

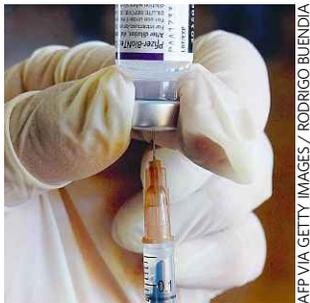


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BIZ GROUPS TO GARDEN CITY:

Stop Slowing LIRR's Third Track Project

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GABBY PETITO CASE FBI SEARCHES FIANCE'S HOME



FBI agents collect evidence from the home of Brian Laudrie in North Port, Fla., on Monday.

Agents focus on Florida house of Brian Laudrie, who is missing

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Slowing Third Track

Business groups urge Garden City to issue permits

BY ALFONSO A. CASTILLO
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Several Long Island business groups are urging the Village of Garden City to stop slowing progress on the Long Island Rail Road's Third Track project, noting that further delays will only "increase the cost to all parties."

In a letter obtained by Newsday that was sent to Garden City officials on Monday, the heads of the Association for a Better Long Island, Long Island Association and Long Island Builders Institute said they would "strongly counsel" the village to approve permits applied for by the railroad months ago to advance its LIRR Expansion project.

The \$2.6 billion project aims to construct a 10-mile-long third track between Floral Park and Hicksville, including through Garden City. Project officials have said it will reduce LIRR delays and facilitate "reverse commuting" to and from jobs on Long Island.

"As a result, it will spur transit-oriented economic and community development, essential if Long Island is to be competitive in attracting new businesses and young people who live in New York City," the letter's authors said. "The project will add billions in personal income, sales & property tax revenue, and gross regional product."

Village officials did not re-



Acting MTA chairman Janno Lieber wants Garden City officials to grant permits for Third Track project.

HOWARD SIMMONS

spond to requests for comment.

After boasting of keeping the Third Track on budget and on schedule since it was proposed in 2016, officials with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority — the LIRR's parent agency — recently said the project is at risk of missing its December 2022 completion date.

The MTA has blamed the village, which has not granted permits needed to replace a rail bridge on Denton Avenue to make it wide enough to accommodate an extra track. The MTA has asked the state

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Supreme Court to compel the village, which previously approved the project's design, to issue the permits.

Village officials have not publicly commented about the dispute, because of the pending litigation. The dispute comes following a separate lawsuit filed by the village against the railroad, complaining about the placement of several utility poles near Merillon Avenue Station. The state Supreme Court threw out that suit in July.

Speaking for the first time on the matter, acting MTA chairman and chief executive officer Janno Lieber last week called the village's refusal to grant the permits a "NIMBY [not in my backyard] action."

"It's clearly retaliation for the fact that they lost the lawsuit — that we got a one-sided decision ... They lost, and now they won't give us the permits to do work that is pretty routine," Lieber said. "There are a lot of people in Garden City who are wondering why their own community is stopping this project, which so clearly benefits Gar-

den City, as well as the rest of Long Island."

Lieber acknowledged the delayed bridge work, which was supposed to begin in March, has set back the project, but added that the Third Track team will "turn themselves into pretzels to make sure we make schedule and budget."

MTA officials have said recouping the lost time could require extending construction work into nights, weekends and the winter months, and running up costs in overtime and other expenses.

In the letter, the business leaders added that "to delay further means the courts would ultimately dictate when construction begins and unnecessarily increase the cost to all parties."

"It is unfathomable that a routine construction permit could delay one of Long Island's most transformative infrastructure projects of our generation," Kyle Strober, executive director of the Association for a Better Long Island, said in a statement Monday.

Mitchell Pally, chief executive officer of the Long Island Builders Institute, in an interview, called the impasse with the village "absolutely ridiculous."

"We cannot let one village stand in the way of progress on Long Island," Pally said.

Matthew Cohen, president of the Long Island Association, said he'd like to see the dispute resolved outside of the courts, with village officials coming to appreciate the benefits of the Third Track, including to its own residents.

"My hope is that reason will prevail," Cohen said.

until January, judge rules

pothermia death of Thomas Valva and the alleged abuse of his brother Anthony, then 10. Prosecutors have alleged that Thomas died Jan. 17, 2020, after the defendants forced him to sleep in their Center Moriches unheated garage in frigid temperatures.

Valva did not appear at the hearing because his Suffolk County jail cell mate has been

diagnosed with COVID-19 and may have exposed the former officer to the virus, Condon said.

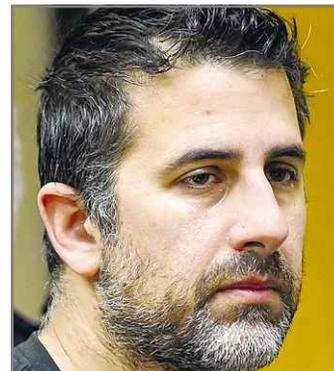
Pollina attended the hearing but did not speak.

The judge ruled in August that key video evidence and other physical evidence would be admissible at the trial.

Defense attorneys for Valva and Pollina had argued during

a pretrial hearing in May that the Nest camera and Ring door bell video, as well as a bag containing Thomas' clothing, was obtained by police illegally and should be suppressed.

The defense also said police failed to get permission from either Valva or Pollina to search the home and didn't get a warrant beforehand. Prosecutors denied those claims.



Michael Valva



Angela Pollina

JAMES CARBONE