

BROOKHAVEN TOWN

Lawsuit against LIRR announced

BY RANDALL WASZYNSKI

Brookhaven Councilman Daniel Panico announced that the town will begin litigation against the Long Island Rail Road after the LIRR denied adding grade crossings in Shirley.

A state administrative law judge has granted the Town of Brookhaven a hearing after the data from a town-commissioned study conducted on the tri hamlet and surrounding areas' at-grade railroad crossings was submitted to the New York State Department of Transportation in September along with testimony from a public hearing on the matter in August.

"We have to sue the railroad for relief that should have been given to this area decades ago, and we plan on doing that," Panico said at a press conference at the Mastic-Shirley LIRR station Jan. 31. "We are going to move forward."

Panico challenged the LIRR's suggestion to the town to alternatively build an overpass or an underpass. "What would that cost?" Panico said. "What would it cost to try to build an overpass here, and how long would this road be closed to traffic? It makes no sense ... and to say that you are not going to put more railroad-grade crossings — that are in compliance with every regulation, lights and arms that go down — because it would increase the possibility for more accidents is ludicrous and asinine."

The town's announcement comes two days after a fatal accident at the railroad crossing next to the Mastic-Shirley station that shut down traffic southbound on William Floyd Parkway for six hours and northbound for eight hours.

With over 30,000 residents, Shirley is no stranger to excessive traffic, especially heading north-south, with three railroad crossings. Brookhaven officials and community leaders concur that one or more additional at-grade crossings will ease those concerns.

"If there was ever an emergency and we had to evacuate, that could not happen," said supervisor Edward Romaine, as the low-lying land of the tri hamlet area is susceptible to flooding.

First District Assemb. Fred Thiele also mentioned issues involving an evacuation plan. "And we know what the answers are," Thiele said. "One of them is to provide an additional access onto Sunrise Highway — an additional interchange — and we're making progress with that."

Alongside the safety concerns, everyday business for companies in the congested areas has been severely affected and even halted in some cases. "We had many stores that their employees could not get to the businesses; they could not open yesterday," said Beth Wahl, president of the Chamber of Commerce of the Mastics and Shirley. "Deliveries were delayed. And, of course, customers couldn't get to the stores."

Recently elected Suffolk County Legis. Rudy Sunderman supported claims that the lack of additional railroad crossings incorporates a quality-of-life issue as well as a safety hazard. "Every day, our residents cannot get down from work with extended traffic conditions during rush hours. This continues to show proof why we are in need of an additional-grade crossing. I'm calling on the railroad to please give us the support that we need for our community." ■

BLOTTER

Disclaimer: This section reflects information obtained from the Suffolk County Police Department. A criminal charge is an accusation against an individual. Unless and until proven guilty in court, individuals are presumed innocent of these charges. During the criminal justice process, individuals may be acquitted or may have a charge against them reduced or dropped.

Blue Point

A Port Jefferson Station man was arrested in Blue Point for criminal possession of a loaded firearm. During a traffic stop on Kennedy Avenue on Jan. 29, Fifth Precinct police officers found that Matthew Pettenato, 27, possessed a small quantity of marijuana and loaded 9mm handgun. He was charged with criminal possession of a weapon.

Mastic

On Jan. 27, three unknown males entered Flying Arrows smoke shop on the Poo-spatuck reservation. Two men displayed pistols, police said, before taking cash from behind the counter. An investigation is continuing.

Someone stole a truck cover and five reflective markers from a driveway on Douglaston Street on Jan. 27.

On Jan. 30, an unknown person entered a home on Overlook Drive and stole a safe box containing Social Security cards and bills.

East Patchogue

Police arrested an East Patchogue man in connection with a burglary on Jan. 27. Lennart Wessberg Jr., 37, allegedly entered a home on Tuttle Street in Holbrook on Jan. 15 through an unlocked door and stole a television, iPad and cash.

Fifth Precinct officers arrested Wessberg after spotting him driving a 1999 Nissan southbound on Hewlett Avenue in Patchogue with a suspended license. He was charged with second-degree burglary, aggravated unlicensed operation of a vehicle, criminal possession of a controlled substance for prescription meds, possession of a hypodermic instrument and unlawful possession of marijuana.

Someone shattered the rear windshield of a Dodge Avenger in the Lowe's parking lot on Jan. 30.

Patchogue

Two brothers were arrested on assault charges in Patchogue on Jan. 27. Police said that around 3 a.m. on Jan. 27, Corey Abrams, 21, of Manorville and Nicholas Abrams, 23, of Patchogue, punched and kicked a victim on South Ocean Avenue, causing mul-

iple contusions. The victim was treated at Brookhaven Memorial Hospital and both men were charged with third degree assault.

Two GPS systems, an EZ-pass and change were stolen from two vehicles, a 2015 Nissan Altima and Jeep Wrangler at a residence on Cleveland Street on Jan. 28.

A Patchogue man was arrested for stealing assorted tools from R R Mowers in Center Moriches on Jan. 31. Police said Frank Kircher, 26, allegedly stole the tools from the landscaper and pawned them. He faces third degree grand larceny charges.

Shirley

Someone threw a rock at a 2017 Hyundai on Astor Drive causing damage on Jan. 28.

On Jan. 30, it was reported that a counterfeit \$100 bill was used at a Sunoco station at the corner of Montauk Highway and Madison Street.

A Gucci handbag was stolen from an unlocked 2008 Dodge Charger at Unique Fitness on McGraw Street on Jan. 31.

An 18-year-old from Shirley was arrested for two thefts from vehicles on Jan. 31. Kahlil McMoore allegedly stole a wallet from a 2008 Jeep Grand Cherokee on Shinnecock Avenue in Mastic around 2 a.m. on Jan. 30. Police said he also took a drone, valued at \$1,300, from a 2015 BMW also on Shinnecock Avenue. He was charged with two counts of fourth-degree grand larceny.

CRIMESTOPPERS

Mastic man arrested following hit and run

On Jan. 27, Suffolk County Police arrested a Mastic man for a hit-and-run crash that killed a pedestrian in North Patchogue early that morning.

Luke Figat was attempting to cross eastbound Sunrise Highway, just west of Route 112, at approximately 3 a.m. when he was struck by three vehicles. One of the vehicles fled the scene. Figat, 25, of Medford, was pronounced dead at the scene by a physician assistant from the Office of the Suffolk County Medical Examiner. The drivers who remained at the scene were not injured.

An investigation by Fifth Squad and Major Case Unit detectives led to the arrest of Eduardo Aponte, 29, of Mastic, who was charged with leaving the scene of an accident resulting in death.

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