

Romaine: Town Investigation of Alleged Employee Workers Compensation Fraud Results in Closure of Illegal Snake Business

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A snake expert from the Rainforest Reptile Show displays one of two Burmese Pythons that were removed from the scene and brought to a wildlife sanctuary.

850 Snakes Found in Illegally Converted Garage in Shirley Residential Neighborhood

Farmingville, NY - Supervisor Ed Romaine today announced that an undercover investigation into alleged Workers Compensation fraud has resulted in the closure of an illegal snake business operating out of a detached garage in a residential neighborhood in Shirley. The premises, located at 79 Auburn Avenue, housed 850 snakes with an estimated value of a half million dollars. Two Burmese Pythons, which are illegal to possess, were removed and brought to a wildlife refuge and the New York State DEC issued two violations to the homeowner. Town Law Department officials are still investigating and will likely issue numerous violations in the coming days.

The search warrant was executed at noon by Law Department investigators with the assistance of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, NY State DEC, Suffolk County Police and SPCA after a weeks-long undercover investigation of the property and business records of the owners.

"Let this be a clear message: Brookhaven Town will not stand for fraud of any kind at the taxpayers' expense. This is one of several investigations we are conducting of alleged fraud activity of Town employees, which we will vigorously prosecute to the fullest extent of the law," said Supervisor Romaine. "What makes this case especially egregious is that this individual was allegedly operating this reptile business out of his home, posing an unknown threat to the neighbors of this community - while collecting a taxpayer funded salary for a town job that he claimed he could not show up for because of medical reasons."

According to Town investigators, Richard Parrinello, who lives at 79 Auburn Avenue, is the owner of "Snakeman's Exotics," whose website advertises a collection of pythons, boa constrictors and hognose snakes available for sale both domestically and internationally. Mr. Parrinello spoke to undercover investigators, who videotaped the operation, claiming to have \$500,000 in inventory stored on the premises, including snakes, turtles and turtle eggs. The business was being conducted out of a detached garage that had been illegally converted into habitable space.

"I'm shocked, and dismayed that in a residential community like Shirley, this individual would put his neighbors at risk by selling reptiles and snakes as large as six-feet in length out of his home," said Councilwoman Constance

Kept. "I want to thank our Town Investigators, as well as other law enforcement agencies involved in this investigation, who discovered and put an end to this illegal, and potentially dangerous operation."

"This is the latest in a series of actions to clean up this Town. These alleged actions not only hurt our taxpayers, but also potentially endanger our residents," said Councilman Dan Panico. "We will continue to vigorously pursue those who would defraud the taxpayers and threaten the quality of life in our communities."

Division of Public Information * Office of the Supervisor

One Independence Hill • Farmingville • NY 11738 • Phone (631) 451-6595 • Fax (631) 451-6258