

## **Meeting Results May 16, 2007 Lake Ronkonkoma Advisory Board Meeting**

Location: William Rogers Legislative Building, Clerk's Conference Room, Veterans Hwy., Hauppauge, NY

Participants: Suffolk County Legislator John Kennedy  
Nick Pappas and associate, Town of Brookhaven Parks Department  
Angel Dybas, Cornell Cooperative Extension, 854-5544  
George Schramm, President Lake Ronkonkoma Civic Organization  
Heidi O'Riordan, NYS DEC, 444-0282  
Robert M. Waters and Andrew Rapietko, Suffolk County Health Dept, 852-5760, 5786  
Russell Barnett and Ted Sanford (Town Engineer), Town of Smithtown, 360-7514, 7550  
Robin Ferencz Kotfica Ronkonkoma Chamber of Commerce, 981-2093  
Kathy Eiseman, Beth Cartwright, Nelson Pope & Voorhis, 427-5665  
Carter McCabe from NYS Assemblyman Michael Fitzpatrick's office, 724-2929  
Carole Donaghy from NYS Senator John Flanagan's Office, 361-2154  
James Rengstl and Daniella G, Eurospect, 366-5294  
Stephen Terraciano and Ronald Busciolano, USGS Cora m Office, 736-0783  
Owen Evans, SUNY SB ESS, 632-8061  
Nora Detweiler, Deputy Commissioner Town of Islip Parks Department, 224-5409  
Kathy Walsh, Brookhaven Town Councilwoman  
Susan Lesica, Lake Ronkonkoma Resident

### **Presentation by Stephen Terraciano of the US Department of the Interior US Geological Survey**

A power point presentation, including several mappings of Long Island and the Ronkonkoma area, were presented along with graphs and charts of measured water levels in wells at varying intervals. The seminar indicated that most of the problems concerning high water levels and flooding today are a direct result of human intervention in the area, as most of the water on Long Island has been managed by humans. The ground has been disturbed to make room for new development. Some natural vegetation has been removed. Dried riverbeds and low lying areas were developed with homes during times of drought, which subsequently became flooded as natural water levels rose over time. Water is being displaced from way below the surface of our communities, and being used to irrigate our lawns and gardens and provide safe drinking water for our communities. But, as the excess water tries to drain through impervious clay ground, 50 feet thick, flooding occurs.

When rain, snow or other precipitation occurs during non-growing seasons, water tables will rise. Water tables are now close to the ground surface.

#### **Questions and some answers.**

Q: What can be done to check on flood conditions.

A: Flooding scales need continuous data monitoring for a more accurate record. Pumping wells and recharge basins may affect water level.

Q: Does anyone check water levels?

A: The Long Island Ground Water Institute holds monthly meetings at the Suffolk County Water Authority Building.

Q: Who handles drainage and flooding problems? Can the Army Corps of Engineers offer relief?

A: The local municipalities are responsible for handling drainage. The Army Corps may offer consulting or reports, but won't do the work. They work primarily on shorelines. They do not handle recharge basin issues.

Q: Can excess water be removed from Lake Ronkonkoma.

A: In 1980 when water levels were very high, forced removal of water from Lake Ronkonkoma was considered, but it was not acted on.

Q: Is it possible to locate areas suitable for water drainage?

A: Stephen Terraciano will be able to assist with that.

Q: Can we share USGS photos and maps?

A: They can be found on the Internet and are not copyrighted. They may be shared.

Q: Can the 3 towns work together to try to relieve the flood problems?

A: A meeting is scheduled at Islip Town Hall on May 30<sup>th</sup> 3:00 PM, where the three towns will discuss Lake Ronkonkoma engineering.

### **What can be done to help with flooding problems and rising water levels ?**

Sewering and dewatering cause declines in water levels. A Human Impact Aquifer map showed decreases in water levels where there are sewers in populated areas. It may also be possible to identify a hole or holes in the lens of the clay where drainage could be directed and relief from flooding can be achieved.

The lake could be examined to see if it is properly draining. The USGS can check the lake to see if it is silted up and responding properly. Since there seems to be a ground water problem, this may be appropriate. The speaker thought, however, that this is unlikely the case. They routinely measure well levels near Lake Ronkonkoma, and near the Great Bog (Lilly Ponds Park). The relationship of water levels in those areas has not changed much. The bog has a higher water level than the lake, which is a normal condition.

Smithtown has been pumping water away from the Nichols Road area, where flooding had been a significant problem. The water was being diverted into the bog. But, as the bog is now full of water, Smithtown is planning on pumping into a different recharge basin that is nearby and may control the flooding adequately. They would like to consider a model that may project possible outcomes under different possible circumstances, not only there, but also in other areas in Smithtown.

Folks may consider watering using rain water. There are links online for rain gardens, where people use collected rain water for gardening.

### **Recommendations**

John Kennedy requested a pool of data to be shared to help identify areas that may be used for additional successful recharge basins. The USGS indicated that they could supply the information, which could be examined to help achieve the results sought. Although the data is available, it had not been used in this manner before. It will require an exacting look at data from different sources to find locations within the vast clay fields that may be used as successful recharge basins.

John Kennedy also asked that the USGS test the silt at the bottom of Lake Ronkonkoma to find out if the Lake is draining properly, so that appropriate measures might be considered.

### **Update on Activities at Lake Ronkonkoma**

Lake Ronkonkoma Clean Up is on for May 20<sup>th</sup> .

The Run Around the Lake, and the Fishing Festival are being held in June.