

WHAT TO Watch

HAUPPAUGE

POLICE REPORT. Suffolk Police officials will present county legislators with an update on changes in the department's structure and policies during a public safety committee meeting today at 9:30 a.m. in the auditorium of the William H. Rogers Building (725 Veterans Memorial Hwy.). Other legislative committees meeting today are the government, operations, personnel, housing and consumer protection, at 12:30 p.m. and the health committee at 2:30 p.m. Check Paul LaRocco's **Twitter updates @paullarocco.**

SMITHTOWN

TOWN BOARD. The Smithtown Town Board of Trustees will meet Tuesday at 2 p.m. at Town Hall (99 West Main St.). The public is invited to attend. Check Carl MacGowan's **Twitter updates @CarlMacGowan.**

SOUTHOLD

BOARD TALK. The Southold Town board of trustees will meet Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. at Town Hall (53095 Route 25). The public is welcome. Check Stacey Alther's **updates at newsday.com.**

NOW ONLINE
Catch up with these stories today at newsday.com/towns

TOPtweet

When ur sunburn isnt even red anymore . . . itz dark purple #sunburnproblems

@BieberTeamLI



GLEN COVE

The TROUBLE with **Crescent Beach**

Mussel shells dot Crescent Beach, but the water is closed to swimmers. Officials blame local septic systems for the contamination.

Bacteria again keeps bathers away

BY EMILY NGO
emily.ngo@newsday.com

Beaches on Long Island opened for the season this past weekend, but Glen Cove's Crescent Beach was not among them.

The beach — a secluded sliver of sand on Long Island Sound — is shuttered for the fourth summer, with high levels of bacteria to blame.

"When I was a kid, I used to come to this beach," Glen Cove Mayor Ralph Suozzi said yesterday, standing by a large sign that read, "This beach is closed for bathing until further notice." "It's a small beach; it's isolated. It was a beautiful place to watch the sunset."

City officials are working to pinpoint the exact source of the bacteria, believed to be the caused by failed or improperly maintained residential septic systems along a nearby stream that feeds into the Sound.

Nassau County Health Department officials have regularly found elevated levels of enterococci, an organism that can cause gastrointestinal-type illnesses, in the water, department spokeswoman Mary Ellen Laurain said yesterday.

A beach is closed when water

samples exceed 104 CFU, or colony-forming units, she said.

A timeline provided by the city showed two samples taken in June 2009, when Crescent Beach was first closed, measured 1,800 and 600 CFU.

A sample taken from the stream around the same time measured a staggering 26,000 CFU, though one taken four days later measured 1,500 CFU.

More recent numbers were not immediately available, but have remained relatively consistent over the years, Laurain said.

The county samples Crescent Beach water three times a week, she said.

Suozzi yesterday joined elected officials from neighboring communities and environmental groups, including the Hempstead Harbor Protection Committee and Friends of the Bay to highlight a campaign to educate residents on septic system management.

About 40 homes near the stream are unsewered, and Suozzi said they have been offered engineering reviews, aeration and system pump-outs — all free.

Education is a short-term solution, he and others agreed.

"The real, long-term solution

Testing the water

The Nassau County Health Department tests Crescent Beach water three times a week and uses two procedures.

■ **Single sample:**

Go into water knee-deep. Take a 100-milliliter sample. If it tests higher than 104 CFU, or colony-forming units, test again the next day. If second sample still exceeds 104 CFU, beach is closed. (A beach sample in July 2010 exceeded 6,000 CFU.)

■ **Log average:**

Samples analyzed over the course of 30 days, using a logarithm. The average cannot exceed 35 CFU. (A log average for enterococci in July 2009 measured 43.31 CFU.)

is getting those homes hooked up to the sewer system," Nassau Legis. Delia DeRiggi-Whitton (D-Glen Cove) said. "This was the beach I took my kids to when they were younger, and I have no doubt it's worth it."

DeRiggi-Whitton, Suozzi and others are seeking federal and state funding for what she said would be a \$10-million to \$15-million system, to cover the cost of sewerage about 75 homes.

The city and county in April 2010 identified a home along the stream with a failed septic

system. The city and state in March 2011 found a second home with an outflow diverting septic water into the Sound.

Still more bacteria sources must be found, but factors such as rising water tables complicate the search, Suozzi said.

Water quality is key to the economy of Long Island, Friends of the Bay executive director Patricia Aitken said.

She indicated that Crescent Beach may serve as a cautionary tale. "It's easier to preserve something and keep it healthy than to recover what was lost."

NEWSDAY PHOTO / AUDREY C. TIERNAN

newsday.com NEWSDAY, THURSDAY, MAY 31, 2012