

TOP STORIES

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Brentwood's Roberto Clemente Park, one of Islip's contaminated dumping sites, remains closed.

County will check water

■ **Suffolk wants** to ensure tainted fill isn't polluting

■ **Health dept.** will reach out to residents with results

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The Suffolk Legislature voted yesterday to have the county health department dig its own monitoring wells at contaminated sites in Islip Town, including Brentwood's Roberto Clemente Park.

The legislative resolution is aimed at giving local residents an independent assessment of the health impact of an estimated 50,000 tons of tainted fill dumped in the town park and at other dumping sites under investigation by the Suffolk district attorney's office.

"We need to have another set of eyes to determine if the monitoring is being done adequately," said Legis. Monica Martinez (D-Brentwood), who said the town has lost the trust of the local community. "This will allow residents to sleep well at night knowing that Suffolk County is there to protect them."

The resolution was approved 17-0 with Legis. John Kennedy (R-Nesconset) abstaining. He called the resolution "a little premature" because the county does not know the cost of the monitoring or whether it can recover the funds from polluters.

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Roberto Clemente Park.
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"Who will bear the freight?" Kennedy asked.

But Legis. Thomas Barraga (R-West Islip), the resolution's co-sponsor, said county action is needed because its experts have a deeper understanding of the local groundwater than state or federal agencies and can press for quicker action.

"There's a real advantage to having Suffolk County involved," Barraga said. "I want the county involved and I want them involved now. The people deserve it."

Walter Dawydiak, health department director of environmental services, said the office expects to begin drilling a half-dozen additional wells at Clemente Park before month's end. He estimated the cost at between \$20,000 and \$30,000, at least 64 percent of which would be eligible for state aid.

He said the county has spoken to state officials, who are overseeing the cleanup, about digging new wells and has received no objections. Suffolk

has not discussed the issue with the town, Dawydiak said.

"We're open to talking to the health department," said Inez Birbiglia, deputy Islip parks commissioner. "It'll be an education to learn what their plans are for installing wells on our property."

Birbiglia said Islip is regulated by the state Department of Environmental Conservation on the cleanup. "That's where we seek our approval," she said. A DEC spokesman declined to comment.

The legislative vote came after the DEC, in a letter last week to Islip officials, said the town must dig two more test wells in addition to the three the town proposed in its 250-page remediation plan.

Martinez said the resolution passed yesterday also calls for the health department to reach out to the community with its findings. The department must report back to lawmakers within 45 days on whether other sites, such as the Veterans Way subdivision in Islandia, need to be tested.

Also yesterday, county lawmakers approved an agreement between Southampton Town and the county for a \$1.4 million project to rebuild dunes near Tiana Beach that have been washed over repeatedly and are in danger of breakthroughs. The state will fund 70 percent, and the county and town will meet their share with in-kind manpower and machinery.