July 1, 2009 Yaphank: Councilwoman Connie Kepert and Legislator Kate Browning (3rd District) called for the closing of the "Trap and Skeet" shooting range at Southaven Park, citing that the range severely impacts the quality of life for local residents.

"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 Connie Kepert.

"Likewise, our second amendment right to keep and bear arms does not mean that we can infringe upon 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 barbecue without being assaulted by the incessant sound of gun shots, or for children to sleep without interruption" continued Kepert.

The Town of Brookhaven has fought Hunter Sports, the operator of the "Trap and Skeet" shooting range, and Suffolk County to give back to the people of this neighborhood their right to live in peace.

The Town hired a nationally renowned noise expert to document that the noise migrating off the "Trap and Skeet" site far exceeded town's allowable limits. (Brookhaven's Noise Code is set at 65 decibels.) The sound levels that were measured from gunshots at residences on Gerard, Leslie, and John streets measured consistently well above 65 decibels, at times reaching beyond 80 decibels, and constitute an "unambiguous" violation of Brookhaven's Noise Code. The Town trained its Public Safety officers to operate the noise meter and has issued more than 17 violations to Hunter Sports since June 13. The Town also sought to have the Pine Barrens Commission determine that the reopening of the "Trap and Skeet" range constitutes development within the core.

Hunter Sports, Suffolk County's concessionaire, has unfortunately fought the Town of Brookhaven at every turn: suing the Town for enforcing its noise ordinance and demanding that the court stop the Town from issuing summonses. Finally, after three years of legal battles, the court supported the right of the Town of Brookhaven to enforce the town's noise violations. Public Safety has been directed to again issue noise violations and issued six violations just this past weekend.

Councilwoman Kepert has been working with Suffolk County Legislator Kate Browning for more than three years. "Since the Trap and Skeet Range in Southaven re-opened in 2006 I have been committed to finding a solution to the constant attack on the resident's quality of life in Yaphank," stated Browning. "This is not an anti-gun issue, but rather a fight for the right to peace and quiet in your own back yard. Currently I am leading a relocation effort to move the facility to a more suitable location, but there is no guarantee it will be successful. Closing this facility may be our only option to restore this wonderful community to the beautiful place it once was," Browning continued.

But in the meantime, "Trap and Skeet" continues to disrupt the lives of residents. "Suffolk County needs to step up to the plate and find an alternative location for this facility and give back to the residents of this community their right to peace and quiet," stated Councilwoman Kepert.