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Transcript of the Public Hearing
on
Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection
Held on Monday, September 22, 2014
750 Veterans Highway
Hauppauge, New York

Hearing convened at 6:15 p.m.

BEFORE: JEFFREY W. SZABO,
Chief Executive Officer of the
Suffolk County Water Authority,
and Chairman, Long Island Commission on
Aquifer Protection

1 P R E S E N T

2 JEFFREY W. SZABO, CEO, Suffolk County Water
Authority

3
4 WALTER DAWYDIAK, Representing Suffolk County
Department of Health

5 JARED HERSHKOWITZ, Representing Suffolk County P.O.

6 BRIAN SCHNEIDER, Representing Nassau County
Executive, Hon. Edward Mangano

7
8 MICHAEL WHITE, Representing Suffolk County
Legislature, Hon. Du Wayne Gregory

9
10 JOHN MILAZZO, Esq., Attorney for Suffolk County
Water Authority

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. SZABO: We are going to start.

Good evening, everyone. My name is Jeff Szabo. I am the Chief Executive Officer of the Suffolk County Water Authority, as well as Chairman of the Long Island Commission on Aquifer Protection.

I would like to introduce the Commission members that are with us this evening. We will start with the gentleman who just arrived seven minutes late, but we won't hold that against him, Mr. Walter Dawydiak. Walt represents the Suffolk County Health Department.

MR. WHITE: Michael White, I am representing the Suffolk County Legislature's Presiding Officer.

MR. HERSHKOWITZ: Jared Hershkowitz, representing also the Suffolk County Presiding Officer.

MR. SZABO: Thank you all for attending. It is much appreciated. Tonight we are holding our second hearing. We held one last week in Nassau County and tonight, obviously, we're in Suffolk County, to give you, the members of the public, an opportunity to offer your thoughts on the state of

1 our aquifer system and any measures that you feel
2 should be taken to protect our groundwater for
3 current and future generations of Long Islanders.

4 Each speaker will be given three minutes
5 to speak. This is an opportunity for us to hear
6 from you what is on your mind. This forum will not
7 be open for dialog or a debate. We will record
8 your testimony so that Commission members can
9 benefit from your thoughts while preparing the
10 State of Aquifer Report and our Groundwater
11 Resource Management Plan.

12 As you know, the Long Island Commission
13 on Aquifer Protection was created last year in
14 order to seek proactive measures to protect our
15 aquifer system in a coordinated manner with
16 governmental entities, local, state and federal
17 levels all working together. The motivation for
18 creating the Commission was that no central agency
19 exists to monitor and protect our most vital
20 resource, our groundwater supply.

21 With that, I would like to introduce the
22 first speaker, Mr. William Stegemann. Please come
23 up.

24 MR. STEGEMANN: Good evening. My name
25 is Bill Stegemann. I am the Conservation Sheriff

1 for the Sierra Club, the Long Island Group. We
2 have about 6000 members here on Long Island. I was
3 at the Nassau County hearing as well, and I was a
4 little disappointed by the number of people that
5 showed up. I am not sure what LICAP is doing in
6 terms of outreach, but this is a very important
7 issue that a lot of Long Islanders are caring
8 about. We have seen increased news coverage of
9 this. I would have thought that there would have
10 been more people there. I think more efforts need
11 to be undertaken in terms of outreach.

12 I am sure you are familiar with these
13 hearings that Suffolk County Legislator William
14 Spencer and Nassau County Legislator Judy Bosworth
15 had. They had a few hearings and there was a much
16 greater representation of the public at those
17 hearings.

18 Speaking of those hearings, one of the
19 things that came up was this idea of an aquifer
20 management compact, and the compact concept is
21 something that is common. New York State is a
22 member of a few of these compacts, and elsewhere in
23 America and around the world people are looking to
24 these management compacts to oversee their water
25 resources, and Sierra Club and many other groups on

1 Long Island and concerned individuals feel that the
2 compact would be the best way to go to manage and
3 protect our groundwater supply, and I would say
4 that Judy Bosworth, in particular, as a Nassau
5 County Legislator, continues to voice support for
6 the compacts even at last year's groundwater
7 symposium.

8 So we have had decades of plans and
9 studies; what we have lacked is consistency and we
10 have lacked implementation and a compact would be
11 there solely to focus and to make sure that what we
12 have seen happen in Nassau recently with the lack
13 of funding for the USGS monitoring, that wouldn't
14 happen if we had a compact.

15 I will leave it at that. Thank you very
16 much.

17 MR. SZABO: Thank you very much.

18 Joe Baier.

19 MR. BAIER: I see some familiar faces
20 here. I am here representing myself and as I say
21 on your card, I will try to do it in three minutes,
22 if I can. I had three items that I think I would
23 like to bring before you this evening that I think
24 you might like to think about as far as aquifer
25 protection:

1 The first is very near and dear to most
2 hearts and that is the Suffolk County Health
3 Department. I am sure you are all well aware of
4 the newspaper articles that Newsday has given on
5 the difficulties that this agency has had, and
6 having been in his position years ago, I can
7 understand what is happening, unfortunately, and I
8 don't know if there is anything that you can do to
9 talk to the County Executive or someone in the
10 County to try to help these guys out because the
11 amount of work that they have done is so tremendous
12 in terms of hazardous waste identification,
13 cleanups, which they have been almost cut to the
14 bone where they can hardly do any inspections, so
15 they can't find any further pollution.

16 The gas stations, that was a great
17 program but it sort of fell off of the table.
18 While the gas stations are under control, they are
19 not being inspected. It's like the fox guiding the
20 chickens, once the fox goes away, all things are
21 going to happen. They know nobody is going to come
22 and inspect them.

23 The other part of the problem is the
24 private wells. There was a great big program years
25 ago to take care of individuals with private wells

1 and they could get their well sampled for a very
2 reasonable price and it found a lot of pollution.
3 It actually led to a lot of water main extensions
4 from the Water Authority, because they found a lot
5 of contamination, which eventually brought the
6 Water Authority into it. That program is almost
7 down to nothing, too, because they had to take the
8 people on that once there are layoffs and what have
9 you, and put them into the public water supply
10 program.

11 So I hope that possibly through your
12 efforts there is something that can be done to help
13 these folks out.

14 My second thing is a program for funding
15 the elimination of cesspools. I don't know if you
16 know this, but two or three years ago the Town of
17 South Hampton put a certain amount of money up, I
18 think it was something like \$50,000, and they told
19 people: If you have a single cesspools or two
20 cesspools and you want to upgrade your system, we
21 will give you a certain amount of money -- seed
22 money, not to pay for the whole thing. People
23 jumped right on it. Within two days the money was
24 gone -- So If the County Executive wants to be
25 concerned with regard to the surface waters because

1 that's the places that are the most vulnerable or
2 possibly have the most contamination. It's an
3 inexpensive program to run. The difficulty is I
4 think there has to be publicity to promote it and
5 perhaps out of your group you can come up with some
6 sort of subcommittee to investigate funding
7 sources. I think if funding was made available,
8 the towns would jump at that.

9 My third thing is the formation of
10 septic districts -- you may have heard of those.
11 They're something that can be done under state law
12 like a drainage district or a sewer district, et
13 cetera, and that would take care of -- in
14 situations it would have to be a local government,
15 and they would set up a program whereby people's
16 septic tank or cesspools can be pumped, let's say,
17 every five years, and it would be free because they
18 will pay for it in the septic district tax over the
19 five years and then the towns could run and it
20 could just be a recurring program.

21 Again, I think that's a big help towards
22 aquifer protection. Thank you.

23 MR. SZABO: Thank you, Joe.

24 Next, Richard Murdocco.

25 MR. MURDOCCO: I am speaking tonight

1 regarding the importance of protecting Long
2 Island's aquifer system.

3 It's critically important that Long
4 Islanders understand how land use impacts drinking
5 and surface water quality in the region. It is
6 equally important that municipalities, from the
7 village to county level, craft a unified vision
8 towards water protection. All too often local
9 governments tout the benefits of water protection,
10 while simultaneously approving drastic increases in
11 developmental density that overburden our already
12 overtaxed wastewater infrastructure.

13 In order to achieve truly smart growth
14 that will allow Long Island to withstand
15 demographic and economic shifts, we need to balance
16 our regional environmental, economic and social
17 needs. We need vibrant downtowns, but they need to
18 be paired with the infrastructure to support such
19 growth. The numbers, studies and trends don't lie,
20 we need to start taking our water protection
21 seriously. If we, as a region, don't change
22 course, we are in for a rude awakening.

23 Decidedly pro-development attitudes are
24 morphing the way Long Islanders discuss regional
25 issues. While the concept of walkable downtowns

1 placed near transit nodes is grounded in valid
2 planning theory, in practice many of the projects
3 being approved across Long Island don't consider
4 the limitations of infrastructure of which is a
5 critical component to successfully implementing the
6 concepts.

7 We already have the answers to our water
8 woes, as outlined in the 1992 Special Groundwater
9 Protection Areas Plan and countless other studies,
10 but must have the political will to execute its
11 recommendations.

12 To ensure our aquifer is fully
13 protected, we must strike the fine balance between
14 Long Island's environmental, social and economic
15 needs, and stop pursuing unsustainable policy
16 solutions as suggested by those who are in a
17 position to gain from such recommendations.

18 That's all. Thank you.

19 MR. SZABO: Thank you very much.

20 I would like to say that I can welcome
21 our next speaker, Richard Amper.

22 MR. AMPER: My name is Richard Amper,
23 and I am with the Long Island Pine Barrens Society
24 and the Long Island Clean Water Partnership.

25 I don't have anything lengthy to say and

1 I don't have anything negative to say, so if you
2 would like to take a moment to pick your teeth up
3 off the floor, there is plenty of time for that.

4 We are very pleased that LICAP has been
5 formed and has moved in to work as quickly as it
6 has. Especially the water purveyors of Nassau and
7 Suffolk County, you are delivering safe drinking
8 water to your customers and yet you have recognized
9 that the cost of filtering it is increasing. In
10 Nassau County, in particular, there are problems
11 locating wells here and there. More than anything
12 else, you have been fairly committed, very
13 committed to source water protection for some time.
14 So I think you have a great role to play. The
15 partnership has now grown to more than a hundred
16 member organizations, more than 13,000 individual
17 members and we are fully supportive of the work
18 that you are doing.

19 We are looking forward especially to the
20 State of the Aquifer Report. Up to this point I
21 have a one page State of the Aquifer Report that
22 says it's terrible, so the answer is having more
23 scientific and professional information as input
24 from you folks. In the meantime, anything that we
25 can do to work even more closely with you, I think

1 we are working for the same purpose. I think it's
2 going to take some time and we are all going to
3 stand up together. Sometimes it takes even more
4 time than sometimes we would prefer, but the fact
5 of the matter is that this is the most important
6 thing that anybody is doing on Long Island. We
7 have to get it right and with your help we will do
8 that.

9 Thank you very much.

10 MR. SZABO: Thank you very much.

11 Andrea Spilka.

12 MS. SPILKA: Hi. Good evening.

13 My name is Andrea Spilka. I am the
14 President of the South Hampton Town Civic
15 Coalition. I find it is always interesting that we
16 are all basically saying the same thing in terms of
17 advocating for your assistance on behalf of clean
18 water, and I thank you for all of your efforts, but
19 I am really here to say that, first of all, the
20 civics are with you on this.

21 I represent a group of civics west of
22 the Shinnecock Canal but I think I speak probably
23 for all of the civics in my area, east to
24 Brookhaven and throughout South Hampton. Our focus
25 is water protection. It's all we talk about. It's

1 all we work on. We are trying now to protect the
2 400 acres at The Hills in East Quoque, which is
3 feeding directly into Weesuck Creek and then
4 Shinnecock Bay which is already polluted.

5 My concern all along is that -- and I am
6 pleased to see that folks like Governor Cuomo and
7 County Executive Bellone keep saying their focus is
8 water protection and water quality. The
9 predicament I have is that money, the money has not
10 come forward to do just that. So I am hoping that
11 there will be the funding, in addition to the
12 focus, and whatever you can do to support that, we
13 will support you to work for that.

14 One frustrating example for us is the
15 Speonk Solvent. I don't know if that's something
16 that you are familiar with. The state DEC and the
17 County -- thank you, Walter -- and everyone
18 involved, have been working to try to help us to
19 monitor that plume. It just keeps growing and
20 keeps expanding. The predicament is that they
21 don't have the staff to do what is really
22 necessary. So at the state level and certainly at
23 the county level, it's been a real predicament.

24 I have spoken before for the County
25 Legislation to get more staff to do the monitoring

1 that we need, especially in our area, because so
2 many of our people are on private wells. We need
3 the updated sewerage treatment systems. We need
4 wells, well monitoring, and in addition, we need
5 action now.

6 I will be brief. I am just about done.
7 I recently read something that I thought was good
8 and maybe it will help you as well. It said the
9 best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The
10 second best time is now. If you can, please try to
11 get them to act now. Thank you very much.

12 MR. SZABO: Thank you.

13 Are there any other individuals that
14 would like to address the Commission at this point?
15 I don't have any more cards up here. Feel free to
16 come up to the podium.

17 If not, it's 6:24. I would ask that
18 with the support of the Commission, that we recess,
19 as we did in Nassau County, for ten minutes, to see
20 if anybody else desires to speak to the Commission.
21 So if no one wishes to be heard, we will recess
22 until 6:35.

23 Thank you.

24 (Whereupon, a recess was taken.)

25 MR. SZABO: Back on the record.

1 We have no additional speakers this
2 evening. I would like to say that individuals can
3 submit written comments in the next two weeks. You
4 can certainly mail any comments you have to the
5 Commission. Send it to my attention, Jeff Szabo,
6 4060 Sunrise Highway, Oakdale, New York 11769. I'm
7 with the Suffolk County Water Authority. I will
8 share comments with the Commission members.

9 We will close this hearing tonight at
10 this time. We will have additional public
11 meetings. The Commission's work does go on. We
12 are in the process of preparing the State of the
13 Aquifer Report and at some point, dates have not
14 been set, but we will get together, we will meet
15 and we will share the information, solicit
16 additional comments and then put them forward to
17 the public, and I can promise you that we will be
18 very aggressive with getting the word out to make
19 sure that the public has an opportunity to come and
20 speak at future meetings, both in Nassau County and
21 Suffolk County.

22 I would like to thank you all for coming
23 this evening. I would like to thank the Commission
24 members. Good night.

25 (Time Noted: 6:40 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I, MONIQUE CABRERA, a Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public, within and for the State of New York, do hereby certify that I reported the proceedings in the within-entitled matter, on September 22, 2014, at 750 Veterans Highway, Hauppauge, New York, and that this is an accurate transcription of these proceedings.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 30th day of September, 2014.



MONIQUE CABRERA, Reporter