

Around LI

Hearings set for pot regulation

Huntington residents will have a chance to weigh in on the New York State Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act's impact on the town. The town board will have three hearings this week. Former Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo signed the sweeping marijuana legalization bill into law in March.

The first hearing considers opting out of allowing cannabis retail dispensaries and onsite consumption sites within the Town. The Town must opt-out by the state's Dec. 31 deadline, though it can opt-in at a later date. However, once a municipality opts in the decision is permanent.

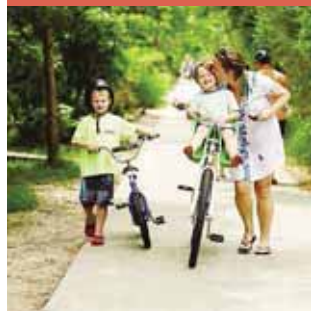
The second hearing considers updating the zoning code to be consistent with the new state law.

The third hearing considers regulating cannabis consumption in public, on town property and on streets and sidewalks outside of Huntington's incorporated villages.

The public hearings are Thursday at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

— DEBORAH S. MORRIS

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YVONNE ALBINOWSKI

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BABYLON TOWN

BEACON OF HOPE

A second location for addiction recovery services to include job training

BY DENISE M. BONILLA
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Having a job is one of the fundamental parts of being a productive part of society, but those who have struggled with addiction often have a tough time finding suitable employment. The Town of Babylon wants to make that job search easier.

The town has announced it will build a second location of its Beacon Family Wellness Center in North Babylon that offers chemical dependency treatment services to residents. The new center in North Amityville will have two floors, one of which will be devoted to the Gino Macchio Foundation's "Putting Recovery to Work" program, an initiative aimed at helping those in recovery find jobs.

"We've grown expansively, and that alone says we need to have another site," said Town Supervisor Rich Schaffer, noting that the center's caseload has more than tripled over the past seven years.

The building will be constructed in an empty lot at 831 Broadway that was once the Sayonara Motel, which was frequently the site of prostitution and drug dealing, town officials said.

After two fires at the motel, the Babylon Industrial Development Agency purchased the property in 2019 for \$710,000, saying it might become a work space for local entrepreneurs.

The town, which will lease the property from the IDA, will start construction on the building next year, using \$3 million of the \$13.5 million it received through the American Rescue Plan Act.

Beacon had a site in Amityville that closed in 2014 after the lease was not renewed. Delores Bocklet, a former center director who is



NEWSDAY / JOHN PARASKEVAS

Monica Primo, right, program coordinator of the Town of Babylon's Beacon Family Wellness Center, located in North Babylon, gives a quick tour of the center on Friday to Babylon Town Supervisor Rich Schaffer, center, and Steve Macchio, of the Gino Macchio Foundation.

now a town consultant, said the majority of their clients were at that site and have since struggled to find transportation to North Babylon.

"There's been an unmet need since that time," she said.

Babylon is partnering with the Lindenhurst-based Gino Macchio Foundation, which aims to work with businesses willing to commit to becoming a "recovery-friendly workplace." The foundation pays half the salary for up to six months for any person who has completed recovery and is hired by a company.

Many employers are fearful of hiring recovering addicts, and as a result those in recovery can face repeated rejections, Schaffer said.

"It's almost like a slippery

VISITS TO BEACON

- 2019: **12,343**
- 2020: **10,197**
- Year-to-date through September: **7,344**

Reasons for visits, year-to-date through September

- Alcohol **57%**
- Cannabis **16%**
- Opioids **11%**
- Adjustment disorder **6%**
- Cocaine **5%**
- Hallucinogenic **2%**
- Other **3%**

SOURCES: BEACON FAMILY WELLNESS CENTER; NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF ADDICTION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS

slope downhill where we're asking them to get sober, to rebuild their life, and all of these roadblocks are put in the way," he said.

The center will also have a vocational counselor and training resources to help clients "be employable," Bocklet said.

"We all want to have meaning in our lives and feel like we contribute, and if a client doesn't have a job and can't support themselves that's a setup for them to relapse," she said.

Jeffrey Reynolds, who heads the Garden City-based Family and Children's Association, called news of the job placement center "quite exciting" and unique for the area.

"Addiction treatment is all about taking drugs and alcohol out of your life," Reynolds said. "But putting more meaningful activities, goals, a sense of purpose and hope for the future back into your life is key to long-term recovery."