Town Board Approves Resolution for Memorandum of Understanding with LIPA for
$2 Million Natural Resources Benefit Grant

posted on 6/15/2011 3:27:05 PM

June 15, 2011

Farmingville, NY - At the June 14 Board Meeting, the Brookhaven Town Board approved a resolution authorizing the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LIPA that will provide the Town with a $2 Million grant for the purchase and preservation of open space in the 0-5 year groundwater contributing area of the Carmans River, which lies within Long Island's Pine Barrens region. The 0-5 year groundwater contributing area was identified by the Carmans River Study Group as the area around the River where it takes 0-5 years for groundwater, or anything that seeps into groundwater, such as nitrogen, to reach the Carmans River.

"I thank LIPA for working with the Town to protect precious open space while advancing a very significant renewable energy project. The two million dollars the Town will receive through this grant will help our efforts to protect Pine Barrens lands that lie within the sensitive Carmans River Watershed, especially at a time when dollars are scarce," said Supervisor Mark Lesko.

"This project is a win-win for Brookhaven residents, producing clean energy and helping preserve open space," said Congressman Tim Bishop, who helped negotiate a compromise for the solar array to be built on Department of Energy land by ensuring funds were dedicated to open space protection. "I am glad we were able to build partnerships and I have confidence that Supervisor Lesko and the Town of Brookhaven will make the best possible use of these open space funds."

"LIPA is committed to ensure that the mutual goals of fostering the protection of Long Island's ecological and hydrological heritage while achieving national, state, and local renewable energy goals are achieved," said LIPA Chief Operating Officer Michael D. Hervey. "By working with Supervisor Lesko and the Brookhaven Town Board, this MOU will allow LIPA to fulfill its commitment from the inception of this solar project, which was to not only advance renewable energy on Long Island, but to also ensure that we protect the natural resources of the Pine Barrens."

"We see this resolution as a win-win-win for the environment, Brookhaven National Lab and the Pine Barrens," said Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld. "The solar farm at BNL is an important component of moving our island to a true solar economy and I'm glad this compromise led to the purchase of additional open space of the Pine Barrens overall helping protect our air, water, land and economy. Congratulations to LIPA for working this to a beneficial conclusion for all concerned."

"This is a fantastic agreement that will simultaneously meet two critical goals in the Town of Brookhaven," said Councilwoman Connie Kepert. "Allocating funds for the preservation of the Carmans River Watershed while investing in alternative energy sources such as solar power will clearly benefit the residents of Brookhaven and I'm happy to support this."

The MOU is part of the "Natural Resources Benefit" associated with the 32 megawatt solar power generating facility which is currently under construction by Long Island Solar Farm LLC (LISF) at the Brookhaven National Laboratories (BNL). The facility is scheduled to begin operation at the end of this year.

On February 10, 2011 Supervisor Mark Lesko received the draft Carmans River Watershed Protection and Management Plan, the culmination of over three months of work by the Carmans River Study Group. The Carmans River Study Group was established by Supervisor Lesko in October 2010 so the Town would have a clear plan of action to protect the Carmans River that was agreed-upon by government, non-government organizations and environmentalists, and builders. The Protection Plan is arguably the most significant and productive partnership between government, environmentalists, and builders since the Pine Barrens Act of 1993. The Protection Plan includes sweeping recommendations to protect the river and preserve land and introduces a new model of land preservation and management by redirecting development away from virgin land. The report was unanimously approved by the Carmans River Study Group at their last meeting on February 9. A public hearing was held on March 29, 2011 where many comments were received. The Town can adopt the Plan after the Draft Environmental Impact Statement is prepared and any amendments are proposed.