

LONG ISLAND

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Residents concerned by Islip park cleanup plan

BY SARAH ARMAGHAN

sarah.armaghan@newsday.com

Islip residents and local officials voiced concerns about the proposed plan to clean up the estimated 50,000 tons of toxin-laced debris from Roberto Clemente Park during a state Department of Conservation meeting in Brentwood last night.

Ajay Shah, regional engineer with the state DEC, outlined the proposed work plan submitted by the Town of Islip early last month that includes community air monitoring, groundwater monitoring and sampling at the end of excavation to ensure all illegally placed materials have been removed.

Adrienne Esposito, executive director of Citizens Campaign for the Environment, called the plan “dangerously weak” during the meeting at Suffolk Community College’s Brentwood campus.

“It doesn’t protect the water, it doesn’t protect the air, it doesn’t protect the soil, it doesn’t protect the children that will come back into the park,” Esposito said.

Many expressed fears over

possible health implications while the dumping took place and demanded the state DEC release the soil test results taken over the summer. The fill, believed to have been dumped in the park since June 2013, contains asbestos, heavy metals, organic compounds, pesticides and PCBs. The park is one of four sites being investigated by Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota, who last month convened a special grand jury on illegal dumping matters on Long Island.

Town officials have estimated 25 percent of the fill will need to be carted off Long Island to facilities that can accommodate specific contaminants. Seventy-five percent will be taken to the town-operated landfill on Blydenburgh Road in Hauppauge. Residents living at the Hamlet at Windwatch, near the landfill, asked that all materials be taken off the Island, away from their neighborhood.

Shah said contractors’ trucks taking fill out of the park will be lined and covered and the state DEC “will attempt to follow trucks to make sure they are not creating a nui-

sance” along their routes. The agency will also visit the landfills where the fill will be taken to monitor their placement.

Carrie Meek Gallagher, chief sustainability officer for the Suffolk County Water Authority, said while there is “no immediate threat” of tainted drinking water, the agency will spend an additional \$30,000 a year for more frequent testing of public water wells to ensure the dumping will not have an effect on the water supply.

Gallagher, along with state Assemblyman Phil Ramos (D-Brentwood), said oversight is needed when the Town of Islip moves to select a contractor to complete the cleanup work.

“The public needs to have confidence in the entity, in the contractor selected to do this removal work,” Gallagher said.

Inez Birbiglia, deputy parks commissioner for the Town of Islip, would not comment.

The 250-page remediation proposal must be approved by the state DEC before a contractor can be selected by the Town of Islip. Public comments will be accepted by the state agency until Oct. 20.