

SOUTHAMPTON

Budget Discussion Focuses on CPF Bond

Board debates benefits of borrowing \$125M

BY CLAIRE WALLA

The first regularly scheduled public hearing on Southampton Town Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst's tentative 2012 budget focused largely on the Community Preservation Fund (CPF).

Bob Anrig, chairman of the Community Preservation Fund advisory board, began discussions by firmly urging the board to approve a \$125 million bond offering for the department.

"What I care about is the long-term interest of the town," he said last Friday, October 28 at a special board meeting on the budget. "I believe that going forward, this [bond offering] is good, smart government. The land is available, prices are the best they've been in a long time and the financing costs are at all-time lows."

The benefit to the bond, Anrig further explained, would be to secure the money to preserve the lands now, at a relatively low interest rate, before property values in the town rise.

"We have been stalling on this," Anrig continued. "My fear is that it's become a political hot potato and we need to move forward on this now."

Throne-Holst and Councilwoman Bridget Fleming are in support of the bond measure, while the board's conservative majority members — Chris Nuzzi, Nancy Graboski and Jim Malone — expressed some concern with taking on more debt. If, for whatever reason, the CPF does not have enough money to continue paying back the bond, Nuzzi said his worry was that then the burden would fall to Southampton Town taxpayers.

Fleming, however, noted that the bond measure would take fluctuating costs into account. It's a four-year payback plan that she insisted the town would be able to extricate itself from, should the town foresee the possibility of CPF revenues not remaining as strong as they are currently predicted to be.

Throne-Holst pointed out that even in the midst of the financial crisis, "CPF has remained robust."

She doesn't expect the fund to decrease so dramatically that it would be unable to pay for the bond, but if it should, she added, "The fact of the

matter is that should it ever get to that doomsday scenario, we could then go to the state and say we may need to reverse one of these purchases. But the likelihood of that is so remote."

Jim Malone echoed Nuzzi's sentiments by reminding the board that in 2007 the fund was lower than it had been in years past.

"We saw an impact," he stated. "The fund does move."

Nuzzi also pointed out that without the additional bond, the CPF would still have roughly \$20 million worth of funds to dedicate to the purchase of open space.

"I support the bond, and I think it's completely right that it's become a political hot potato," Fleming said, harking back to Anrig's previous statement. "I feel good that this is good, strong money management. It's different than just taking on debt."

Fleming urged Anrig — himself a banker and a local real estate agent — to further explain why the CPF advisory board is so adamant that the \$125 million bond be issued as soon as possible.

"The bond proposal has been written in extremely prudent terms," said Anrig. "We tried to ensure that even after all costs of the fund are considered that we have a debt service coverage ratio of projected revenues that's at least one-and-a-half or one [percent] for the bond."

"The opinion of the underwriters was that that was an extremely conservative set of assumptions and a conservative debt service coverage ratio," he continued.

Anrig added that this bond would be completely funded by CPF revenues, so it would have no effect on the Southampton Town tax rate.

During the public portion of the meeting, Linda Kabot, the former Southampton Town supervisor who is running a reelection campaign as a write-in candidate against Throne-Holst, used her time at the podium to weigh-in on the issue.

"I applaud [the fact] that the majority of you appear to be more fiscally conservative to scale that [bond proposal] back to address the risk," she said. "You're talking about doubling our debt load. I do think that needs to be vetted further."



GAME KNIGHTS: Ben and Max Snow with electronic games donated to the children's program at Stony Brook Medical Center.

SAG HARBOR

Hospitalized Kids Get Game

Local "knights" provide a distraction for ill and infirm

BY CLAIRE WALLA

Imagine being confined to a bed for days on end. You cannot venture outside, you lack the freedom to really move about, and you're stuck in a room that's made to look generic and bland. As if that wasn't bad enough, you're here because you're sick — and you're only a kid.

"You know, younger kids who are in hospitals, they worry," said Ben Snow, a seventh grader at Pierson Middle School.

Though he doesn't know from first-hand experience, he and his older brother Max, a sophomore, take this image to heart. Last year, they founded the Hamptons chapter of a non-profit organization called Game Knights, which collects pre-owned DVDs, video games and electronic devices and donates them to local hospitals who in turn give them to children when

they're sick.

"These video game consoles distract you so you won't really think about your condition," Ben continued.

The idea was born from a good friend of Max's, a high school student in Manhattan who realized the benefits of hand-held electronics while briefly hospitalized one summer.

"He was sitting in the hospital with literally nothing to do," Max said.

He explained that then his friend's parents brought him an Xbox to use while he was confined to his hospital room, and it proved to be a much-needed distraction. Knowing that not every patient had such a luxury, upon leaving the hospital Max's friend donated the game system and made it his mission to continue with similar donations.

Admiring their friends' work and eager to help make a difference, Max and Ben decided last spring to take up the mantle and form Game Knights Hamptons. Based in Sag Harbor, the boys said they already have about 10 members and are set to make their first donation to the children's wing of the Stony Brook Medical Center next Thursday, November 10.

"I knew something was missing from our school," Max said. "We collect food and toys around the holidays, but besides that [Pierson] doesn't have a real organized charity."

Most of last year, Max and Ben tried to make Game Knights more of a prominent fixture on campus. The boys had to pitch the idea to administrators at Pierson Middle/High School and gain approval before so-

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NORTH HAVEN

Greening A Village

Pursuing cost and grant for solar panels at village hall

BY CLAIRE WALLA

As the village of North Haven continues down the green road toward solar heating, clerk Georgia Welch updated the board at its most recent meeting on Tuesday about the steps needed to secure a bid for the project, as well as the financial costs the town board could expect to pay to redo the village hall's roof.

Welch explained that she met with the village's grant writer the week prior and learned that, unfortunately, the opportunity to receive grant money to complete the project "has been closed for quite a while."

But, Welch said the village will keep pursuing other options.

"[The grant writer] is going to explore other opportunities so she will continue to let me know what may become available," Welch added.

Welch also relayed two estimates to the board for costs associated with replacing the roof over village hall. (Though slated to happen in conjunction with the installation of solar panels, the roof replacement project has already been written into this year's budget and will take place regardless of whether or not the village goes solar.)

The estimates are based on two different options: fully replacing the current wood shingles, or replacing the wood with an asphalt material known as GAF timberline. Based on calculations made by Village Building Inspector Al Daniels, the cost of the first project is estimated to be about \$38,000. The cost of using asphalt shingling would hover closer to \$27,000, saving the village roughly \$11,000.

The board has not made any decisions either way, but board members seemed more inclined to go for the less expensive GAF timberline material, which is also expected to last longer than wood. Board members have asked to see samples of each shingle before making their final decision.

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Cops bust overtime

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eral factors for the overtime shortage. Not only was the department overworked in the wake of Tropical Storm Irene, he said a recent shortage of staff has contributed to the need to dip into overtime. The department has lost four officers, bringing its force down to 92, and there are currently eight officers who are out, six of whom are being replaced in their absence.

Councilman Chris Nuzzi demanded to know why, from 2008 through 2011, when there wasn't a huge variance in the number of police officers, "there is a huge variance in overtime," he said. "I think drilling down to the details is necessary to see how these numbers shifted."

Pearce further explained that when Chief Wilson joined the town he increased the number of sectors with 24-hour patrol from seven to eight, adding an additional patrol car for the Flanders/Riverside area, which, Pearce said studies have shown, has a relatively high rate of crime and warrants 24-hour patrol.

Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst said that it's important to maintain eight sectors of patrol.

"We saw a very active season this year and there was a commensurate rise in crime activity that needed to be investigated," she said.

Games for kids

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liciting donations and volunteers who could use the charity as a viable option for completing service hours.

"I don't think you would find a person that would denounce a charity that benefits sick people; [the administrators] were happy about it," Max said. "But that doesn't mean that right then and there it was accepted and automatically mainstream."

When asked how much time the boys spent trying to get the program to where it is now — poised to make its first drop-off — Max stared straight ahead and with a straight face he didn't pause or hesitate before replying: "Oodles."

After discussions with administrators, and after giving a presentation to a collection of middle schoolers and their parents, Max and Ben were ultimately allowed to set-up a drop-box inside the school where students can now donate unwanted DVDs and video games. (There is also a drop-box at the boys' temple — the Jewish Center of the Hamptons.)

Their donation next week will in-

clude roughly 40 DVDs and video games, along with 10 brand new, portable DVD players and an Xbox 360, which were given to the group by the father of one of Game Knight's founding members. Plus, with proceeds from a bake sale the boys held at Pier-son last year, in addition to money donated by two Sag Harbor parents, the Game Knights Hamptons has purchased a new iPad II to add to the mix.

"This is an amazing donation because it's our first endeavor," said Gay Snow, the boys' mother who has helped the boys organize the charity and will drive them to the hospital next Thursday to deliver their gift.

It's somewhat ironic, she continued, because neither Max nor Ben actually play video games.

"They're very addictive in nature," she confirmed.

In fact, the Snow household has been "unplugged" for at least two years running, Gay noted.

"They're [video games] OK every once in a while," she continued. "But, in this instance, when you're in a setting when you're convalescing, they're actually therapeutic."

For that reason, Throne-Holst said the rise in costs came from the detective division.

According to figures read off by Krato-ville, the detective division generated 91 hours of overtime in July, 170 hours in August, 120 in September and 150 hours during the first 15 days of October.

For Nuzzi, the crux of the issue goes beyond the reasons why the department has accrued this debt, he is concerned with the town's immediate dilemma. With two months left in this fiscal year, he emphasized the fact that there is currently a zero in the budget line for the department's overtime pay.

"How are we going to be able to shift resources around to deal with this?" he asked.

The board had previously authorized shifting \$175,000 from the department's retirement fund to off-set this deficit, but that was before it was revealed that these overtime costs are rising.

"I just want to add that I felt as though I was caught," Councilwoman Nancy Graboski said. "I didn't know that we were in this position in the first place. I would have felt a whole lot better about authorizing the money if I had known prior to that — or if we had had something in the way of advisory — that there was no more money left."



MERIT SCHOLARS

Ross School seniors Julia Lewis, Hayden Aldredge and Emily Watson have been recognized for their exceptional PSAT scores by the 2012 National Merit Scholarship Program. Julia qualified as a National Merit Semifinalist, while Hayden and Emily were named Commended Students.

This is only a test

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ing simultaneously from New York to Hawaii that infamous cacophony of monotone beeps and text that reads: "Emergency Alert Notification has been issued."

"A new era in alerting will commence," wrote Public Safety and Homeland Security Bureau Chief James A. Barnett, Jr. in a statement published on the website of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). In the 15 years since the EAS has been in existence, it has issued emergency tests multiple times throughout the course of a single year. However, this is the first time the signal will be tested nationwide.

"This test is vital to ensuring that the EAS, the primary alerting system available to the American public, works as designed," the statement continued.

Emailed messages circulated throughout Southampton Town have indicated local police and management circles are concerned that this test might induce a level of anxiety for some residents. While audio messages peppered throughout the three-minute broadcast will clearly state "this is a test," the written text will not necessarily indicate the same.

However, local officials seem calm.

"I've made dispatch aware of it, in case someone calls in," said Sag Harbor Police Chief Tom Fabiano. "It's just the usual test, except it's happening

across the country. Most people probably won't even notice it."

And Lieutenant Robert P. Iberger of the Southampton Town Police wrote in an email response: "Folks have been routinely listening to the EBS [Emergency Broadcast System] since as long as I can remember, and now the EAS."

So as long as the nation refrains from re-broadcasting Orson Welle's radio drama "War of the Worlds," Lt. Iberger indicated, "We should be ok."

The EAS is typically used to spread warning signals throughout regions of the country affected by the onslaught of severe weather, for example. Wednesday's test is important to ensure that the system would work should anything more devastating affect the nation as a whole.

"If public safety officials need to send an alert or warning to a large region of the United States — in the case of a major earthquake and tsunami on the West Coast, for example — or even to the entire country, we need to know the system will work as intended," Barnett said in his statement. "Only a top-down, simultaneous test of all components of the EAS can tell us this."

"Early warnings save lives," the text continued. "This was demonstrated recently and dramatically during the major earthquake and tsunami that devastated Eastern Japan. Except for Japan's early warning systems, loss of life would have been much higher."

Waterfront planning

continued from page 1

of Massachusetts in Boston. UHI will work in concert with the Pace University Land Use Law Center to complete the first draft of the proposal for the town.

"Our expertise really lies in supplying scientific information," said UHI member Jack Wiggin.

In general, the WPP will be designed to address several key issues that affect the waters of Southampton Town: flooding, erosion and sea level rise; public access; water-dependent uses and harbor management; water quality; fish, shellfish and wildlife habitats; land use ranging from housing to agriculture to open space; scenic, historic and cultural resources. But Wiggin added that before the UHI team can address such categories, it has to know what the pertinent issues might be. And for that, it needs public input.

All attendees of last week's meeting — including Citizens Advisory Committee Chairs Fred Cammann and John Linder, as well as the Town Trustees and elected officials — split into four main groups, each facilitated by a member of UHI. They proceeded to discuss any personal or regional issues residents may have had. Issues ranged from chemical runoff and global warming to waterfront access.

"What's happening here is that property owners adjacent to the ocean are trying to restrict access to those roads [that end at the water]," said Bridgehampton resident Jeffrey Vogel.

"The towns are hard-pressed to fight these things," he added. "It's a continuing problem and it's happening all throughout the East End. Public access is being taken over by property owners through lawsuits."

Vogel's fellow Bridgehampton resident Jeff Mansfield, head of the Mecox Sailing Association, which has entered into a license agreement with the town to create a sailing school where the now-defunct Mecox Yacht Club was once housed, echoed these sentiments.

"We're currently being sued by the homeowners [on Bay Lane in Water Mill]," he stated.

UHI member Steve Bliven, who facilitated this discussion, said, "that's just the kind of neighborhood versus facility-access I'm talking about. That's the kind of issue that the plan is trying to address."

With a WPP in place, he added, the town will be able to confirm its stance on waterfront access issues, allowing officials to refer to written documentation for each case in which waterfront access is threatened.

"That way the town doesn't have to address these things on an ad-hoc basis," Bliven continued. "The best way to fight that is to have a clear set of laws and policies."

Another topic residents raised was the inordinate amount of parking tickets issued throughout the town in the summer months.

"They give tickets all over the place," Vogel explained. "Including in my driveway!"

Bliven said the same issue had been addressed the previous night with residents in Hampton Bays. He suggested that perhaps "increased signage" would reduce the influx of falsely issued parking tickets.

Across the room, a group of residents discussed water quality with Wiggins and his UHI associate Kristin Uiterwyk. Northampton resident Brad Bender (who is also running for Southampton Town Council) expressed concern with soil runoff from farmlands. And several other residents were worried by the presence of nitrogen in

"What's happening here is that property owners adjacent to the ocean are trying to restrict access to those roads [that end at the water]."

groundwater often caused by septic systems.

While Wiggin said he was happy to hear about these issues from the residents' perspectives, he added that "I don't think this plan would necessarily be the primary way you would go about addressing the septic problem. What's happening with the septic system is causing concern for us, but this plan won't provide the solution."

Similarly, just as toxic runoff has an affect on town waterways, so do waters from neighboring towns, an issue some residents thought to address. Wiggin said the WPP would only govern areas within Southampton Town, even though town waters are integrally connected to neighboring towns.

"That was one of our frustrations," explained Southampton Town Supervisor Anna Throne-Holst.

But she said she and her administration will continue to try to work with neighboring districts so that the affects of the WPP will have more far-reaching impacts.

"That is a big part of this plan," she added. "We want to do it on a broader level."

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PERSON OF THE YEAR

We will honor Sag Harbor's Person of the Year in our special year-end edition coming out December 29th and we want your help.

Between now and December 8th we will be accepting nominations for the person who, through his or her actions, has made a significant impact this year, in small ways or large, for better or worse, on the greater Sag Harbor community.

RECENT HONOREES

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- 2003 **Barbara Schmitz**
- 2004 **Laura Nolan**
- 2005 **Ellen Stahl**
- 2006 **Debbie Skinner**
- 2007 **George Simonson**
- 2008 **Jordan Haerter**
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- 2010 **Tom MacLeod**

When making your nomination, please tell us what the individual has done or accomplished, and why you believe he or she deserves to be Sag Harbor's Person of the Year.

Email us at info@sagharboronline.com, write us at POB 1620, Sag Harbor, NY 11963, or drop off your nomination at our office at 35 Main Street.

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