

New Suffolk sewer plan can solve several needs

A new plan has emerged for hooking up the Ronkonkoma Hub development to sewers, and it seems so sensible and forward-looking, it's a wonder it wasn't the plan of choice from the get-go.

The first proposal involved running pipes west through Islandia, the shortest and least expensive route to the Southwest Sewer District. But when the village objected, officials from Suffolk County and the Town of Islip started brainstorming and came up with an alternative that is more expensive in the short term, but far more efficient in the long run — and better both environmentally and economically.

The new route, still being tweaked, runs south from the Hub into downtown Sayville, then west through Oakdale to East Islip, where it would hook into the Southwest Sewer District. This route would cost \$10 million to \$15 million more — small change in the big-money world of sewerage — while providing enormous additional benefits.

It would allow for more development at Long Island MacArthur Airport and connections to the Route 454 corridor. It also would dovetail neatly with county plans for \$383 million in federal funding for sewer projects to reduce nitrogen that's fouling our water and killing the marshes and wetlands that provide storm protection on the South Shore. Part of the plan involves extending the Southwest Sewer District into Great River. Oakdale and Sayville, the next communities, also are high on the priority list. The new route would put some of the needed infrastructure in place. Permits for laying the pipes are not expected to be a problem.

County, town and state officials will sit down to talk on Friday and everyone seems to be on the same page with this new thinking. That's good. Because even though the new plan might not have been the first plan pitched, it's a far better one. **N**