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**From:** Lisa Blake <lisa@sensibleshoes.tv>  
**Sent:** Monday, August 14, 2023 2:55 PM  
**To:** okeeffem@optonline.net  
**Subject:** For the record - Timothy House  
**Attachments:** THOpinionS'town.pdf

Lisa Davidson  
3 Harbor Rd  
St. James, NY 11780

14 August 2023

Mayor Dahlgard  
Village Trustees  
Village Clerk  
Village of Head of the Harbor  
500 North Country Road  
St. James, NY 11780

Dear Mayor, Village Trustees and Village Clerk,

The Editorial page of the Smithtown News contained an opinion piece (July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023) articulating why, in their view, Trustee White should recuse himself on the matter of Timothy House.

Herewith, I am submitting the piece into the public record on the matter.  
Document attached.

Very Sincerely,

Lisa Davidson  
Encl

Lisa Blake Davidson  
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## Editorials & comments

# Cox applications should be before town board

Based on the testimony at two public hearings and the relief that is being proposed, the applications by contractor Michael Cox to bring his properties into compliance are inappropriate and misplaced.

Rather than dozens of variances and special use permits from the Smithtown Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), the Cox applications should be zone change applications to the Smithtown Town Board.

Mr. Cox is seeking to have the BZA legitimize heavy industrial (HI) uses on land that is zoned light industrial (LI). Changing land use from LI to HI is the purview of the town board, not the BZA.

Mr. Cox has applied to the town for variances and special exception permits to bring into compliance properties he owns at 168 Townline Road and 2 Old Northport Road. The relief that he is seeking is staggering, variances for parking, lighting, fencing, outdoor storage, and building size, some of the variances as much as 22 times or 418,000 square feet beyond the permitted amount.

He is also seeking special exception permits to operate a repair garage, outdoor storage and trucking station on the property. Some of the variances are for the conditions from the requirements for a

special exception.

Even if all of this relief is granted, in the end there will still be a heavy industrial operation on land that is zoned light industrial, which will not truly correct the underlying violations.

It seems the BZA has an obligation in this situation to suspend its review of the Cox applications and to refer the applications for 168 Townline Road and 2 Old Northport Road back to the drawing board for consideration of zone change applications. That is the appropriate level of review that is required to bring these sites into compliance.

# Trustee should recuse himself on Timothy House

Head of the Harbor Deputy Mayor Daniel White has refused to recuse himself from consideration of the controversial Timothy Smith House application, but he should.

The Saint Dionysios the Areopagite Monastery, also known as Monastery of the Glorious Ascension, has applied to the Village of Head of the Harbor for a special use permit to build a 4,323-square-foot church on the 4.6-acre residentially zoned site at 481 North Country Road (Route 25A). The application is controversial because twice, once in 1973 and again in 1997, renowned Long Island historic preservationist Barbara Van Liew, who owned the property from 1943 to 2005, placed covenants and restrictions on the property to restrict development.

The application is also controversial because of the history of the Timothy Smith house on the property. Timothy Smith was a descendant of Town of Smithtown founder Richard Smith and parts of the house, located on a bucolic parcel of land with an open field and a tree-lined driveway, date back to the 1790s.

Hieromonk Vasileios Willard is Deputy Abbot of the Monastery of the Glorious Ascension. Father Willard is a grandson of Deputy Mayor White's aunt. At the May 17 meeting Deputy Mayor White said his relationship with Father Willard is distant and that they have not had any significant conversation in 20 years. Therefore, he declined to recuse himself.

The ethical standard is that elected officials should avoid the "appearance of a conflict of interest" and recuse themselves if one exists. In this

case, Deputy Mayor White has acknowledged that he has a family tie to Father Willard and the church. To avoid the "appearance of a conflict of interest" he should feel duty bound to recuse himself. He should not take part in the deliberations about the church application and he should not vote on the application when that time comes.

This seems especially important right now considering that there is growing concern in the community among the opponents as to whether the village is following the proper procedure with this application. The application has been rejected by the Head of the Harbor Planning Board. It was then

substantively modified and should have gone back to the Planning Board to reconsider before advancing to the Board of Trustees for its consideration.

The revised plans, however, never went back to the planning board for its reconsideration and a recommendation to the board of trustees. It appears the board of trustees may be exceeding its authority at this point, which makes the appearance of a conflict of interest based on a familial relationship something especially important to address.

Deputy Mayor White should recuse himself and this application should be remanded back to the planning board for its reconsideration.

# Two good picks in race for county executive

The 2023 race for county executive is the antithesis of the direction electoral politics has been heading in Suffolk County.

From this vantage point, it seems that the electorate has been stuck in a spiral into an abyss of mediocrity, left to pick the lesser of two evils in race after race, from the most grassroots level in school board and library board levels right up to the federal level. That is a harsh criticism and a daunting narrative but standouts are hard to find.

The race for Suffolk County executive, however, is an exception to that dispirited evaluation. The Republican candidate, Brookhaven Town Supervisor Edward Romaine, and Democratic candidate, David Calone, are both terrific candidates.

Mr. Romaine and Mr. Calone participated in a campaign forum sponsored by the New York League of Conservation Voters (NYLCV) Monday, July 17 at Stony Brook University. They appeared separately, so the level of political animus was eliminated, Mr. Calone first, followed by Mr. Romaine. They gave two minute opening and closing remarks and answered the exact same questions posed to them by a moderator, NYLCV President Julie Tighe, each appearing for a little over 45 minutes.

The questions were all about environmental issues, asked at a time when Long Island has been engulfed in smoke from Canadian forest fires, seen flooding rains, and faced some of the hottest sustained periods on record. That's how the moderator framed her questioning. The questions delved into climate change, sustainability, farming, waste management, open space preservation, and the proposal for a Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act to be included on the 2023 ballot proposition to increase the Suffolk sales tax by an eighth of a cent to generate revenue for clean ground and surface water.

Both of the candidates were informed and responsive and they provided in-depth answers that defined their vision for the future of Suffolk County; which is not very far apart. And, they both received rousing applause from the audience by supporting the inclusion of the Suffolk County Water Quality Restoration Act on the November 7 ballot, legislation advocated by County Executive Steve Bellone that is being blocked by the Republican majority in the Suffolk County Legislature.

Mr. Calone was quick to release a press statement before the auditorium had cleared Monday criticizing Mr. Romaine for his remarks, charging that he deflected blame to Democrats related to the closure of the Brookhaven landfill and charging that he failed to offer solutions. In the statement, Mr. Calone claims to have the "broadest environmental background" to be the county executive.

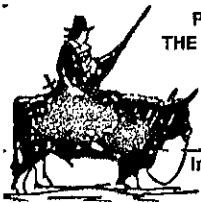
That, of course, is a hyper partisan assessment. Objectively, Mr. Romaine offered a cogent public policy position related to the landfill, arguing that once elected supervisor he turned aside a proposal by his Democratic successor to allow it to go higher, and instead requiring that it be closed by next year, incinerator ash and construction and demolition debris having to be disposed of elsewhere.

These issues and many others are sure to be debated as this election campaign develops. What was obvious Monday was the youthful exuberance of Mr. Calone, which sets him apart from Mr. Romaine, who if elected will be the oldest elected official in Suffolk County history. Nonetheless, these are two good candidates and voters should be thankful for that.

Now is the time for voters to start paying attention, find the distinction between the two candidates and make a choice of who they feel is best qualified for the job moving forward.

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