

EDITORIAL

TIME TO REVITALIZE DOWNTOWN OYSTER BAY

There was a time when downtown Oyster Bay was the center of the world. Not only was the President of the United States a local resident, but every summer the US Cabinet lodged and met downtown. Oyster Bay once had two downtown theaters, a dozen great restaurants, several hotels, and its modern rail and ferry links to Manhattan made it a favored bedroom and resort community.

Those days are sadly long gone: The theaters and hotels are all closed. Much of downtown, including historic structures like Snouder's, now lies vacant. The remaining restaurants are struggling. The ferries are all gone, and the rail link hasn't improved much in over 100 years. Neighboring communities like Huntington and Glen Cove are busy redefining themselves as the downtown destinations for the north shore, drawing away local residents who used to frequent downtown Oyster Bay.

20 years ago, business mogul Charles Wang came up with a proposal to radically redevelop downtown Oyster Bay, with condos, apartments, townhouses, marinas, and a raft of supporting services. The plans were ambitious - perhaps far too ambitious - and badly sold to local residents, who feared the congestion, pollution, traffic and heavy construction they implied. The plans were turned away by the Town.

With the continued stagnation in downtown Oyster Bay, the time has come to revisit plans to revive our downtown. The Oyster Bay Main Street Association has developed some interesting and intelligent ideas to attract and keep our residents local. The Town of Oyster Bay has taken some bold steps to plan the redevelopment of downtown Hicksville - the much vaunted Hicksville Renaissance - and could do the same for downtown Oyster Bay.

It is time for the community and our Town government to creatively focus on the revitalization of downtown Oyster Bay. A revitalized downtown will be good for all our local residents, and - just as in Huntington or Glen Cove - will raise property values for Oyster Bay residents and boost local businesses and services. Historic downtown Oyster Bay deserves our attention, and our best plans for revitalization.

The Publisher

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: We encourage our readers to express their view regardless of opinion, through the Letters to the Editor column. Letters published represent the viewpoint of our readers. *They do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Leader* and, in fact, may be of opposite viewpoint. Letters should be typed and mailed or emailed to the editor's attention. Letters will be edited for length, clarity and accuracy. All letters should be signed and contain author's address and telephone number for verification. Although it is discouraged, we will withhold an author's name if the subject matter is sensitive or the writer may be subject to intimidation or harassment. Letters that contain accusations or important "facts" must demonstrate knowledge in the area described or show evidence for their writing. *The Leader* will not return letters and reserves the right to publish them at a later time or not at all, due to lack of space or editor's discretion.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Leader has received several unsigned letters to the editor. We will respect an author's request for anonymity, but must have your name, address, and phone number. We want to hear from you and publish your opinions, so in the future, kindly include the above requested information.

LVHS WRESTLING TEAM

To the Editor:

Locust Valley's wrestling team 6 wins 0 losses vs. Nassau D2-teams. And 8th time conference champions represented Nassau County as the D2 small schools champion. They were ranked number 1 in NY State.

Well they had a bad Saturday January 27th in Syracuse. In their 1st match they lost 45-24 to Alfredsburg seeded 18th from Albany. Then the Falcons met unseeded Peru High School from Section 7. Peru won 51 to 25. Mt. Sinai from Section 11 Suffolk County won the small school state championship. This was the first state post team tournament to determine the best team in NY State. In the large schools, Wantagh 31 and 0 ranked No. 1 in NY State, crushing everyone. In the finals they easily best #2 Minisink Valley from section a the Catskills region. So Long Island took home the 2 state titles. Mt. Sinai for small schools and Wantagh for Division 1; the large schools. For the entire season from day 1 Wantagh was ranked number 1, believe me they have an all-star team this season. They are the favorite two in Nassau D1 tournament and NY State tournament in Albany in the last weekend in February. Locust Valley is the favorite to win their 8th straight small school with 4 returning Nassau champions. Vito Rodriguez, Gage DeNatale. and seniors Jack Ward and Bailey O'Brien. Good Luck to the Falcons.

Gary Reynolds

CROSS SOUND TUNNEL A DEAD IDEA

To the Editor:

The Cross Sound Tunnel is not an idea that won't die. It's an idea that has been killed many times, and like a viral zombie, it doesn't know that it's dead. The idea has been discussed, researched, and proposed many times all to the same end. It's wrong for Long Island. This project is not simply intended to allow Long Islanders a faster way off Long Island, it is viewed by the business community as a

way to open up Long Island to an influx of commercial and passenger traffic from all over New England and the Northeast in the hopes of filling business coffers at the expense of Long Island residents. Traffic on our roads and byways won't be lighter. It will be worse as tens of thousands of people from off the Island seek weekend refuge on Long Island for its beaches, parks, and other amenities, the finest in the Northeast. If you think traffic is bad for the air show at Jones Beach on Memorial Day Weekends, prepare for that experience every day.

The finances don't make sense either. As we know, when Mr. Polimeni proposed his tunnel (it's actually 3 side-by-side tunnels) about 10 years ago, the project was going to be privately financed through the sale of bonds that were guaranteed by the State (you and me). Shortly after this proposal was unveiled at a meeting at Oyster Bay Town Hall, the economy tanked, and Bear Sterns (the company floating the bonds) went out of business. If that misguided proposal had been in place at the time of the crash, we all would have been left holding the bag and paying the bill. Isn't one white elephant project (Shoreham) enough? Generations of Long Islanders are still paying off that debt through the highest electric rates in the country.

The supposed cost of the Sound tunnel project suggested by the study is \$55.4 billion. However, pie-in-the-sky public works projects are notoriously over budget. The Hudson River rail tunnel originally was supposed to cost \$7.7 billion and is now calculated to cost \$13 billion. Similarly, the East Side access tunnel was supposed to cost \$4.3 billion when first proposed. It then ballooned to \$6.3 billion in 2006, \$8.4 billion in 2012, and is now expected to cost \$10.2 billion. You get the idea. Don't forget another hidden cost--the graft and corruption attendant to multi-billion dollar public works projects.

Remember Buffalo Billions?

The idea that tunnels are invisible and, therefore, more acceptable is simply not true. All tunnels require large chimney towers for venting vehicle exhaust. They present air pollution and visual pollution issues. How many of these exhaust towers spewing huge amounts of diesel and gasoline fumes into our communities will be needed for 3 massive tunnels under the Sound and how will they blot our scenic landscape? How will the pollution impact the health of our residents? Also, the thought that running a tunnel under communities somehow makes all questions or concerns disappear is simply wrong. If the State thinks it can bypass eminent domain proceedings by building tunnels 50 feet below our homes (yes--that is what the Polimeni project wanted), it is severely misguided. Would anyone stand for tunnels transporting 80,000 vehicles a day to be constructed and operated 50 feet under their home--just a stone's throw--and not feel the effects without destroying houses, families, and communities? I think not.

The North Shore Communities are working hard to improve our environment and the water quality of Long Island Sound. While much work remains, the latest reports show improvements. Why even chance a reversal?

The residents of Nassau County only recently rejected the idea of a publicly guaranteed private financing of the rebuilding of the Nassau Coliseum. The stakes were far lower than those at issue here. Long Islanders revel in the fact that we live on an island for all of the beauty, recreation, and enjoyment it brings. We don't need nature's idyllic beauty harmed by some recurring bad idea. The Sound crossing idea has always been dead. Like the zombie, it just needs one final blow.

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