves ill rider

BY RACHEL UDA
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A New York City subway conductor from Nissequogue helped save an unresponsive passenger last week while on his route, MTA officials said.

Kevin Bartsch, 50, was a conductor on Wednesday on a southbound F train that was stopped at the Jackson Heights-Roosevelt Avenue station in Queens when passengers ran to his window.

A man was slumped over in his seat. Bartsch, who had been a volunteer EMT for the Nissequogue Fire Department, went to check and noticed the passenger wasn't breathing and his lips had turned blue.

He brought the man to the ground and immediately started CPR, performing chest compressions for about five minutes before he was joined by an EMT for the Metropolitan Transportation Authority who was posted at the station, the MTA said.

"It all happened so fast," Bartsch said. "The training just took over."

Bartsch continued to rhythmically push down on the man's chest as the EMT read-



Conductor Kevin Bartsch, of Nissequogue, said: "It all happened so fast. The training just took over."

ied an AED. But the man regained consciousness before they could use the defibrillator, and "became combative," Bartsch said.

"He jumped off the floor and tried to push the EMT

back down," Bartsch said. "I was telling him, 'You just died. You need to relax and listen to what I'm telling you.'"

The passenger was taken to Elmhurst Hospital in Queens, the FDNY said. Bartsch then

went back to the rest of his rush-hour route, he said.

"We are in awe of Kevin's bravery, quick thinking and the action he undertook to save a rider's life," said MTA spokesman Jon Weinstein.

JESSICA ROTKIEWICZ

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1860 The Pony Express began carrying mail between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California.

1882 Outlaw Jesse James was shot to death in St. Joseph, Missouri, by Robert Ford, a member of James' gang.

1936 Bruno Hauptmann was electrocuted in Trenton, New Jersey, for the kidnap-murder of Charles Lindbergh Jr.

1968 Martin Luther King Jr. delivered what turned out to be his final speech, telling striking sanitation workers in Memphis that "I've been to the mountaintop" and "seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we, as a people, will get to the Promised Land!" (About 20 hours later, King was felled by an assassin's bullet at the Lorraine Motel.)

1996 Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski was arrested at his remote Montana cabin.