Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld (D-East Setauket) has announced the hiring of Eileen Gerle, as the long awaited Environmental Educator with enforcement powers (think somewhat like a National Park Service Park Ranger) for West Meadow Beach. Months of negotiations with the Suffolk County Civil Service Department regarding the job description (ie "duty statement") for this new position was part of the reason for the elongated delay in the hiring process. Ms. Gerle is to begin her duties on Monday, March 2.

"We are absolutely thrilled to have someone of Ms. Gerle's caliber as our live-in public educator and protector of this incredible ecosystem - and jewel of our Town parks system - at West Meadow Beach." Ms. Gerle was formerly Director of Education at Atlantis Marine World Aquarium in Riverhead where among her responsibilities was the development of new education programs. She holds a Masters Degree in Marine Environmental Science from Stony Brook University as well as two Bachelor of Arts degrees-one in Biology and the other in Communications Design. For the last five years, Ms. Gerle has served as a Naturalist for the Riverhead Foundation for Marine Research and Preservation. She previously served as Environmental Sciences Educator for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. She has made numerous presentations on marine mammals and sea turtles at symposiums and conferences around the United States and Mexico.

Assemblyman Steve Englebright added: "I'm delighted that the Environmental Educator that was central to the premise of restoring the natural beauty of West Meadow Beach and making it useful for our local school children has finally come together. I salute Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld for his determined follow through on this important initiative that will benefit every family in our community and our school children in particular."

The West Meadow Beach Restoration Master Plan called for the establishment of an environmental education center with interpretive programs. Working under the direction of our Town's Division of Environmental Protection Director Mr. John Turner, a renowned, credentialed conservationist himself, Ms. Gerle will be responsible for the development and presentation of educational environmental programs. Workshops on the flora and fauna of West Meadow Beach will be given to school groups, community organizations, and the general public. It is expected that Ms. Gerle will work with the Suffolk County Parks Department, the Three Village Community Trust, the Ward Melville Heritage Organization, and others to bring about a total ecosystem management program as envisioned in both the state laws as well as the Town's adopted WMB Restoration Master Plan. In addition, she will act somewhat similar to what the public generally considers a "park ranger," providing an additional on-site securing presence at West Meadow Beach while informing the public of the park rules and regulations and enforcing them as needed.

Ms. Gerle will live on site, thus being the 24/7 eyes and ears or "town's steward" at West Meadow Beach. It is anticipated that her presence there will prevent most, if not all, of any future vandalism of a kind that has occurred in the past on the remaining historic structures, all of which are to be but back into productive public re-adaptive use as per the Town's adopted WMB Restoration Master Plan. Ms. Gerle will work with the Town's DEP, the Town Parks Department and the Town grant writers to see the restoration process to fruition on such matters as removal of invasive species and re-establishment/restoration of indigenous species of flora and fauna. She will temporarily occupy a residential trailer that will be placed next to Cottage 109, the one closest to the public beach/parking lot. When restoration of that cottage is completed, Ms. Gerle will move there permanently, and the trailer will be removed.

The NYS law written by Assemblyman Englebright concerning the Town's West Meadow Beach (from 1996) states that one of the remaining cottages may be used for park protection purposes and another for educational purposes. Both the trailer, at first, and then cottage 109 will provide Ms. Gerle with both living quarters as well as some office space.