

Councilwoman Cartright Attends Ceremony to Honor Historic Site Designation in Setauket

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Farmingville, NY - On the morning of February 28, Councilwoman Valerie M. Cartright (seated lower left) joined Pastor Gregory Leonard and Robert E. Lewis, along with other Setauket residents and congregation members for a ceremony at Bethel AME Church. During the ceremony, the Preservation League of New York State designated the American Indian and African-American community, Bethel Christian Avenue-Laurel Hill Historic District, an endangered historic site. Also in attendance were Supervisor Ed Romaine and Assemblyman Steve Englebright.

"Our community is deeply grateful to the Preservation League of NYS for validating the historic and cultural significance of the Bethel Christian Avenue Historic District and bringing attention to the threats that endanger it," said Assemblyman Steve Englebright. "By designating this historic community as one of their 'Seven to Save' sites, the Preservation League has signaled that they are in our corner as we work to ensure that the Bethel Christian Avenue Community continues for generation after generation into the future."

Supervisor Romaine said, "The history of Native and African-Americans in Brookhaven Town is as rich and deep rooted as any other races or nationalities. It is important that we preserve our historic sites so future generations have a better understanding about the contributions and sacrifices that people have made to make our country great."

The Preservation League of New York State "invests in people and projects that champion the essential role of preservation in community revitalization, sustainable economic growth, and the protection of our historic buildings and landscapes. We lead advocacy, economic development, and education programs all across the state."

"Today the Preservation League of NYS designated the Bethel Christian Avenue Historic District as one of our 2014-15 Seven to Save. This important historic community, centered around the Bethel AME Church, has been home to Native and African American families for hundreds of years. Our designation will help shine a statewide spotlight on the neighborhood and highlight the need for its preservation," commented Erin Tobin, Regional Program Director at the Preservation League.

The area is rich in history, the Church itself was founded in 1848 and is one of the earliest African-American churches on Long Island and was considered to be a religious, social, cultural and educational hub for the community. The nearby Laurel Hill Cemetery contains gravestones that date back as far as the early 1800s.

"At one time, there were many historically significant communities of Native and African-American heritage along the U.S. east coast. Unfortunately, due to harmful events, they disappeared. We do not want that to happen in this historic district," stated Robert E. Lewis, President of Higher Ground Inter-Cultural and Heritage Association.

"The designation of this historic location in Council District One will help protect both a physical location and a link to American Indian and African-American culture in the Setauket area. It is of great importance that our entire community draw attention to this historic location and continue to celebrate its past," said Councilwoman Cartright. "Thank you Mr. Lewis for your efforts and hard work in acquiring this designation. This State designation is consistent with the Town's Designation of this area as the Bethel Christian Avenue Laurel Hill Historic District in 2005. As the new Council District One representative, I am committed to continuing the work of the former Councilperson Fiore-Rosenfeld in the preservation of the history and heritage of the Setauket area. "

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