

A War Of Words In Beach Battle

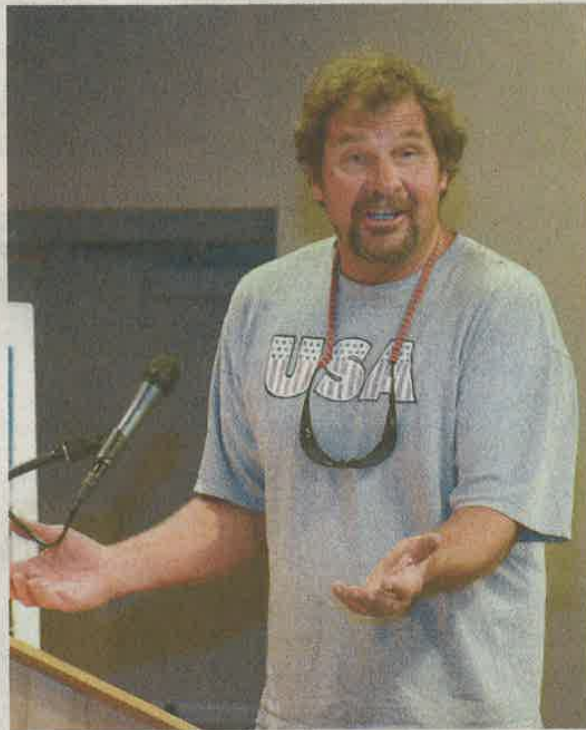
At hearing, two sides give no ground

BY GREG WEHNER

Nearly 150 residents, most of them outraged over plans that would limit their ability to drive and park on a popular stretch of ocean beach in the Village of Southampton, displayed their discontent to the Village Board at a public hearing last week.

"That place is about the hard-working people in this town who need a place to go and relax, to talk about whatever they want to talk about, cook whatever they want to cook on the grill, go swimming, watch their kids grow up, walk their dogs," Phil Gay, a Water Mill resident and the owner of East End Clambakes in Southampton, said of the 2,000-foot-long section of sand that runs between the village's western boundary and Road F, popularly known as the Picnic Area.

On Sunday evenings, Mr. Gay said, he and his brother can go there with their kids and have a picnic and socialize: "It's all



Francis Adamczeski weighs in on the vehicle limit at the Picnic Area at the Southampton Village Board hearing last week. GREG WEHNER

about that."

The hearing, which took place last Thursday night, May 12, at the Cultural Center on Pond Lane, allowed members of the public to weigh in on a proposal that seeks to cap at 175 the number of vehicles that are able to access the Picnic Area at a given time, between Memorial Day and Labor Day. It is the only stretch of ocean-facing beach in Southampton Town where people are permitted to drive onto the sand in the sum-

mer months, between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., with a proper village permit. In the past, up to 2,500 permits were issued, and the number of vehicles permitted at the Picnic Area at one time was not limited.

If it moves forward with the plan, the village would police the number of vehicles on the beach by setting up a single access point at the nearby heliport.

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Sand Land Wins A Round

Court denies town's attempt to halt activities

BY ALISHA STEINDECKER

A Suffolk County judge this week denied a temporary restraining order sought by Southampton Town officials to immediately stop the processing and selling of mulch and other materials at the Sand Land mine in Noyac.

According to Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman, however, Suffolk County Supreme Court Justice Denise Molia set a hearing for June 3 to hear from both the town and Sand Land's operators.

"The judge did not want to impose the immediate TRO," Mr. Schneiderman said. "I think

they have stopped taking in material, but they need time to process the material that they have already taken in."

In March, the State Supreme

'They are clearly in violation of the town code.'

Court Appellate Division ruled that the 50-acre sand-mining operation can no longer be used to process "trees, brush, stumps, leaves and other clearing debris into topsoil or

mulch." The business is also prohibited from storing, selling or delivering mulch, topsoil and wood chips.

Nevertheless, the mine has continued to process such materials, as well as sell them to the public, in an apparent effort to clear the site of materials that were collected prior to the decision.

"They are clearly in violation of the town code," Mr. Schneiderman said. "In terms of a question of injunctive relief, it seems like the judge was sympathetic to giving them time to remove the materials from

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Southampton
Press, 5-19-16

Parking Dispute Tossed To Village

BY GREG WEHNER

Appearing in court with more than a dozen other members of the Shinnecock Indian Nation on Tuesday, Dyani Brown was granted a two-month adjournment for a parking ticket, giving her time to take her fight to allow tribe members to be considered village residents, and thus eligible for beach parking permits, directly to the Southampton Village Board.

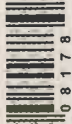
Southampton Village Justice Barbara Wilson told Ms. Brown to go to the board to ask for an exemption to allow those who live on the Shinnecock Indian Reservation permission to park at the beach.

Ms. Brown is disputing a parking ticket she received at Coopers Beach in the village on August 9, 2014. She has argued that, as a member of the Nation who lives on the reservation just outside the village bound-

aries, she should be allowed to park at village beaches for free, as village residents can.

"We have never been restricted by this before," Ms. Brown told Justice Wilson, who heard the case on Tuesday. According to Ms. Brown, other members of the tribe have received parking tickets at Coopers Beach, but some of those tickets were later dismissed when the tribe

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Members of the Southampton Village Board listen to members of the public on Thursday, May 12, as they weigh in on a proposal to limit the number of vehicles allowed on the beach at the Picnic Area. Right, nearly 150 residents attended the public hearing, and the majority of the speakers opposed a plan to limit the number of vehicles allowed to park on the beach at any one time during the day in the summer.

GREG WEHNER PHOTOS



BEACH: Picnic Area Fight Continues At Public Hearing

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Out of those in attendance last Thursday, 28 people addressed the Village Board; only three spoke in favor of the proposed change. The rest insisted that the proposed rule, prompted by a recent lawsuit filed by

the owners of nearby oceanfront homes who are upset about the large numbers of vehicles on the beach each summer, would unfairly limit their access.

Francis Adamczeski, a regular user of the Picnic Area, told Village Board members how much he loves the area, noting that, at

times, he even walks the beach just to clean up any garbage.

But some of his comments were directed at attorney Nica B. Strunk, who attended the hearing on behalf of the plaintiffs in the lawsuit targeting the Picnic Area, property owners Kathleen Araskog Thomas, Andrew S. Thomas, Rand V. Araskog and Jessi M. Araskog, who were not in attendance.

"This is our home," Mr. Adamczeski said. "You got enough money—move somewhere else."

Mr. Gay said the property owners who are upset about beach driving should have done their research before purchasing their homes. He opposed the 175-vehicle limit, saying he would prefer to see the number set at 250. At the same time, he said

the Southampton Town Trustees should do something to relieve the pressure at the Picnic Area—even if it means opening more beaches to vehicles in the summer.

The lawsuit filed against the Village of Southampton, the Southampton Town Trustees and the State Department of Environmental Conservation alleges that the village and Town Trustees were unfairly and illegally allowing vehicles on a small portion of the beach during the day in the summertime, while excluding them from other beaches. Filed by attorney Ms. Strunk on behalf of the Araskog and Thomas families on October 21, 2015, the lawsuit remains active and unresolved.

Ms. Strunk spoke at the public hearing on behalf of the Araskog family and said her clients are civic-minded and care about the community—and the last thing they want to do is deprive people of being able to go to the beach. But unlike all of the other beaches in the village and in the Town of Southampton, she noted, the Picnic Area is the only beach that allows driving and parking between the hours of 9 a.m. and 6 p.m. in the summer.

Without traffic, engineering or environmental impact studies, Ms. Strunk said, there is not enough information to support that 175 cars was an appropriate number on the stretch of beach. She said she believes village officials should do the studies to find out what is safe—and whatever the determination, it should apply to all beaches in Southampton Village, not just the Picnic Area.

"Their beach is a parking lot," Ms. Strunk said of the oceanfront portion of the Araskogs' property. "They're paying taxes on a public parking lot."

When asked by Southampton Village Mayor Mark Epley if her client was looking to have no vehicles drive on the beach, Ms. Strunk replied that they would prefer that, but that if a study found that it was safe for the environment and the people, and a resolution was proposed that could be applied to all of the village beaches, her clients would accept that.

Many in the audience said they have been going to that stretch of beach since well before the homes were built, and some said they even remembered a time when the only way to get there was on a dirt road.

