

March 7, 2023

BY HAND

Suffolk County Legislature
100 Veterans Memorial Highway
P. O. Box 6100
Hauppauge, New York 11788

Re: Proposed Parkland Alienation in Montauk's Hither Woods

Dear Members of the Suffolk County Legislature:

On February 23, 2023, the Suffolk County Parks Trustees voted, without dissent and with only two abstentions, to recommend against a proposal by East Hampton Town to exchange Town-owned land on East Lake Drive, Montauk, for 14 acres of County parkland at Laurel Canyon, in Montauk's Hither Woods. The Town wants to use the County land to build a sewage treatment plant ("STP") to serve the Downtown Montauk commercial district.

Our organization, which consists of thirteen environmental, Native American, and park user groups representing citizens throughout Suffolk County, adamantly opposes East Hampton's proposal. The Town has presented no evidence that an STP to treat Downtown Montauk wastewater will have any environmental benefits whatsoever. We know the proposed STP won't improve drinking water quality. In fact, it would risk polluting the Hither Woods aquifer, which is the last substantial source of pure drinking water which remains on Montauk. The treatment plant would, however, relieve Downtown Montauk businesses from the sewage flow regulations of the County Health Department.

We think this is the real objective of the East Hampton Town Board. There is nothing inherently wrong with East Hampton Town wanting to promote local business development as a policy. But East Hampton should then come out and admit this. In any event, promoting business growth in Downtown Montauk is not a legitimate basis for alienating 14 acres of parkland in Montauk's magnificent Hither Woods. Nor is it a proper reason to build a sewage treatment plant on County parkland and within a State-designated Special Groundwater Protection Area.

We thank Legislators Steven Flotteron and Kara Hahn for speaking at the Parks Trustees meeting on February 23. We hope that, if the East Hampton Town Board turns to this body for approval of its ill-conceived parkland alienation plan, you will follow the lead of your colleagues and of the Parks Trustees. Your answer should be a firm "NO."

Sincerely,

RICHARD E. WHALEN
President