

OUR TOWNS

BETHPAGE

Water district allowed to amend lawsuit

The Bethpage Water District is allowed to amend a lawsuit filed against Northrop Grumman Corp. in 2013 over contaminated groundwater, a U.S. District Court judge in Central Islip ruled Friday.

The water district, which serves more than 33,000 people, sought in December to update the complaint after learning Navy monitoring wells had found levels of the possible carcinogen trichloroethylene as high as 4,600 parts per billion. The drinking water standard is 5 parts per billion.

The amended lawsuit reported the new findings would force the district to “expend additional money to monitor, test and treat” groundwater.

Judge Sandra Feuerstein approved the district’s motion. She also denied a petition from Northrop Grumman to dismiss the case, but said the defense contractor could file a similar motion after the amended complaint is filed.

Bethpage first filed a lawsuit in November 2013 seeking damages to cover water monitoring and treatment programs to remove contaminants. Months earlier, the district

announced it had detected the radioactive element radium in one of its wells, forcing its closure. A month later, the district started digging a new well outside the known plume boundaries.

Water quality problems have long plagued the district. Since the 1940s, the Navy and what is now Northrop Grumman operated an aviation manufacturing facility on 609 acres in Bethpage. Groundwater contamination was first documented in 1947 and in 1983 the sites were added to the state Superfund program.

— EMILY C. DOOLEY