

COME JOIN THE FUN !



**9 PICKLEBALL COURTS &
3 GOLF SIMULATORS**
PRIVATE COURT RENTALS/
LESSONS/CLINICS/OPEN PLAYS

PICKLENPAR.COM



MELVILLE: 515 BROADHOLLOW RD., MELVILLE 631-777-7425
SMITHTOWN: 62 LAKE AVE. S., NESCONSET 631-382-7425



Smithtown's Premier
Real Estate Professional.

SIGNATURE
PREMIER PROPERTIES

WWW.LORIZAMOREHOMES.COM

CELEBRATING SUCCESS.

Lori Zamore, CBR, SRES

Licensed Real Estate Salesperson

Signature Premier Properties

7 West Main Street
Smithtown, NY 11787

Cell: 631-804-0440

LZAMORE@SIGNATUREPREMIER.COM



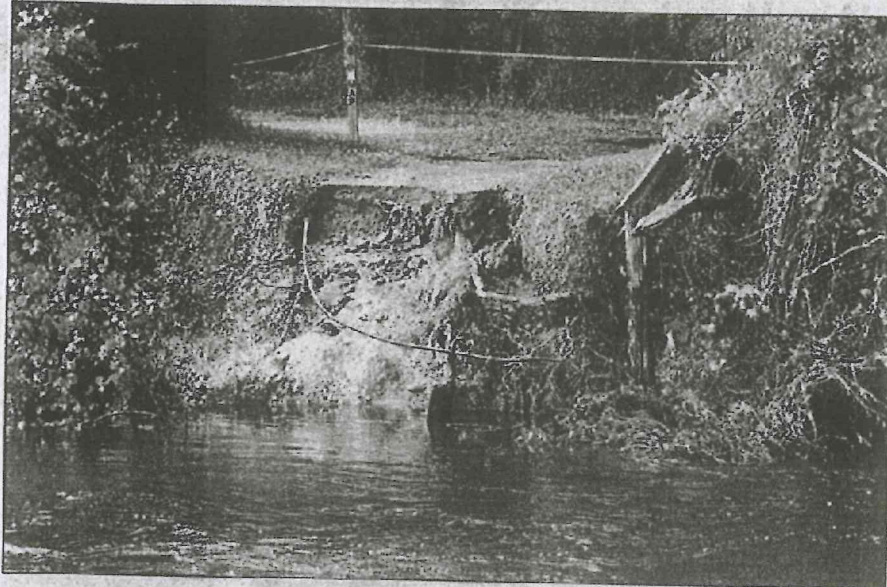
The Smithtown News

THE COMMUNITY'S WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

VOLUME 79, No. 84

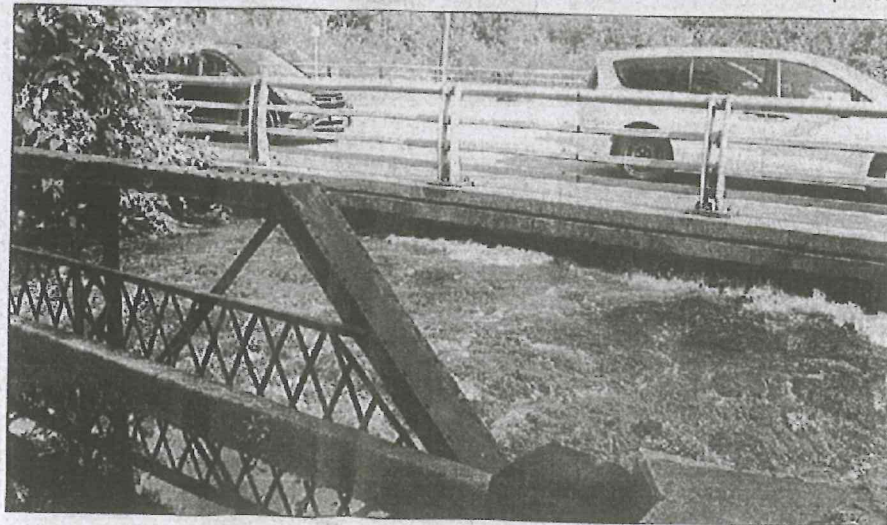
August 22, 2024

\$1.00



STATE OF EMERGENCY: After heavy rain washed out the dam at Stump Pond in Suffolk County Blydenburgh Park (above), a torrent of water runs down the Nissequogue River, imperiling homes along the way and before flooding Paul T. Given Park and running under Jericho Turnpike (below) and down the river to the Long Island Sound. The rainstorm Sunday, August 18 to Monday, August 19, caused catastrophic damage to the Smithtown Library, including its Long Island Room collection, and Smithtown Town Hall, and caused significant damage in Head of the Harbor Village. See stories, pages 2, 3, 8 and 10.

-David Ambro photos



Feds okay train yard

Application moves to town

By David Ambro

In a 10-page decision Thursday, August 15, the United States Surface Transportation Board (STB) approved an application to construct a 5,000-foot rail spur off the south side of the Port Jefferson Branch of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), just east of the Pulaski Road/Townline Road intersection, to a proposed freight train yard at the end of Meadow Glen Road in Kings Park.

"This action, as conditioned, will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment or conservation of energy resources," says the STB decision.

The decision by the four-member board was approved unanimously. Petitions for reconsideration must be filed by September 4.

"Science, facts, and research will show what should be done, not fear-mongering. Real science,

(Continued on page 18)

August 22, 2024
The North Shore News Group

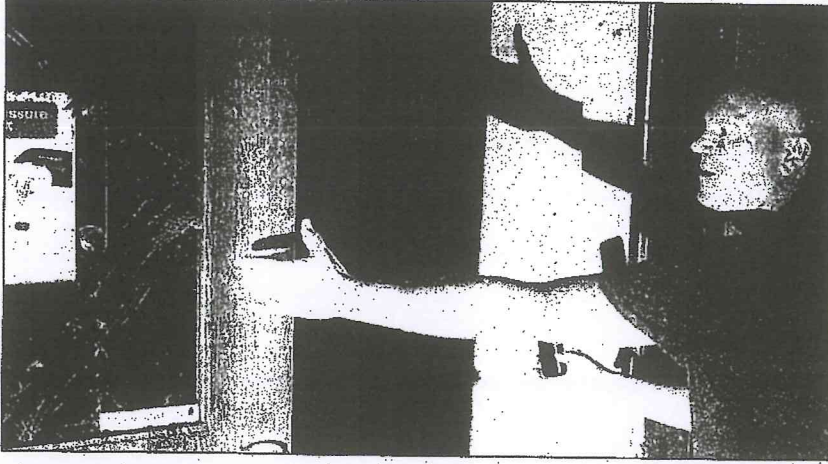
INSIDE!

★ WELCOME ★
BACK

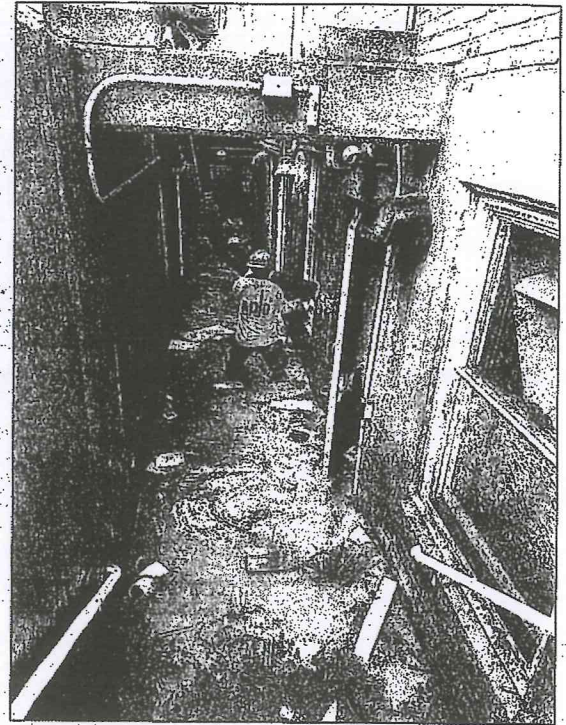
★ SCHOOL ★

807 01 0092A *C008 1159
SMITHTOWN LIBRARY
SMITHTOWN LIBRARY
JEAN DEL ALBO
748 SMITHTOWN BLVD
NESCONSET NY 11787-1114
5MT0812 P-3 P7

Labor Day Savings Inside!



ONE FOR THE BOOKS: During a tour of the destruction of the lower level of the Smithtown Library Tuesday, August 20, Library Director Robert Lusak (above) points out the damage to the community room doors and workers pump out more than 20,000 gallons of water from the building Monday, August 19 (right).



Library officials devastated by flood that damaged historical collection

By David Ambro

Catastrophic is how Smithtown Library Director Robert Lusak described the damage to the Smithtown Library on Main Street from the severe rainstorm Sunday, August 18, into Monday, August 19.

The outside stairwells to the library's lower level on the east and west sides of the building filled up with more than 10 feet of water. The windows at the bottom of the east set of stairs burst, flooding the building.

"The force of water must have been like a dam breaking," said Mr. Lusak as he rummaged through the ruins Tuesday morning. "That's how I would describe this, a dam breaking."

In the lower level of the building is the Long Island Room, the most significant collection of historic archives on Long Island, which suffered significant damage. Through its insurance, the library has retained Rainbow Restorations of Long Island to undertake the clean-up. At the library Tuesday, Rainbow Restoration owner Russ Regan said that he had hired an expert from Prism Specialties in Detroit who will be in Smithtown Wednesday, August 21, to assess the damage to the Long Island Room and to try to salvage as much of the collection as possible.

"We all know how bad the storm was the other night. With us, what happened downstairs was catastrophic," said Mr. Lusak during a building tour with Assistant Library Director Eileen Caulfield. "Words can't describe how we are feeling right now. You read about

this happening in other places but never think it will happen to you. This is catastrophic. That's the only word I can use to describe this. It's catastrophic, and it is more than upsetting."

As she surveyed the damage to the lower level of the building, Ms. Caulfield said that she had lived in Smithtown all of her life and

had never seen a rainstorm as devastating as this.

"As a library, we're here to preserve and make materials available to the public, and we feel now that it is like losing a child. This is our bread and butter, providing information to the public, which has been destroyed," said Mr. Lusak. "Everyone knows that the Smithtown

Library has the best history collection. We don't know for sure the damage, but the first impression is that a lot of it is gone forever."

Mr. Lusak was trying Tuesday to figure out where such a large volume of water came from. "Water just found its way into the stairwells. The pressure of the water on the east side of the

building was so great that it literally exploded—I'll call it exploded—the lower sash of the window, and the water just rushed in," he said.

Walking through the lower level of the building Tuesday, some parts for the first time, Mr. Lusak and Ms. Caulfield pointed out how the power of the surging floodwater

(Continued on page 17)

Smithtown Fire Department answers the call

Conducts swift-water rescue at river-side home after Stump Pond dam break causes flooding

By David Ambro

For the Smithtown Fire Department, the severe rainstorm Sunday, August 18, into Monday, August 19 was unprecedented. There were 50 emergency calls in 12 hours, including a house on fire after being struck by lightning.

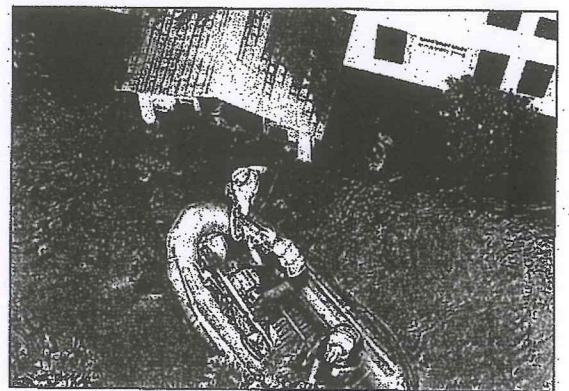
One of those calls was especially harrowing. Two residents were rescued from their home in rushing flood waters after the dam burst in Stump Pond in Suffolk County Blydenburgh Park, sending a torrent of water down the Nissequogue River.

The Smithtown Fire Department received an emergency call Monday at 9:30 a.m. reporting that two people were stuck in their house on Mill Dam Road on the western shoreline of the river. Mill Dam is near Blydenburgh Park, off New Mill Road, which leads to the Historic Trust Area of the park. The park was once the hub of Smithtown, where the pond water was used to power grist mills on the river.

There was a dam south of the mill site that tamed the flow of water running north down the river. Monday, the dam was gone, its concrete form no longer visible from the spot it had been and a 50-foot gash in the earth where there had been a path around Stump Pond. The pond was emptying fast Monday through the gash, the water along the shoreline receding and the bottom emerging in large areas. This flow went rapidly past the riverfront home on Mill Dam Road, into Paul T. Given Park on Jericho Turnpike, under the bridge and down the river to the Long Island Sound.

Smithtown firefighters were engaged in the storm response and out on the street. They arrived on Mill Dam Road fast and with what they needed for the rescue: a swift-water rescue team with a Zodiac, a small boat that can be transported in the back of a pick-up truck.

The first floor of the house was flooded, and the two residents were stranded



Smithtown firefighters maneuver a Zodiac to rescue residents of a Mill Dam Road home on the Nissequogue River.

on the second floor. Three Smithtown firefighters made their way to the house in the Zodiac, got the residents on board from a second-floor window, and took them to dry ground.

Third Assistant Chief Joseph Palazzo said they were fine once the residents left the house. He said they were sleeping on the house's second floor and didn't realize what was going on until they woke up and found the whole first floor flooded.

Chief Palazzo said the first

storm-related call came into the fire department at 11 p.m. Sunday night, a water-related rescue under the train trestle on Main Street and the response to the storm did not stop until 11 a.m. Monday. "We had over 50 calls between 11 and 11, a 12-hour non-stop response for an all-volunteer fire department. That's unheard of, really," said Chief Palazzo. "And, that included a fully involved residential structure fire where

(Continued on page 17)

Floodwaters damage L.I. Room collection

(Continued from page 2)

relocated a heavy vending machine, a refrigerator, a pinball machine, desks and the public computer stations. The floor was also covered in slippery mud and littered with DVDs and books, all of which were ruined.

The windows to the doors in the community rooms were shattered, and one of the doors broke off its hinges. The piano in the community room toppled over, was pushed to the middle of the room and was covered with mud.

As he pointed out items askew in the building, Mr. Lusak pointed out where they were, where they are now, and how heavy they are.

The initial surge of water burst into Ms. Caulfield's office and blew out both the side walls and the ceiling. It rushed into the learning lab and destroyed everything in there; it flooded into the Long Island Room. "The vault in our Long Island Room was very heavily damaged," said Mr. Lusak.

Ms. Caulfield said the door to the Long Island Room is specially designed to protect the collection. However, the force of the surging water was so powerful that the wall broke through. The lower level of the building was so cluttered with displaced furniture and debris Tuesday that Ms. Caulfield said they have not yet been able to assess the damage to the Long Island Room.

Mr. Lusak said the historic archival material in the Long Island Room is by far the most valuable part of the library collection. "It is the library's crown jewel. It is what everyone knows the Smithtown Library for, the Long Island Room," he said. "Everything else, the DVDs, the CDs, with digital downloading, can be replaced very easily and build the collection back up again. That Long Island Room is more than near and dear to us, and as soon as we can get in there, we will know the damage."

Mr. Lusak added that the real crown jewels of the Long Island Room are kept in a waterproof safe, and though he had not yet been able to assess the damage to it, he expects those treasured items to be salvageable. "We will restore as much as we can, but as long as that safe did its job, which we think it most likely did, we will be able to save some of the most important archives," he said.

As he walked through the lower level of the building, Mr. Lusak pointed to the water lines on the walls, which ranged in height depending on the floor slope from six to nine feet. He also pointed out an exterior utility shaft on

the south side of the building facing Main Street that was filled with 15 feet of water, and though it had receded, it still had water in it on Tuesday.

"This was not rain. Something breached," he suggested. "It is the same thing that happened in Stony Brook with the Duck Pond, at Blydenburgh, and with us. You can't even imagine how much water filled up in here."

Mr. Lusak said the library's main floor was not affected by the flooding. "The water just kept pushing through and broke through walls," he said.

The library staff has been temporarily relocated to the Nesconset Library. Library officials were not able to get into the building until Tuesday morning. Mr. Lusak explained that one of the difficulties was turning off the electric power to the building to make it safe. The Smithtown Fire Marshal told the library that it had to shut off the electric service. The electrical panels were submerged in water, making the situation dangerous.

"So, there is no power to this building and the electrical system is shot. Everything was fried," Mr. Lusak said.

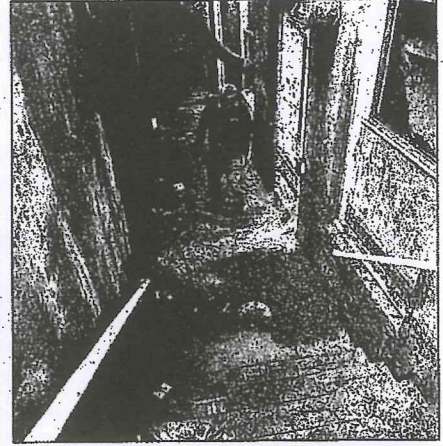
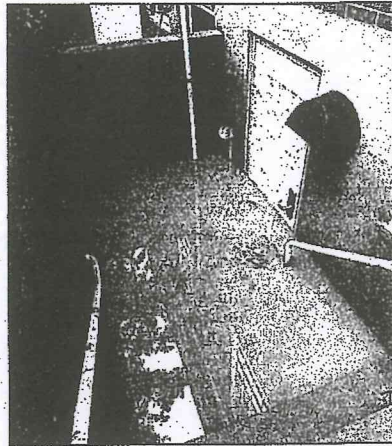
Removing the water from the building became the next task. Mr. Lusak said he called New York State Senator Mario Mattera, who sent a super-sucker truck to the site. The truck was able to pump tens of thousands of gallons of water out at a far faster rate than the pumps being deployed originally.

Once the water was removed, Mr. Lusak said the mission was to clean out the building. "Right now, this is like a war zone," he said.

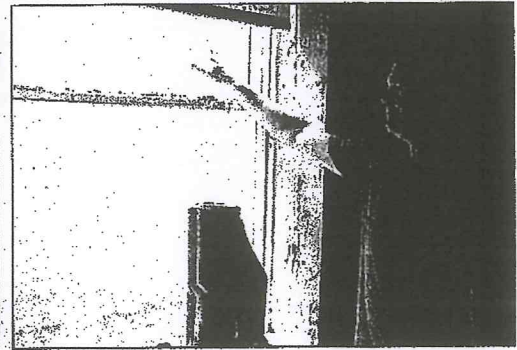
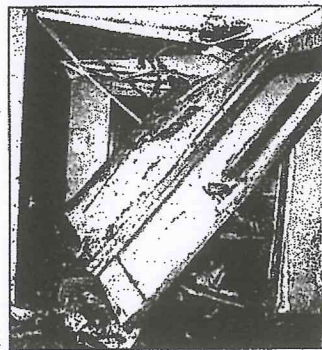
Mr. Regan had a large crew at the library on Tuesday. They were removing damaged materials from the ground level and filling them into dumpsters. He said numerous dumpsters will be required to dispose of everything that has been destroyed in the building. He estimated that workers would be at the library for a minimum of a week removing damaged materials to dumpsters.

Mr. Lusak said he is hopeful that Governor Kathy Hochul will declare a state of emergency so that the library district will qualify for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding for the clean-up and restoration of the library. He said the lower level of the building will have to be reconstructed.

"I'm trying to hold my emotions in. I have been a library director since 2000, and in 2006 I came here, and I've never seen anything like this," said Mr. Lusak. "This is tough. This is tough to



STORM SURGE: At the Smithtown Library, storm water fills the exterior stairwells (above) and Library Director Robert Lusak (bottom right) points out where it broke through the window and surged into the building, blowing out the walls of deputy director Eileen Caulfield's office (bottom left)



comprehend. As I said, this is catastrophic; but Mother Nature's devastation is unbelievable. They don't teach you this in library science class. I'll tell you that."

Mr. Regan said he works on flood restoration every day and was in New Orleans for three months after Hurricane Katrina, but he said the situation at the Smithtown Library is one of the most significant building floods he has seen. "This is a big one. I've never seen this much water from rain," he said.

He said they removed more than 20,000 gallons of water in the super sucker and had numerous other pumps on-site removing water, and there was still water in the building Tuesday morning. "It's crazy," he said, sharing Mr. Lusak's opinion that the floodwater was amassed from an off-site source.

"This was the most water we've taken out of a building, so you've made the record book," Mr. Regan told Mr. Lusak.

"I'd rather not be in that

record book," said Mr. Lusak.

The library is closed to the public with caution tape and a notice on the main entrance. Mr. Lusak said when patrons come they have been understanding. "They are feeling the pain just as much as we are. This is not just us; it is all of us," said Mr. Lusak. "This is when the community shows its true colors and how much it cares about its library."

"We will rebuild," he said. "And we will be better."

Storm keeps firefighters on the move

(Continued from page 2)

residents were removed from the house, the attic."

"It also involved us as a department responding to every street that was flooded and redirecting our members about how to go a different route to avoid the flooding," said Chief Palazzo. "It was a very intense, very high volume, and very technical response to every call we got. And we accomplished every response."

Chief Palazzo called the storm response from firefighters amazing. "You had members of the department who were responding to residents while their own houses were being flooded.

They had to leave their families to help others while their houses were flooded."

According to Chief Palazzo, the department has a highly trained team for swift-water rescues with the Zodiac at all hours and at all times. "It's all because we are along the Nissequogue River, and that requires us to have those technical rescue abilities," he said.

Like others who have lived in Smithtown, Chief Palazzo said he has never seen rainfall like there was Sunday into Monday. "I have witnessed everything in the Town of Smithtown. I grew up in the Town of Smithtown and have lived here all my life, for over

55 years. I never experienced the volume of rain we had in a couple of hours," he said. "It was incredible. It really was."

Chief Palazzo said that the fire department has the full support of the Town of Smithtown Department of Public Safety, Parks Department, and Highway Department. "It is incredible how we work together as one to really come through for the community in every type of situation, whether it be a hurricane or a rain for a three or four-hour period that floods Smithtown to this extent," he said. "I have never witnessed it, and it is incredible how this department and this township come together as one."