Farmingville, NY - On June 19, Councilwoman Connie Kepert held a press conference to address the community in regard to the Pine Barrens Commission vote to assert jurisdiction over Suffolk County Trap & Skeet in Yaphank. It is the culmination of many years of work by Councilwoman Kepert to give back to the people of this neighborhood their right to live in peace. Suffolk County Trap & Skeet is located both within the Core Preservation Area, and within a Special Groundwater Protection Area. The newly adopted Pine Barrens Protection Act gives the Pine Barrens Commission the power to determine what types of activity constitute development within the Pine Barrens Core.

Suffolk County Trap & Skeet was closed in October 2001 as a result of the then vendor's failure to pay fees and remove lead shotgun pellets from the site. The range remained closed until it reopened on July 29th of 2005.

"Suffolk County claimed that the use of this facility never fully ceased. That is not the case, not one shot was fired on the Yaphank site for nearly four years and that therefore, the reopening of the Trap and Skeet Range, in my view, clearly constitutes development within the core," stated Councilwoman Connie Kepert. "There has been substantial new development on the site of the Trap and Skeet range in Yaphank, a new deck and ramp, the installation of 1200 feet of fencing which resulted in the cutting of vegetation and pine trees and an 8' by 20' wooden wall on the sporting clay course."

"There is a truism I teach to my students which states: 'All of our rights exist in relationship to the rights of others.' Our first amendment rights include freedom of speech, but we can't yell fire in a crowded movie theater because that would endanger others," stated Councilwoman Kepert.

"Likewise our second amendment right to keep and bear arms does not mean that we can infringe on the rights of others, the rights of entire neighborhoods, and communities for a peaceful existence; the rights of people to enjoy
their backyards, to invite friends and family for a barbeque without being assaulted by the incessant sound of gun shots, or for children to sleep without interruption,” continued Kepert.

As a result of the Pine Barrens Commission's vote to assert jurisdiction over Suffolk County Trap & Skeet, the county must make an application to the Pine Barrens Commission for core hardship relief to continue their use. "I am very hopeful that the Commission will deny that relief," concluded Kepert.

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