

Brookhaven Councilman Dan Panico Holds Public Hearing Regarding Need for Additional Rail Road Grade Crossings in the Tri-Hamlet Community

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Farmingville, NY – More than 100 residents attended a public hearing hosted by Brookhaven Town Councilman Dan Panico on Wednesday, August 23, at 6:00 p.m., at William Floyd High School, to solicit public comment on the need for additional at-grade rail road crossings in the Tri-Hamlet area, specifically on Hawthorne and/or Madison Avenues. Councilman Panico was joined by Congressman Lee Zeldin, Brookhaven Highway Superintendent Dan Losquadro, Town Planning officials, NYS Senator Tom Croci; NYS Assemblymen Fred Thiele and Dean Murray; Suffolk County Legislator Kate Browning, officials from Mastic Beach Village, and representatives from the William Floyd School District, area fire

departments, ambulance companies, the Unkechaug Indian Nation, and the Chamber of Commerce, all of whom voiced overwhelming support for more at-grade crossings in the Tri-Hamlet area. [View Presentation](#)

“This is a night that has been decades in the making,” said Councilman Panico at the start of the hearing. “Tonight, the community spoke loud and clear, alongside every one of their elected officials across party lines, at this public hearing. We have always been together on this issue and have decided to stop taking ‘No’ for an answer by formally taking the first step in our legal action against the LIRR under the NYS Railroad Law by having this hearing. We will now meet with our engineers and our legal team to go over the testimony and will soon announce our next step. Our strength comes from the unity and common purpose we seek in improving our community. I thank everyone who came out and spoke so passionately on the issue.

At the start of the hearing, Nelson and Pope, the traffic consultants hired by the Town to perform a traffic impact study, presented data that was collected in the Tri-Hamlet community over the last several months. This information only strengthened the case for additional at grade crossings, and emphasized how the neighboring communities of Patchogue and Center Moriches both have multiple at-grade rail road crossings, despite smaller and less dense populations. The Patchogue community - which encompasses Patchogue Village, Patchogue and East Patchogue - has a population of approximately 45,420 and a total of 12 rail road crossings, or one crossing for every 3,785 people. Center Moriches has roughly 8,000 residents and has four rail road at-grade crossings, or one for every 2010 people. Based on this data, traffic engineers estimate that with its population of 60,000, the Tri-Hamlet community should have a total of eight at-grade rail road crossings.

Congressman Lee Zeldin said, “Installing an additional at-grade rail road crossing is absolutely imperative to improving the flow of traffic in and out of the Tri-Hamlet area. It is time we finally addressed this issue that the Tri-Hamlet community has been requesting for decades now. I am proud to join with Councilman Panico and all of our elected officials and community leaders who are uniting to resolve this crucial concern.”

Supervisor Ed Romaine said, “The LIRR has ignored this issue for too long and now is the time for them to take action. Continuing with the status quo is completely irresponsible and threatens the lives of thousands of people in the event of natural disaster that would require mass evacuation. We need to keep the pressure on them until they do the right thing for Tri-Hamlet residents.”

“This is not a matter of want, but a matter of need,” said Suffolk County Legislator Kate Browning during her testimony. Several other speakers testified that they would be “trapped” during an evacuation situation.

“There is no question for the need,” said Chief Harry Wallace of the Unkechaug Indian Nation, which is located on the Forge River. “We have over 18,000 people who live here and we are trapped. This community is tired of being neglected.”

This public hearing, which was mandated under Section 90 of New York State Rail Road Law, was the first step in the overall process of petitioning the Long Island Rail Road for an additional at-grade rail road crossing. The testimonies provided during the hearing will now be officially presented to the New York State Department of Transportation to request a second hearing before an independent judge.

Division of Public Information * Office of the Supervisor

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