

Whir over helipad plan

Proposed limits inspire ire of a daily commuter

BY TED PHILLIPS

ted.phillips@newsday.com

Centre Island officials have proposed a law to generally prohibit helicopter landings and takeoffs in the village other than for emergencies.

The law, introduced by village trustees at their meeting Wednesday, would provide three existing helipads with a path to become permitted — including one on Billy Joel's property.

New York State requires owners of private airports or heliports to complete a number of steps, including local municipal approval, before they can get state approval. Centre Island's village code doesn't include regulations addressing helicopter use — something village officials said has created a nuisance in recent years.

15 'flight events' a month

The proposed law would prohibit helicopter landings and takeoffs from Centre Island with exceptions for governmental purposes or emergencies. It would grandfather in three existing helipads, providing they comply with a number of regulations including a limit of 15 flight events — a takeoff and landing — per month. The board could also issue permits for individual flight events. The village plans to hold a hearing on the proposed law next month.

John Chase, the Glen Cove-based attorney for village resi-



Centre Island has proposed limiting takeoffs and landings for three already-existing helipads.

dent Clive Holmes, told trustees Wednesday the proposed law would deprive Holmes and his wife of their property rights.

"The board is well aware the Holmeses use that helicopter as a means of transportation on a daily basis to and from their place of employment," Chase said. "You know that you're intentionally taking his right to use that helicopter to go to and from work."

Chase also objected to a provision to extinguish Holmes' right to keep the helipad if his property were subdivided.

Holmes, a founder and managing partner of Manhattan-based The Silverfern Group, a private

equity firm, said in January he would sue the village if his helipad was taken away.

"If you proceed with adopting of this law in this form, the Holmeses intend to take every action possible to protect their rights," Chase said.

'A judge can decide'

"We have a right to defend our actions and then a judge can decide who's right and who's wrong," Deputy Mayor Michael Chalos said in response.

Trustee Peter Furniss, speaking during a break in the meeting, said the village needs regulations to either make helipads legal or ban them completely.

"I don't necessarily believe the argument of 'taking' because your heliport is not legal in the first place," Furniss said, referring to Chase's comments.

Joel's attorney, Anthony Guardino of Uniondale, who attended the meeting, said he had not reviewed the language of the proposal with his client.

"I don't believe you'll have any real objections to the provisions of the law" from Joel, Guardino said. He suggested a change to the language that referred to individuals as homeowners rather than corporations that own property. Joel's estate is owned by a limited liability company, property records show.



Tammy Mahoney

\$40G REWARD FOR INFO IN 1981 CASE

The Associated Press

Federal investigators are offering a \$20,000 reward for information that may help solve the case of a Long Island woman who went missing 38 years ago in central New York.

College student Tammy Mahoney was last seen hitchhiking on state Route 46 in Oneida on May 8, 1981. Authorities believe the 19-year-old Farmingdale native was raped and killed after attending a party on Oneida Nation tribal land. Her body was never found.

At a news conference Thursday, FBI Special Agent James Hendricks announced the reward and said "recent events" led officials to believe there may people with information about what happened to Mahoney. He gave no specifics.

The Oneida Nation said it would match the FBI's reward with an additional \$20,000.

Tammy Mahoney, an aspiring veterinarian who was attending classes at Morrisville College south of Oneida while working with horses at nearby Vernon Downs, was last seen hitchhiking along Route 46 en route to visit friends in upstate Hamilton, Newsday has reported.

"I always had my ray of hope that someday I would get a call from her," her mother, Jean Mahoney, told Newsday in 2001 upon learning that police had declared her daughter dead. "Until you find out, your hopes are always there."

With Newsday staff

Fisherman seeks aid, rescued near Fire Island

The captain of a commercial clam dredge was brought safely to shore Wednesday night after he had difficulty breathing and radioed for help, police said.

Ronald Garay, 44, of East Meadow, was operating his 77-foot clam dredge, Mary T, near Fire Island, south of Point O' Woods, when he began to experience shortness of breath, police said.

The Suffolk County Police Marine Bureau received the distress call around 9:15 p.m., and sent a rescue boat, Marine Kilo,

with two crew members who are New York State certified emergency medical technicians.

"The police boat responded out of Fire Island Inlet into the Atlantic Ocean and intercepted the Mary T approximately two miles south of Fire Island," police said in a news release.

Police said Garay was taken to U.S. Coast Guard Station Fire Island, then by ambulance to Southside Hospital in Bay Shore for treatment.

— CHAU LAM



Marine officers rescue the captain of a clam dredge on Wednesday.