

Brookhaven Will Press Enforcement of Trap & Skeet Violations

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BROOKHAVEN, NY - Frustrated after months of work on the part of Brookhaven Town Board, the Pine Barrens Commission passed a resolution at its meeting of Wednesday, March 18, to review whether the reopening of the Suffolk County Trap & Skeet facility in Yaphank, constitutes "development" under the Pine Barrens Protection Act of 1993 (ECL as amended). Town Council members Jane Bonner and Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld said the Town itself must act in response to complaints from environmental and civic leaders. Groups and citizens charge that the facility's operation constitutes illegal development, prohibited in the Core Preservation of the Pine Barrens and a state-designated Special Groundwater Protection Area. Local residents charge that these activities produce intolerable noise, in violation of Brookhaven noise ordinances.

"State law is clear," said Bonner. "When citizen-identified violations are ignored, towns are empowered to enforce the law themselves." Fiore-Rosenfeld pointed to provisions of a 2004 amendment to the Pine Barrens Protection Act, which specifically provides for local enforcement upon receipt of citizen charges of violations. Council members have recently received another round of complaints about this dire situation from both environmental and civic leaders.

"The Pine Barrens Commission has ignored serious environmental and quality-of-life threats to Brookhaven residents through years of inaction, leaving our Town with no recourse but to take matters into our own hands," Fiore-Rosenfeld said.

Bonner added, "The Commission has now thumbed its nose at a vote by every Town Council member and Brookhaven's representative to the Pine Barrens Commission demanding an investigation to determine whether violations of law at the range have occurred. The Commission's inaction is a complete abdication of responsibility to the environment and to our citizens, and we won't stand for it any longer."

Bonner and Fiore-Rosenfeld, as members of the Town Board, said they would call upon the Town's Law Department to investigate and enforce all applicable laws and use our Town's authority under sub-section (b) of 57-0136 of the Pine Barrens Protection Act to attempt to shut down the facility if it is not in conformance with applicable law.

Both Council members said they would advise and involve the office of the New York State Attorney General as provided for in the Pine Barrens Act. "The Commission has let us down." Fiore-Rosenfeld said, "Now we must enforce the law ourselves." Bonner added, "I think this effort will enjoy the unanimous, non-partisan support of the entire Town Board. After all, the law is the law."

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