Farmingville, NY - When Councilwoman Connie Kepert learned that the proposed 2011 Town Budget included a provision to close the towns compost facility in Manorville as a money saving measure she took immediate action

"To close one of the best run facilities in Suffolk County and transfer that material to the already over burdened community of Yaphank was simply unacceptable," stated Kepert "I realized the Town needed time to review the long term financial and quality of life impacts on town residents," continued Kepert.

Kepert immediately formed a Compost Review Committee to study what the potential impacts could be if indeed the Manorville site was closed. The committee had representation from area elected officials, civic reps from council districts 4 and 6, Suffolk County Health Dept., the DEC, a representative from the Supervisor's office and two members of the Blue Collar Bargaining Unit. The Committee was given a window of 90 days to report their findings to the Town Board.

The goal of the committee was to: "Generate recommendations for policies which ensure that the Town of Brookhaven composts its leaves and brush in an environmentally sound manner which protects the health and quality of life of nearby residents."

"I have sponsored several sense resolutions whose goals are to decrease the impact of compost facilities on all the residents of Brookhaven rather than transfer those impacts," stated Kepert.

Those resolutions are as follows:

1. The processing of mulch generates particulate matter and odor which results in negative health effects therefore be it resolved that the TOB recommends that New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) amend Mulch-exemption DEC Part 360 regulations such that mulch not be an exempt activity under DEC regulations.

2. Due to the difficulty in implementing regional air quality standards at specific sites such as compost facilities, the TOB recommends that the State of New York adopt site specific air quality standards, thereby providing State and other enforcing agencies a standard with which to implement.

3. DEC should enforce preferred practices at all compost facilities within the Town of Brookhaven (TOB), in particular at L.I. Compost in Yaphank. Preferred practices include, but are not limited to: use of weather forecasting, elimination of ponding, monitoring temperature and oxygen levels of mulch piles and asphalt milling.

I have also proposed to move the town from plastic to paper bags which will reduce the impact of odors when compost is debagged.

The Compost Review Committee met a total of six times and topics discussed were Environmental, Financial, and Labor impacts connected with possibly closing Manorville. Extensive time was spent studying the effects that surrounding communities may feel if Manorville closed. Other discussions included finding alternative uses for the un-used portion of the site along with other revenue generating possibilities.

"An enormous amount of work went in to these meetings; people from all sides of this debate were passionate in their advocacy, great ideas were heard and some have been implemented in the Supervisor Lesko's Modified Analysis," said Connie Kepert.

In the Supervisors Modified Analysis the Blue Collar Bargaining Unit agreed to a staffing plan that would significantly lower the labor expense at Manorville and would reduce the annual cost to process yard waste by over $300,000. "The savings we enjoy through negotiations with Blue Collar alone puts the Manorville Compost Facility at a surplus of $8571.00, I applaud Bill Walsh for working with us on this issue, but it gets better" said Kepert.
Another idea to come forward during Committee meetings was the possibility of renting un-used land at Manorville to rent to local Landscapers or Construction Companies. An informal study was conducted and it was determined that an acre of property could fetch approximately $1200.00 a month in rent. "The town has over ten un-used acres in Manorville so lets be conservative and say we could rent 3 acres at $1200 a month, that's an additional $43,200 a year in revenue to the town which brings the total revenue coming to the taxpayers at $50,000 per year. And in these trying financial times those are numbers that simply cannot be ignored" said Kepert

Residents living in Yaphank were overjoyed after hearing that the Manorville Compost Facility was not closing. Johann McConnell President of the South Yaphank Civic Association said "The residents of South Yaphank are very excited and pleased that the Town Board voted to keep the Manorville facility open. We would like to thank Councilwoman Connie Kepert and the committee for all their hard work in making this possible, and also to Supervisor Lesko for listening to the residents and the committee. The community looks forward to working with Councilwoman Kepert and the town on improving methods for composting the town's yard waste."

Division of Public Information * Office of the Supervisor
One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone (631) 451-6595 • Fax (631) 451-6258