

THE *A Monthly Newsletter of the Affiliated Brookhaven Civic Organization*

Civic Sentinel

Issue 01

Tom Talbot & Doug Dittko, Editors

March 2006

Take Charge to Help LI's Poor Elderly

Growing Numbers Living in Poverty Should Not be Swept Into Institutions

By Paul Arfin

They are hidden: Long Island's poor elderly, living alone with little physical or mental stimulation. Whether in nursing or boarding homes, their children's homes, one-room apartments or in their own homes, they are having trouble trying to maintain a quality of life. Their days are often filled with quiet desperation waiting for life to end. And we ignore their plight.

Yes, middle-class Long Island has its share of poor elderly, and their numbers are increasing dramatically. In 2000, no fewer than 71,623 Long Island women age 75 and older lived under the federal poverty line (\$9,310 for a one-person household); 46,391 lived in one-person households. That's 48 percent of the noninstitutionalized 75-plus population.

How do these residents survive on expensive Long Island with fixed, low incomes in light of rising costs of health care, taxes, fuel and housing? It is no wonder that 52 percent of women expect to work during the traditional retirement years. With low salaries and time off for child-rearing, women are unable to save. Once they spend their home equity, they've few options.

Particularly startling is the situation for widows and widowers. We have 155,584 of them, 81 percent of whom are women. African-American and Hispanic elders, a growing percentage of our population, having had disproportionately lower-paying careers, often have it the worst.

Families with a strong sense of responsibility toward their elders are left with few choices - and those choices are complicated by racism, discrimination and higher rates of frailty.

Where will older Long Islanders live, and what is our collective responsibility to them? Certainly, we aren't constructing enough affordable housing or assisted-living facilities; many localities oppose new senior housing. Public policy increasingly places responsibility on families for the financial costs of aging. I call it benign neglect.

With two living mothers, both age 90, my wife and I are familiar with public policies and programs. Both parents require assistance with activities of daily living. So far, our families have assumed the costs of care. But the future threatens to force our mothers to be institutionalized, something neither of them wants. Is this what we want for ourselves and our children? To spend our last 10 or 20 years in an institution, even

though we are healthy? We aspire to "the American Dream," homeownership during our middle years. Is nursing-home living part of the American dream for our later years?

Baby boomers have a vested interest in these issues of aging. At the same time they are responsible for their parents, they are planning for their own retirements, often working two or more jobs to make ends meet - sometimes while paying for their children's educations and delaying their own retirements. Our leaders fail to acknowledge the economic train wreck of rising costs of Medicare and Medicaid and public pensions.

Long Island's 800,000-plus baby boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, represent a powerful political force and need to act. Boomers need to understand that the nation's poverty-line calculations presume that older people need to spend less on food than younger people and that it generalizes about people's nutritional needs. They need to know that health care costs not covered by Medicare are not adequately factored into the calculation of the poverty line.

Baby boomers should advocate for a different poverty line. They should advocate for reform of our financing of long-term care so that they aren't forced to consider the impoverishment of their parents to qualify them for nursing homes.

Sensible community-based housing alternatives with supportive, medical and nonmedical services are needed. We shouldn't continue to isolate older people from the rest of society in age-restricted housing. A condition of new construction should be a requirement for intergenerational units, where generations could support each other.

The fastest-growing age segment on Long Island today is persons age 85 and older. As medicine prolongs life, the number of frail and dependent people will increase, as will the percent who will live in poverty. But all too often the old-old are left with no path out of poverty and social isolation.

This is no way to treat people who worked and reared children - helping to build our communities, fight in our wars and purchase the products that fuel our economy.

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Paul Arfin is president of Intergenerational Strategies, a Hauppauge-based not-for-profit organization.

The proposed Caithness Power Plant remains a very contentious issue, not only among ABCO member civic organizations, but throughout Long Island. This month's Civic Sentinel includes two testimonies which present two sides of the topic. The testimony below was given by Jim Pearsall, a Mastic resident, to the Brookhaven Town Council at the March 9 public hearing on Caithness at Brookhaven Town Hall. The following perspective, next page, is from testimony given by Andrew Manitt, Research Director of the Neighborhood Network to the LIPA Board of Directors.

TESTIMONY SUBMITTED BY
MASTIC RESIDENT
JAMES PEARSALL TO THE
BROOKHAVEN TOWN COUNCIL;
MARCH 9, 2006

Mr. Supervisor, members of the Brookhaven Town Council, thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I would like to preface my discussion on the Caithness issue by asking that I be allowed to finish my comments and questions in their entirety, before any of you choose to respond. I trust that this request is not out of order.

I wish to start by saying that I am not taking a position in opposition to, or in favor of the construction of the Caithness plant. I am addressing you all this evening to express my deepest concern that your approval of this project, and the incentives that have been negotiated, will result in a de facto \$150,000,000 rate increase for all LIPA ratepayers.

As stated on the Town's own Industrial Development Agency web site, companies requesting IDA funding may receive real estate tax abatement of up to 100 percent on all new capital investment for up to ten years. It would seem apparent to the casual reader that would be taken to mean that there would be no local real estate tax liability for up to 10 years. In addition, contained within LIPA's Caithness Long Island Energy Center Findings Statement of this past December, is the clause, Caithness will not be seeking relief from local tax requirements.

However, contained in the agreement between LIPA, Caithness Long Island, LLC and Brookhaven Town, LIPA will reimburse Caithness Long Island, LLC for payments in lieu of taxes, totaling \$139 million over twenty years. There seems to be a significant conflict here. If Caithness Long Island, LLC, under Brookhaven Town IDA incentives, is potentially not liable for real estate taxes for up to ten years, why is LIPA going to reimburse Caithness Long Island, LLC for payments in lieu of taxes?

Additionally, in the prior referenced, Caithness Long Island Energy Center Findings Statement, Caithness will not be seeking relief from local tax requirements. Which is it? It seems quite apparent that LIPA reimbursements are, in fact, relief from local tax requirements.

But interestingly, LIPA has no legal authority to pay payments in lieu of taxes for property it does not own. LIPA Chairman Richard Kessel is on record in the official LIPA minutes of a meeting held on October 6, 2005 as stating that Caithness proposes to permit, construct, own, operate and

maintain a combined cycle generation project. The key word here being "own."

Furthermore, at a regular meeting of the Economic Development, Higher Education & Energy Committee of the Suffolk County Legislature that was held on December 15, 2004, Mr. Kessel, in response to a question from former Legislator Peter O'Leary replied: *We are statutorily required to make pilot payments on old LILCO properties. We're doing it on new facilities on a voluntary basis.*

I find Mr. Kessel's \$139 million generosity quite amazing. As a LIPA ratepayer, to state that I am not enthralled by the prospect of paying the local taxes for a private company for ten years would be a gross understatement. But the liability of LIPA ratepayers doesn't stop there. In addition to the \$64.5 million in tax relief that Caithness Long Island, LLC would receive from LIPA ratepayers in the first ten years, there is another \$64.5 million of payments in lieu of taxes for an additional ten years. On top of that, another \$10.5 million in community benefits will be paid by LIPA over twenty years. In total, LIPA ratepayers will pay almost \$150 million. And who will benefit from this nearly 1/6th of a billion dollar giveaway? A few school districts and communities in the vicinity of the Caithness Long Island Energy Center and Caithness Long Island, LLC.

So if I am correct in my interpretation of the agreement between LIPA, Caithness Long Island, LLC and Brookhaven Town, all LIPA ratepayers will be saddled with nearly \$150 million in rate increases, before a single watt of power is generated, and with NO benefit whatsoever to over 90 percent of LIPA's rate base. But most disturbing about this agreement, is the fact that LIPA has committed to buy only 85% of the power generated by the Caithness Long Island Energy Center. The balance of the power will be sold outside of LIPA's service area. What this translates to is that LIPA ratepayers will be subsidizing 15 percent of Caithness Long Island, LLC's business, as they alone will be shouldering the costs of the \$139 million payments in lieu of taxes.

There is a term for this, and it has become the standard operating procedure for the Bush administration, it is called "Corporate Welfare." And judging by the public comments made by several members of this Town Board, they seem to have no problem with corporate welfare for Caithness, or with sticking LIPA ratepayers with a \$150 million bill in an attempt to buy the silence of opponents of the Caithness Long Island Energy Center.

Having said all this, let me close by saying, as someone who campaigned and voted for several of the people seated in front of me this evening, if you approve this \$150 million giveaway, I want my vote back.

COMMENTS SUBMITTED BY THE
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK ON
THE CAITHNESS LI ENERGY
CENTER TO THE LONG ISLAND
POWER AUTHORITY BOARD OF
TRUSTEES; DECEMBER 15, 2005

Good afternoon, my name is Andrew Manitt, I am the Research Director of the Neighborhood Network, a Long Island-wide, membership-based environmental organization. I would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to submit these comments on the Caithness Long Island Energy Center.

One of the Neighborhood Network's principal issue agendas is clean energy. We have been promoting conservation, energy efficient technologies, and clean, renewable energy generation, to Long Island municipalities and the general public, through projects such as the Clean Energy Leadership Task Force.

The Neighborhood Network supports LIPA moving forward with a multi-pronged plan that includes the offshore wind farm, the 75 MW demand reduction program, continuation and expansion of the Clean Energy Initiative, and Caithness. As an environmental organization, the Neighborhood Network would prefer that all of Long Island's electricity needs were met by clean, renewable sources. However we recognize the reality that in the near term, fossil fuel burning plants are necessary to meet Long Island's electricity demand. However, any such power plants should utilize the most efficient and environmentally friendly technologies possible. Unfortunately, that is not the case with Long Island's current electricity generation. Caithness represents a move in that direction.

Power plants are a significant source of pollutants that affect local air quality and public health, and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global warming. Power plants on Long Island should utilize the cleanest and most efficient technology available. Caithness will set a higher standard for efficient power generation on Long Island. Because the gas combined cycle technology to be used at Caithness is so much more efficient than the single cycle plants predominately in use on Long Island today, under competitive market rules, power produced by Caithness will displace the use of these older, less efficient plants. This will result in a net reduction of both local air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions for Long Island.

Per MWh generated, Caithness will emit less than 5 percent of the oxides of nitrogen produced by the existing base-load plants. As a result, it could avoid the release of between 2,300 and 2,800 tons of NO_x, per year. NO_x is a precursor for the formation of ground-level ozone, which can result in damage to lung tissue, and reduced lung function in children, and people with asthma. Long Island is classified by the EPA as a "non-attainment" area for ozone. Long Island has a childhood asthma rate of 7 percent, which is significantly higher than the national average. Unfortunately, asthma occurs at higher rates among children living in low income households where proper treatment may be less available.

And, once again, the technology utilized by Caithness will

produce NO_x emissions at a rate at least 95 percent lower than the dirtiest power plants currently operating on Long Island.

Caithness will also produce dramatically less carbon monoxide than current baseload power plants. When Caithness displaces electric production at these plants, the annual savings in carbon monoxide emissions could be between 390 and 460 tons per year. Exposure to elevated carbon monoxide levels is associated with visual impairment, reduced work capacity, reduced manual dexterity, poor learning ability, and difficulty in performing complex tasks. Long term (chronic) exposure to low levels of carbon monoxide may produce heart disease and damage to the nervous system. Exposure of pregnant women to carbon monoxide may cause low birthrates and nervous system damage to the offspring.

Global warming could be the most serious environmental threat to our planet. The two greatest sources of greenhouse gases in the U.S. are power generation and transportation, with carbon dioxide from combustion being the most significant greenhouse gas. Because combined cycle plants are more efficient, Caithness will produce significantly less CO₂ than existing base-load plants, the conservative estimate being 32 percent less CO₂, emitted per MWh. In the course of a year, Caithness could offset the release of over 640,000 tons of CO₂. This is the equivalent of taking 125,000 cars off the road for a year. To put 32 percent less CO₂ in context, the Kyoto protocol (from which the United States has chosen to withdraw) called for a 7 percent reduction in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, and a number of climatologists have suggested that worldwide greenhouse gas emissions need to be reduced by 70 percent to stabilize the global climate.

An additional reason that the Neighborhood Network believes construction of Caithness power plant is good for Long Island's environment, is that the additional generation capacity it represents may prove key to moving forward with plans to repower Long Island's existing power plants - beginning with the two plants announced by Governor Pataki yesterday. As demand continues to increase, the ability to take a power plant offline in order to repower can be, complicated, unless additional generating capacity is brought online. Repowering has long been championed by environmentalists, as it will provide significant reductions in air pollution, and will improve generation efficiency to allow for long-term rate stabilization.

In closing, the Neighborhood Network supports the Caithness power plant proposal as part of a broader LIPA strategy that also includes the Offshore Wind Farm proposal, the 75 AM Demand Side Reduction Program, and the continuation and expansion of the many programs carried out under the Clean Energy Initiative. The Neighborhood Network has reviewed the extensive record created during the environmental review of the Caithness power plant proposal. An analysis grounded in science can only reach the following conclusions:

(1) the Caithness power plant will be the cleanest source of base-load energy generation on Long Island; (2) it will help to advance efforts to repower existing power plants; and (3) once the plant is operating, it will immediately deliver tangible results by displacing - at very significant rates - air pollution from older power plants.

**ABCO Elections
Will be Held
2006-2007
Slate of Officers:**

*President: Doug Dittko
1st Vice President: Sid Bail
2nd Vice President: John Sicignano
Treasurer: Tom Talbot
Corresponding Secretary: Debbie Felber
Recording Secretary: MaryAnn Johnston
Sergeant-at-Arms: Open
Director: Sarah Anker
Director: Cynthia Barnes
Director: Open*

Additional nominations will be taken from the floor.

**March
Agenda**

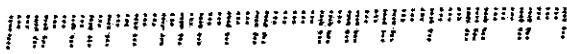
Regular Membership Meeting

Date: Monday, March 20th

Guest: Paul Arfin

Place: The Longwood Library

Time: 7:30 pm



1 1713+0345-45 B003

Jon BREMEL
Don League Bellport Beach Property(NP)
PO BOX 345
BELLPORT NY 11713-0345



THE CIVIC SENTINEL
The Affiliated Brookhaven Civic Organization, Inc. welcomes all civic organizations throughout Brookhaven Township. The meetings are held on the third Monday of every month at the Longwood Library, on Rt. 25 in Middle Island.
Meetings commence at 7:30 pm.
THE CIVIC SENTINEL IS DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF EILEEN TROMBINO.



Affiliated Brookhaven Civic Organization, Inc.
Post Office Box 523
Rocky Point, N.Y. 11778