

# RESIDENTS DEBATE PLAN TO DEVELOP SYOSSET SITE

## Proposal to build condos and hotels

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Opponents of the proposed Syosset Park development assailed it as environmentally risky at a packed public hearing Tuesday night, while supporters said its housing and park plans will improve acres of contaminated land that has remained vacant for decades.

About 700 people jammed the Syosset High School auditorium and a nearby overflow room for a sometimes-rambunctious Town of Oyster Bay hearing on the draft environmental-impact statement by developer, Syosset Park Development LLC.

The developer — made up of Indianapolis-based Simon Property Group and Manhasset-based Castagna Realty Co. — plans to build 625 town houses and condominiums, two hotels, a 30-acre park, stores, offices and restaurants on the site of the former

Cerro Wire plant, currently a town landfill and public works complex.

Cerro Wire and the landfill — both former Superfund sites — were partially cleaned up in the 1990s.

The landfill was capped and is monitored regularly, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency said in a statement Tuesday.

The Cerro Wire site will be further remediated because of stricter standards adopted in 2006, the state Department of Environmental Conservation said Tuesday.

Multiple speakers Tuesday night asked for additional, independent environmental testing of the site to ensure the safety of current and future residents.

Some speakers said they distrusted government assurances of safety after EPA statements proved inaccurate about air quality in lower Manhattan following the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.



Debbi Hunter of Syosset, co-president of the Birchwood and Syosset homeowners association, speaks out against the proposed Syosset Park development at Syosset High School Tuesday evening.

Danfei Huang, 37, said she was worried by the noise and pollution that construction would generate at South Grove Elementary School, which her 6-year-old daughter attends and is next to the site.

"There's no guarantee you can give me to make me feel safe to send my daughter to South Grove School while the construction is going on," she said to loud applause.

Syosset Park Development LLC estimates an enrollment increase of 243 students from the project.

Syosset Central School District puts the estimate at 355

more students.

"What happens if we have to start redistricting our whole community and taking kids out of school because we can't fit them in South Grove or Robbins Lane?" Woodbury resident Glenn Vogelman, 38, asked, referring to the Syosset schools.

Ling Ling Xu, 42, of Syosset, said developer estimates of tax benefits for the school district don't add up.

"We as residents would have to pay the bill," Xu said.

Robin Grossman, 54, of Jericho, who helped defeat a previous proposal for a mall at

the site, said she wants about 20 percent fewer housing units than proposed. Grossman said she backed the general outline of the proposal, saying it would replace "barren and unsightly" land and is better than other options.

Kyle Strober, executive director of Association for a Better Long Island, said Syosset Park's mixed-use design would "help attract and maintain a young professional workforce that is vital to our economic future."

Walkable communities are "where the next generation wants to live," he said.

# Long Beach budget calls for 12% tax hike

BY JOHN ASBURY  
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Long Beach City Council members are weighing what services to cut in order to reduce a 12.3 percent tax increase in next year's proposed \$95 million budget.

The proposed 2018-19 plan, which could raise taxes by \$400 a year for homeowners, was presented to more than 400 residents during a heated City Council meeting Tuesday night.

Acting City Manager Michael Tangney has said the budget preserves all services the city now offers.

Tangney said nearly half the proposed budget was made up of public safety and employee salaries and benefits. Only nonunion workers, accounting for less than 1 percent of the city's workforce, contribute to health care costs, and the city may be seeking additional union contributions, Tangney said.

Tangney said the city will no longer let department heads control their budgets.

"Management is needed now more than ever to make hard choices," Tangney said.

The budget includes \$830,000 in contractual raises and step increases after the

CSEA union took a zero percent increase last year.

City officials are still seeking to close a \$2.1 million gap to fund the city this fiscal year, which ends June 30.

Tangney said the city had recovered \$550,000 in old bonds and cut nonessential overtime and cut all nonemergency spending that may save \$400,000. The city also is not replacing the city manager, assistant or comptroller through June for a total savings of about \$1.2 million, but remains \$800,000 short.

City Council members failed to pass a bond resolution last month that would fund separa-

tion and accrued time to 57 employees, including 15 nonunion employees who remained on staff.

Officials said they may be forced to issue layoff notices or cut services to meet June payroll. The city has already cut weekend bus service and other routes, including Point Lookout, because of the funding gap.

CSEA president John Mooney led a walkout of union workers after blaming the defeat of the bonds on council members Anissa Moore and John Bendo.

"You cannot balance the budget on the backs of us anymore," Mooney said.

Next year's proposed budget, which will give the city a new infusion of tax dollars July 1, also includes borrowing and counting on the council to approve bonds for \$1.8 million to cover separation payments, according to the proposed budget.

City Council members have said they have diminished their reliance on loans after borrowing \$3.4 million in the 2016-17 budget; but the separation payments and accrued time would otherwise account for a 7 percent tax increase.

City Council members are expected to hold another budget hearing and vote on the budget May 15.