

COVERSTORY

EPCAL series fuels hope

Continued From Page 5

"We've talked to a million politicians," he said. "She was the first one that sat down with us and seemed to be interested."

Among the racing advocates who lobbied the town was professional drag racer John Montecalvo, whose Riverhead-based race team's Pro Stock 2017 Camaro has taken home a trunkful of championship trophies.

"When I was growing up in Center Moriches, I used to go down the road to National Speedway," he said. "It kept me out of trouble. That's what I want for today's youth."

Montecalvo, who once tried to buy 200 acres at EPCAL, obtained the concrete barriers for the temporary dragstrip and his family's company, Montecalvo Asphalt Maintenance, filled the cracks in the runway-turned-speedway.

"I've been waiting for this for 20 years," Montecalvo said. "It brought tears to my eyes when the town board approved it."

Staying power?

And while getting the four-weekend drag racing series was a big win for the Island's hot rod community, the real goal is to establish a permanent dragstrip here.

"The whole purpose of this thing is to put a fulltime track on Long Island," Quitoni said.

"But it's Long Island and space is very expensive."

Budano agreed that the shortage of land and its high price here is a huge handicap.

"It can be profitable in Calverton," he said. "Drag racers will go anywhere, so anywhere on Long Island would be a good spot. It would draw from all over the New York metro area."

Montana estimates that a minimum of 20 to 25 acres would be needed to develop an eighth-mile drag racing facility.

"Calverton would be the best place," he said. "It's perfect for this. You wouldn't find a better spot because it doesn't impact a neighborhood."

However, putting a permanent dragstrip in EPCAL will be challenging, especially since the property is in the process of being sold.

It's been more than two decades since the town took title to the 2,900-acre Calverton property, last used by the U.S. Navy and Northrop Grumman for testing F14s and other military aircraft. Some 1,900 acres of it has been preserved as open space and to protect the region's environmental health. The rest of the property was earmarked for economic development, though the town has struggled to land a deal for the site, despite fielding several ill-fated proposals over the years.

That changed in 2018, when Riverhead approved a \$40 million deal to sell the 1,643 acres remaining of the EPCAL land to Calverton Aviation & Technology, headed by Triple



Photos by Judy Walker

Cars queued in the staging lane awaiting their turn at the starting line.

Five Worldwide Group. The town is currently waiting for subdivision approval from the state Department of Environmental Conservation so the sale can close.

As part of the agreement to sell the land, about 600 acres, which is zoned to accommodate up to 9.8 million square feet of industrial properties, have been earmarked for development. And the buyers are reportedly planning to utilize the existing runways for air traffic that will service the planned industrial park.

Nevertheless, Cozzali said he has spoken with Triple Five executives about using some of the property for a track and Aguilar added that she will do what she can to see that they make room for a permanent drag racing facility at the site.

"I will work with them to ensure that this American sport that's loved by everyone continues in Riverhead," the supervisor said.

■ DWINZELBERG@LIBN.COM



Windshield view of the starting tree and track at the runway-turned-dragstrip.

FROM LIBN.COM

Biz groups to MTA: Boost access to BNL, East End

A number of business organizations on Long Island joined forces to urge the Metropolitan Transportation Authority to include the Long Island Rail Road in its capital plan in order to spur economic development in the region.

The Long Island Association, Association for a Better Long Island, Long Island Builder's Institute, and Long Island Contractor's Association sent a letter to the MTA. They said in the letter that the MTA should "prioritize the relocation of the [LIRR] Yaphank Train Station and include funding for simultaneous electrification or implementation of new battery power technology."

The project, they said in the letter, "could help enable the MTA to better serve communities on the East End of Long Island and support regional businesses as well as Brookhaven National Laboratory," which they described as "a critical economic development asset for our region."

They urged the MTA to start the project immediately, given that a feasibility study had been completed, "in part with



\$20 million previously allocated."

A relocated Yaphank Station would increase access to Brookhaven Lab, they said, "which generates hundreds of millions of dollars of economic output for New York State and employs approximately 2,500 people, with more than 5,000 visitors annually."

And because the lab recently scored a U.S. Department

of Energy contract of up to \$2.6 billion "to construct a new Electron Ion Collider to study nuclear physics," a "direct route from New York City to BNL is needed immediately and will become even more important in the years to come."

The project would also boost LIRR ridership, and address "issues including parking and traffic with other crowded stations and the roads leading to it, such as at the Ronkonkoma station," the business groups said.

It would also spur economic development in the Town of Brookhaven, and along the William Floyd Corridor.

"Future development and redevelopment on Long Island should be near transit hubs, and a new train station presents a unique opportunity to engage the community, government officials and developers in a discussion about transit-oriented development," the business leaders said.

The letter was addressed to Janno Lieber, the MTA's acting chair and CEO, and sent on Monday.

— ADINA GENN

Measuring device maker gets IDA assist for Hauppauge expansion

Mark-10 Corporation, a manufacturer of force and torque measuring instruments, will expand in Hauppauge with the help of the Suffolk County Industrial Development Agency.

The Suffolk IDA has preliminarily approved tax breaks for the company to acquire and renovate a 31,500-square-foot industrial building on 3.51 acres at 160 Oser Ave.

The project, estimated to cost more than \$9.5 million, will allow Mark-10 to expand at the Hauppauge building and relocate from its

current digs in Copiague. The company has pledged to create five new fulltime jobs over the next two years, which will grow its \$4.6 million payroll.

Mark-10 began as an engineering consultant firm in 1979 before branching out into contract manufacturing in the 1980s and introducing its own line of branded products in 1990.

The company's products are used for quality control and research applications in a variety of industries worldwide, including medical devices, aerospace, automotive, consumer

products, packaging and several others. Mark-10 is currently a supplier to medical and pharmaceutical companies working on research, testing and treatment for COVID-19, according to an IDA statement.

"The IDA's assistance in our company's expansion is needed for us to remain competitive," Mark-10 Corporation President Mark Fridman said in the statement. "We have outgrown our facility and the IDA's support will help us grow in terms of our employee count, inventory and product line expansion. We are excited about this opportunity to

expand in a region that we have called home for decades."

Suffolk County IDA Executive Director Tony Catapano said the expansion project will help expand the reach of a company that has been on Long Island for decades while also providing new job opportunities for Long Island residents.

"We are pleased to help this company, which has operated on Long Island for decades, stay close to home as it expands," Catapano said in the statement.

— DAVID WINZELBERG