May 15, 2012

**Kepert partners with LIPA to acquire unique 15 acre parcel located in the Central Pine Barrens and Carmans River Watershed**

**Farmingville, NY** - At Tuesday night's board meeting, the Town Board voted unanimously to adopt Councilwoman Connie Kepert's resolution to acquire the property known as Winwood Oaks in Yaphank. Winwood Oaks is a 15 acre parcel located in the 0 to 5 year contributing area of the Carmans River.

The funds to acquire the parcel were from a Natural Resources Benefit fund to be used for the preservation of ecologically and hydrologically important properties in the Town of Brookhaven. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with LIPA to purchase such properties was adopted by the Town board in June 2011. As part of the regulatory process for the construction of the Long Island Solar farm (LISF), this MOU provides the Town with $2 million for the purchase and preservation of open space in the 0-5 year groundwater contributing area of the Carmans River, where it takes 0-5 years for groundwater, or anything else that seeps into groundwater, such as nitrogen, to reach the Carmans River.

"The best open space purchases are when we partner with outside agencies like LIPA to stretch our funding and find a willing seller of ecologically valuable land, like Winwood Oaks, to preserve and cherish for future generations. With this purchase we are successful in hitting both those marks," stated Councilwoman Kepert.

"The protection of this sensitive land is a win for the community and the environment. I am delighted these 15 acres of land will be protected for generations to come," said Supervisor Mark Lesko.

"LIPA is proud to partner with Supervisor Lesko, Councilwoman Kepert and the Town of Brookhaven to advance solar energy on Long Island with the construction and operation of the largest solar farm on the eastern seaboard, as we also to ensure that we protect the precious resources of the Pine Barrens," said LIPA Chief Operating Officer Michael D. Hervey.

Johan McConnell, the former president South Yaphank Civic Association, stated, "The neighboring homes have been concerned about the potential development of this property for years now and have strongly desired to see it preserved. This is outstanding news that the community will be thrilled to hear. We are thankful for the Councilwoman's leadership in protecting this land."

The owner was originally moving forward with a sub-division application which included 14 single family homes. During the application process, active grey fox dens were sited on the property. Considering the sensitivity of the land, the Town's Planning Department required the development be clustered in order to preserve the habitat of the rare species. The owner then met with the Town and offered to sell the property for open space.

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