

# THE LONG ISLAND Advance

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## **A draft watershed plan to protect the river is accepted**

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There are 5,400 acres already protected in the Carmans River Watershed, with another 3,700 on the town's radar in the draft Carmans River Watershed Protection & Management Plan proposed for open space acquisition that even includes Legacy Village, although with a caveat. And there is a scoring system, that reduces density out of the watershed area for parcels that might be near a major roadway, existing sewer district, library, or other public service. It also establishes 0.7 milligrams per liter of nitrates for the water quality goal in the river to remain in effect until the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation adopts a water quality standard. Large proposed projects must meet a 2.5 mg/l nitrate standard at the property line for new projects.

On Tuesday night, Brookhaven's Town Board voted unanimously to accept the draft plan, a 79-page compendium of specifics, with an additional 70 plus pages of maps, minutes, tables and, along with the names of the technical advisory committee and study group, a list of those civic leaders who participated in meetings and discussions. The public hearing will be held on March 29.

Brookhaven Planning Commissioner Tullio Bertoli was the architect of the multifamily zoning grading system, the land swap, so to speak, for open space required for preservation and quality of life for the river. "The idea is to create projects that are walkable so that we reduce the amount of car trips," he said. The principle is – you give incentives to builders to build in areas near basic services. The other thing, too, the whole point of the plan was to deal with a regional problem of the river, where should we preserve and under what conditions should we preserve."

How many units can be built on commercial or industrial zoned land is defined by where the project is located reiterated Long Island Pine Barrens Executive Director Richard Amper. "If it's located in a formally blighted area, it gets more points," he said. "If it's located by a supermarket or a library or some other neighborhood convenience, it gets extra points. They can build as many as nine units per acre if they have a perfect plan and as few as three and the planning board has the discretion as to if they can let them build at all. It's not as of right." There was also a push for affordable homes in those walkable areas.

"The areas being rezoned to five acres can't receive any development, that is the land being transferred," he said. "None are approved to go through. They listed dozens of parcels that are targets for acquisition and those that are not acquired will be rezoned to five acres. There were six parcels the developers did not agree to do that for." That includes The Meadows, the AVR parcel by William Floyd Parkway, the Artist Lake Breslin Project, Sandy Hills, Sam Glass and Silver Corporate Park. Legacy Village was in the mix. All are on the list for possible acquisition, Amper said.

The draft plan, which provides a basic template for the town, had its admirers and skeptics. Councilman Tim Mazzei (5th District) commented that he wasn't concerned about the plan and how it would affect his district. "They'll give more density in downtown areas," he said. "I think all in all, the committee came up with a great product and the appropriate people will tweak it." Councilwoman Connie Kepert (4th District), whose district encompasses most of the watershed was for it. "I don't think it would be mostly in my district alone," she said of where the density would go. "Where I'd like to see it is concentrating development in compact town centers. What that does is relieve development pressure on areas more sensitive and closer to the Carmans River. I think they certainly added to and honed down their recommendations. The board will be going through this. We'll all have a lot of questions for law

and planning and for our representatives on the committee. They're looking to create amendments to the multifamily zoning district and looking to have increases by special permit by the planning board."

While Councilman Dan Panico (7th District) said he was supportive of protecting and preserving the Carmans River, he also questioned where the density would be placed. "The land is potentially going to be upzoned from A1 to A5 and as a result the landowners and developers are going to have a new stock of development credits to be redeemed outside this defined area," he said. "As the representative of the district adjacent to the majority of this Carmans River watershed area, I am concerned that these development credits and the potential for the density and intensification of land use could very well occur in my district." Panico also alluded to the proposed edict of placing zoning changes from light industrial and the series of J business zoning classifications to multifamily in the planning board's hands. "The planning board does not have a composition nor does the town code mandate, a geographic balance of membership like our current council district system," he said. "And I think it's a very important point to be considered because this town and its residents adopted this council district system." Panico also questioned, from an environmental standpoint, why the watershed area evaluated starts just south of Route 25 at the lake. "Clearly this watershed also includes lands to the north and for purposes of completeness, I wonder why these areas were not considered."

Long Island Builders Institute CEO Mitchell Pally said the implementation issues need to be followed through. "You can't say to anyone, you can't do anything with the land," he said. "The land preservation portion and the multifamily implementation go together and unless it goes together, it does not work," he said. "It may or may not fall into place. There are specific actions the Town of Brookhaven and the county have to enact as well as the state legislature to make the program work. Would we like to see it happen? Yes."

An informational meeting about the plan will be held at the Longwood Library at noon this Saturday, said Carmans River Partnership Co-Chair Tom Williams, a member of the study group that put together the core of this ambitious plan.

"Our feeling is that there will be development in this town, so having a measured plan that addresses, 'where do we want to put it?' and 'what do we want to preserve?' addresses that," said Williams, who was cited for his contributions at last week's press conference. The Carmans River and its health was kept in full sight. "We're not talking about increasing density in a residential area but in those areas that are blighted and already developed."