

Around LI

Elections on tap for tomorrow

Elections in many villages across Long Island are to be held Tuesday.

Nine villages have contested elections: Babylon Village, Floral Park, Lynbrook, Valley Stream, Freeport, Hempstead Village, Malverne, East Williston, Greenport and Massapequa Park.

Issues range from water quality and infrastructure spending to tax breaks and government transparency.

A special referendum for residents of the Stewart Manor-Fernwood Terrace Library Funding District also is being held to determine a contract renewal for library services with the Garden City Public Library.

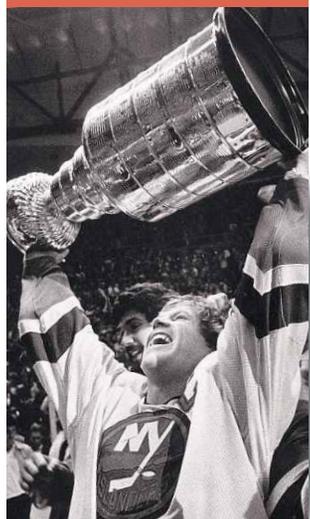
Babylon Village, Lynbrook, Valley Stream and Malverne have contested mayoral races. The Malverne race represents the first contested mayoral election in the village in 12 years.

Check village websites for information on polling places and times.

— SOPHIA CHANG

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CENTRE ISLAND

Buzz over HELICOPTERS

Village studies ways to control chopper noise, keeping new helipads on hold

BY TED PHILLIPS

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The roar of helicopter blades on Centre Island has divided the village as it struggles with how to regulate helipads.

A temporary moratorium on new helipads enacted by the village in 2017 has been repeatedly extended, most recently last month.

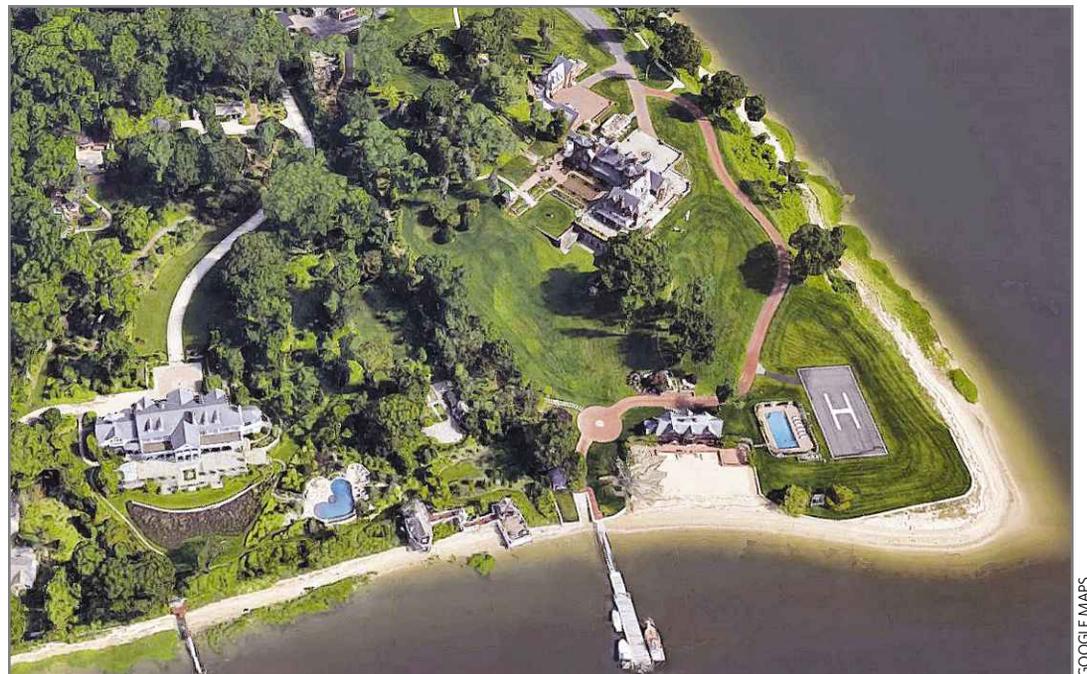
“The issue is basically quality of life,” Mayor Lawrence Schmidlapp said. Unlike many villages, Centre Island has no regulations banning helicopter landings and takeoffs, he said. Neighboring Bayville, for example, generally prohibits aircraft landings and takeoffs except for emergencies.

“We want to be fair to everybody, but we also don’t want to open up the world to 20, 30 helicopters using us as a base, which could eventually happen if we don’t pass a law,” Schmidlapp said.

The village board is considering setbacks and acreage requirements and limits to the number of takeoffs per month, he said. A study commissioned by the village last year determined the village could prohibit all helicopter landings and takeoffs, except for emergency use, or it could impose land-use restrictions, but it could not limit use of airspace. A new local ordinance on helicopters will have to go through the state’s environmental review process, which would take several months, he said.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it received applications in October to establish three Centre Island helipads and determined in December that those locations would not adversely affect airspace.

“We need to know the location of these types of aviation landing areas so their locations can be marked on aeronautical charts,” FAA spokesman Jim



A moratorium exists on building helicopter pads, such as this one at Moses Point, in the lower right corner.

Peters said in an email. The most notable chopper rides from the island take off from Billy Joel’s waterfront estate.

“It’s widely known that he takes a helicopter back and forth to his Madison Square Garden show,” his publicist, Claire Mercuri said. She declined to comment further.

Joel’s attorney, Anthony Guardino of Uniondale, said at a January meeting that his client “understands that reasonable regulations probably make sense in order to balance the interests of those who want to use a helicopter and those who don’t.”

The issue has become emotional in the North Shore waterfront village, with opinions ranging from restricting helipads to a more permissive approach.

Several residents at the Jan. 16 village board meeting supported limits on helicopter pads, citing concerns about noise, the impact on wildlife,



and fears that helicopter use would turn the village into the Hamptons, where noise complaints are chronic in the summer, according to a transcript of the meeting posted on the village website.

Resident Gregory Druhak said, “I see both sides because I’m a pilot . . . I don’t want to be next to one, but so far, the ones that exist don’t bother me personally.”

Another resident said he would pursue litigation to preserve his helipad — one of four on Centre Island.

“You take my helipad away, I will sue you,” Clive Holmes said, according to the transcript.

Holmes is a founder and managing partner of Manhattan-based The Silverfern Group, a private equity firm. Last year he sued the village over restrictions on installing a fence on his property, which his lawyer said in a court filing was necessary, in part, because of vandalism to his helipad. Neither Holmes nor his attorney returned phone calls seeking comment.

GOOGLE MAPS

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