

Hempstead Town Unveils Plans For Re-Opening Of Water Testing Lab On Back Bays Of Long Island

July 18, 2018



(L-R Biologists Tara Schneider-Moran, Dr. Jim Brown, Hempstead Commissioner of Conservation & Waterways Tom Doheny, Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen, Councilwoman Erin King Sweeney, Deputy Executive Director LI Regional Planning Council Elizabeth Cole, Photo Courtesy of Town of Hempstead)

Issued by: Town of Hempstead, Office of Supervisor Laura Gillen

(POINT LOOKOUT, NY) – Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen and Councilwoman Erin King-Sweeney were joined by environmental and planning representatives from the Long Island Regional Planning Council and the Town's Department of Conservation and Waterways to unveil plans for the re-opening of the Town's water testing laboratory that was shuttered after the discovery of damage relating to Superstorm Sandy.

The laboratory was closed after the discovery of black mold and other contaminants. The prior administration planned to close its doors permanently and sell of its equipment for pennies on the dollar. Supervisor Gillen and the Town Board changed course, recognizing that the work done at the lab was vital to protecting Town residents and shorefront communities, including Point Lookout, where the lab sits.

The lab was made a priority in Supervisor Gillen's five year Capital Plan, which was passed unanimously by the Town Board in order to safeguard the water quality in the back bays of Long Island.

Saving the lab will be crucial to safeguarding water quality, which has significantly deteriorated over the last century due in large part to the dumping of effluent from numerous sewage treatment plants, along with nitrogen pollution from septic tanks, and the increased use of fertilizers.

"This lab used to be a bulwark against high levels of pollution, alerting the public to rising levels of contamination," said Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen. "Today, 50 years after this lab first began its important work; we're here to say that we need this lab now, more than ever! I remain fully committed to pursuing an agenda that will protect residents, as well as our beautiful beaches and waterways."

"I think it is great that the Town of Hempstead is moving forward and thinking about ways we can continue to protect our environment," said Councilwoman Erin King Sweeney. "By reopening this lab we are committing, not only to science and protecting the environment, but to the people of Point Lookout who are desperate to have this lab operating again."

"Water is the lifeblood of Long Island. The renovation of the Town of Hempstead Marine Laboratory will provide the entire region with a vital and strategic asset as we work to preserve and improve the quality of our coastal waters," said Richard Guardino, former Hempstead Town Supervisor and Executive Director of the Long Island Regional Planning Council. "The Long Island Regional Planning Council looks forward to continuing our work with the Town as we move ahead with the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan."

"The Long Island Regional Planning Council congratulates the Town for its commitment to the environment. By restoring the functionality of its analytical laboratory and advancing the important work of its dedicated staff, the Town has recognized the great value of healthy coastal waters to its residents and in fact all of Long Island. We look forward to continued engagement with the Town as we advance the mission of the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan," said David Berg, Program Manager of the Long Island Regional Planning Council.

The Town of Hempstead plans to re-open the lab by next spring and is actively seeking joint partnerships with colleges, non-profits and other public and private entities that have an interest in the health of Long Island's waterways.

"The goal of this lab is not only to safeguard the Town's residents, but also act as resource to test water quality throughout Long Island," said Town of Hempstead Supervisor Laura Gillen. "It will once again provide a valuable service that can be used to bolster our beaches and home values, as well as the commercial and recreational fishing industry - all of which are fundamental pillars of Long Island's economic well-being."

Gillen also noted that the marine economy alone makes up 9.7 percent of Long Island's total GDP, "so protecting this industry, which our communities rely on economically, should be everyone's concern."

The Town is diligently receiving estimates for the safe removal of the mold and other contaminants, as well as the replacement of electrical, heating and cooling components that are no longer functional. New equipment will be energy efficient and all lighting will be LED, fitting into the Town's sustainability vision.

Furthermore, the building will be self-sufficient, utilizing solar panels to power the facility, along with receiving energy from the Town's wind turbine here in Point Lookout via remote net metering.