

~Op-Ed~

Contact: Sarah Hartmann
Office: 854-1400



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From the Office of Legislator Rob Calarco

Determining the Future of the Blue Point Laundry Site

The future of the Blue Point Laundry property has been the subject of a great deal of talk and media attention recently. The 2-acre parcel located on Park Street in the heart of Blue Point is known by Civics as Roe Park, while local youths have referred to the property as “the Wastelands” for some time now. The property, which is owned by Suffolk County, is contaminated.

For the past two years, I have been working with the civic associations, nearby residents, and youths of the area to plan how best to turn this contaminated parcel into a community asset. One of those youths had been Billy Schettino, the young man who tragically lost his life on the Long Island Expressway. Since Billy’s passing, his family and friends understandably have begun to see this property as being the perfect site for a park with a skate-park feature. It would be built in Billy’s honor, as he was a passionate skater. To this end, friends and family have begun petitioning and pushing for their vision. I welcome their involvement, understand their motivation, but think it is important for everyone to understand the facts surrounding the property and the process that must unfold before its future use can be established.

The Blue Point Laundry Property had been used as a laundry and dry cleaner, an auto garage and storage area for National Millworks. It was acquired by Suffolk County through tax default in 1998. at which time concerns were raised that the property could be contaminated because of its long use as a dry cleaner. Suffolk then sought inclusion of the property in the New York State Brownfields program in an attempt to obtain the expertise and financial assistance of the NYS Department of Environmental Control (DEC) to remediate the site.

In May 2002, the County successfully received a Targeted Site Assessment Grant from the DEC which was used to investigate the site and assess the level of clean-up required. However, the County was denied inclusion as a NYS Brownfield on two separate occasions. Instead, the property was assigned to the DEC Spills Unit (ID number 09-06677). Since that time, Suffolk County has conducted extensive testing of the property and found Stoddard Solvent spills (from the drycleaner) and motor oil spills (from the auto garage).

To address the spills, we have an approved remediation plan from the NYS DEC and have funding in our Capital Budget for the present year to begin remediation (CP 8223). The Suffolk County Department of Health Services is the lead agency on the action and will be coordinating all the cleanup efforts, which will take at least until the end of the current year. Before this property can become a park, the remediation must be completed and the County Legislature must designate the area as parkland via resolution.

On September 21, 2011, Legislator Jack Eddington hosted a community meeting at the Henrietta Acampora Center to solicit public comment and input concerning this property. At that meeting, a representative of the SC Health Services provided a presentation on the remediation efforts; the attendees were asked to sketch their own thoughts of what they would like the property to become; and some young men submitted a petition for a skate park. A great deal more planning is necessary as we must hash out all the future features of a potential park as well as determine who will be responsible for the maintenance of the park and how we will ensure that the property is not misused. Attached is an informational sheet provided at that first meeting regarding the contamination of this property.

And finally, at the meeting last fall, I assured the residents that they would guide the future of the property. I stand by that commitment today. My goal remains for the property to become an asset to the residents of Blue Point and especially for those who live in the small neighborhood of Park Street. That can only occur when they make the decisions on the future use of the property.