

Around 

Grant delivered for sewer plan

Suffolk County officials Thursday announced a \$5 million grant to connect the Port Jefferson Station business district to a Mount Sinai sewage treatment system.

Officials said connecting 73 commercial parcels to the plant will boost plans to redevelop the lagging area just south of Port Jefferson Village.

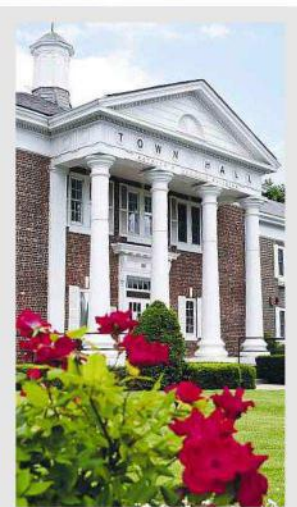
The grant, from the county's Water Infrastructure Fund and funded by the federal American Rescue Plan Act, will make the Port Jefferson Station project "shovel ready," improving its chances of receiving additional federal and state grants, County Executive Steve Bellone said in a news release.

The revitalization project is based on an outline drafted in 2014 by the Town of Brookhaven as part of a study of the hamlet's business corridor, Bellone said.

The funding announced this week will underwrite efforts to complete final designs of the sewer project and finance initial construction, Bellone said.

The project requires approvals from the county sewer agency and the county legislature, which are expected within the next years.

— CARL MACGOWAN



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PORT WASHINGTON NORTH

GROUNDS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Playground for people with disabilities, walking trail in the works for parcel

BY DARWIN YANES
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Port Washington North officials are in the first phase of developing an accessible playground for people with disabilities along with a recreational area.

The Port North Accessible Playground and Recreational Facility Project will build a playground, a quarter-mile walking trail and other amenities on 4.75 acres near Channel Drive.

"The Village of Port North has always been inclusive," said Mayor Robert Weitzner. "The entire North Shore is underserved by the playgrounds that we've seen."

The village has created a master plan for the parcel, which was acquired in May 2022, and plans to add a village hall and possibly a public works facility, he said. Weitzner said they are also considering adding shaded areas with benches and tables at the park.

The first project is the playground, the mayor noted. The village is exploring options to finance the project and has submitted applications for about \$1 million in state and federal grants. He said local officials have also expressed support for the project and the village has pledged to match grant funding from the state.

The playground and walking trail, currently in the design phase, are estimated to cost around \$1.35 million, he said.

The village has established an advisory committee of residents, elected officials, nonprofit representatives and playground experts. The committee, which will have 11 to 13 members, is seeking two residents to join.

Among the advisers is Stella Spanakos, co-founder of The Nicholas Center, whose mission is to create innovative



Port Washington North Mayor Robert Weitzner, left, Stella Spanakos of the project advisory panel and village communications Commissioner Lauren Summa at the site of a planned accessible playground.

programs and services that allow autistic individuals to learn, live and work in the community.

Spanakos, whose nonprofit serves about 140 families, said the playground could fill a void in the autism and disability community. She noted that the park would also allow for senior citizens and adults to get exercise and develop new skills.

"Anytime you can add to a community and enrich it, and give them another venue to assemble, to socialize, learn and interact — that really is what communities are about," Spanakos said.

Spanakos said the width and

Project progress

■ **The first phase** of the project is to create a fully accessible playground for individuals with disabilities.

■ **The village has created** an advisory committee of residents, elected officials, nonprofit representatives and playground experts.

■ **Officials have developed** a master plan for the 4.75-acre parcel that includes new villages resources.

height of certain equipment make the playground ADA-compliant. She said having quiet areas, sensory play equipment

and wheelchair-accessible equipment are factors as well.

Weitzner added that secure fencing, balancing activities and a separate area for noisy activities could be included in the playground.

The first advisory community meeting is expected to take place in the fall. The mayor said he hopes to have shovels in the ground by 2025. Once completed, the playground will be open to everyone, he noted.

"I won't make mistakes of the other parks and sell the public short, and not check all the boxes to make sure this succeeds and delivers," Weitzner said.

DANIELLE SILVERMAN