

Editorial

Investigation before action

To hear that New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D) has been accused of sexual harassment is distressing, but to read that many elected officials would like to see the governor resign or be impeached is just as disappointing.

While all of the women's allegations should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, Cuomo just like any other American deserves due process. Innocent until proven guilty is one of the cornerstones of our democracy. He deserves that process, too.

To ask the governor to resign or impeach him, would not only go against due process, but it would go against the wishes of the majority of New Yorkers who voted him in office.

We understand that Cuomo has exhibited behavior in the past that may seem aggressive or arrogant. The potential that he could have committed such acts is there, but until the alleged victims and witnesses are thoroughly questioned, a decision about his future as New York governor must be put on hold.

No matter what the outcome, this is a lesson for all. For men, it's time to understand that women are their equals and must be treated as such. Women are not playthings or ornaments to be ogled or fondled at a man's desire. Females just like males have talents and skills and contribute to society. Just like their male counterparts, they have the right to feel comfortable in their workplace and every space for that matter.

The 20th century is more than 20 years behind us. Women are more than wives and mothers, they are teachers, doctors, lawyers, legislators, journalists, scientists, CEOs and so much more. It is time to recognize and respect the strides women have taken throughout the decades by treating them with the respect they deserve. No person should ever feel uncomfortable in any circumstance, especially in a workplace, because they feel someone will touch them in inappropriate places or talk about uncomfortable topics.

But it still happens. No matter how many sexual harassment trainings there are, there is always someone somewhere who thinks it doesn't apply to them.

And it doesn't have to be someone inappropriately touching you or making you do something you don't wish to do. It could be a remark, a comment, an email or a note. We've seen and heard it all. For years, women didn't want to speak up. They felt like they couldn't. Now, thanks to the #MeToo movement and other women sharing their stories, they are able to discuss what they've been through and people are now listening.

For women, this is a reminder to speak up when we see something inappropriate. If someone crosses the line, it's OK to say, "No," or "Stop." Or, whatever you need to say or do to make the behavior stop. If it continues, have the strength to report the person to human resources and file a complaint. Even in social situations, it's OK to tell family and friends you will no longer be at social gatherings if a certain person attends.

Of course, as human beings, we all have different boundaries and senses of humor, but if you laugh at a joke that you know women will find offensive, don't hesitate to say, "I know I laughed, but others may find that inappropriate."

Last but not least, we must educate our boys and girls. It's important that they learn that everyone should be treated equally. We must always take their pains and discomforts seriously, ask the right questions to get to the heart of the matter. This way they can forge ahead in life knowing that if they feel boundaries have been crossed, they have the confidence to speak up.

Women and men have been at odds for too long. It's time to unite. It starts today with respect for all and believing that a person is innocent until proven guilty.

Letters to the Editor

Gyrodyne changes require additional environmental review

State law requires that changes proposed to the Gyrodyne mega development must be subject to environmental review before the Smithtown Planning Board can consider whether to approve the controversial plan to build a hotel, high-density housing and medical office complex on the 75-acre Flowerfield Fairgrounds site. The changes, made without public notice, include 30 additional housing units, 45,000 additional square feet of office space, and a 4,000 square-foot 133-seat multi-purpose room, according to documents available on the town website. These changes are significant and will require the preparation of a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). The fact that changes were proposed without any public notice is troubling, as state law requires the additional traffic and groundwater impacts must be subject to environmental review.

I am convinced the plan would completely overwhelm several two-lane roads that border the site, permanently alter the rural character of Mills Pond National Historic District and pollute Stony Brook Harbor. What Gyrodyne has proposed could be a boost to the economy on a site

bordered by four-lane highways that is not part of a National Historic District. There is no way a development this large can work at this location, because the infrastructure needed to support it just doesn't exist.

On Dec. 15, 2020, the town released its first Draft Comprehensive Plan since 1957, which set an overall goal of preserving, protecting and enhancing the historic, scenic, cultural and architectural character of the Town (p.14). The draft plan specifically recommends that mixed-use developments should be allowed in downtown areas and not along travel corridors like 25A (p.55). The plan also states that assisted living facilities should only be permitted in a newly created multi-family zone by special exception from the Town Board (p.42). Because the Gyrodyne proposal conflicts with significant recommendations in the Draft Comprehensive Plan, the Town Board needs to enact a moratorium on approval of major subdivisions until the Draft Comprehensive Plan is finalized. Ideally, undeveloped portions of the Flowerfield site should be rezoned back to residential, like it was prior to a controversial vote by the Town Board to approve industrial zoning,

which prompted a lawsuit against the town and Gyrodyne by the Village of Head of the Harbor and neighbors of the property. The decades-old controversy over the zoning and future use of the property makes it even more critical that the town require an SEIS.

Gyrodyne has an inherent right to develop, but not the right to develop whatever it wants. This massive development would be a textbook example of suburban sprawl that runs completely counter to current planning principles and the town's own Draft Comprehensive Plan. Zoning requirements are put in place to protect communities. Gyrodyne's mega development plan includes uses that are not 'as-of-right,' but are instead prohibited without special exceptions approved by the Town Board. We need our town government to step up and make sure this plan receives the comprehensive review that the law requires.

Judith Ogden
St. James

Village of Head of the Harbor trustee
Spokesperson for the St. James –
Head of the Harbor Neighborhood
Preservation Coalition

Gyrodyne saga continues

The saga of Gyrodyne in its current incarnation as a real estate investment trust continues. The concerns regarding traffic congestion and alteration of the vicinity's historic character do not seem to be slowing Smithtown's approval of the proposed development at the Gyrodyne site. Since the development would affect the Town of Brookhaven as well as Smithtown township, it would seem appropriate for Suffolk County or

New York State to address the effects of the proposed development, but that does not seem to have occurred so far.

There may however be some justification for U.S. federal government involvement. If there are significant subsurface toxic remnants of Gyrodyne's helicopter manufacturing days, we could have a potential Superfund site with underground contaminants moving with the ground water, either to the navigable

waters of Stony Brook Harbor and Long Island Sound or to the sole source drinking water aquifer below the site [or both]. It would be prudent to sample the subsurface characteristics of the site in a statistically defensible manner to address any potential groundwater contamination and ultimately avoid any federal involvement.

Barry Siskind
Smithtown

Editor's note: See page 5 for a perspective piece from the town in response to residents' concerns to the proposed Gyrodyne development.

Being better informed on our local Black history

I want to applaud the March 11 letter to the editor, "Black History Month is over, now what?" by Allison Singh. One wonderful source of information on local Black history is the newly published "Long Road to Freedom: Surviving Slavery on Long Island" by Jonathan Olly, curator at The Long Island Museum.

Published in PDF format, "Long Road to Freedom" is the story of the exhibition of the same name which ran at the museum in 2019. The exhibition and the PDF publication help provide an understanding of enslaved people

on Long Island, and a more direct and encompassing history of African Americans on the Island. It is centered around documents, objects and images that makes it a perfect vehicle for teachers to use in the classroom. As it says in the introduction to the publication, "People of African descent have played an integral role in Long Island's history, just as they make essential contributions to this region's present and future."

As Allison Singh said in her letter, "How can we call ourselves a 'well educated' community with so much

history still untold?" "Long Road to Freedom" goes a long way toward the goal of making us better informed citizens. I know that teachers, parents and students will all gain important knowledge from this illuminating publication which is free and can be downloaded from The Long Island Museum's website: longislandmuseum.org. Scroll down to image of "Long Road to Freedom."

Beverly C. Tyler
East Setauket
Three Village Historical
Society historian