

Flower Hill residents complain about rodent problem

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Flower Hill residents spoke on a rodent issue in the village during a meeting Monday night. (Photo from the Island Now archives)

BY BRAHMJOT KAUR

Flower Hill residents complained at a village Board of Trustees meeting on Monday about a rodent infestation, and Mayor Brian Herrington said the village is taking action.

“You should not be dealing with rodents in your backyard,” he said.

The residents voiced frustration about a rodent infestation on Ridge Drive West behind Joanne’s Gourmet Pizza and Dunkin Donuts.

An unidentified resident said at the meeting that the Nassau County Health Department inspected the restaurants in the area and met with residents.

Herrington said the village is in contact with public health officials and a lawyer to see if there have been violations and what updates can be made in the village code to ensure that commercial properties comply with health and sanitation regulations to avoid this issue in the future.

The Health Department has cited Joanne’s restaurant, Herrington said at the meeting. According to residents, the pizzeria was leaving its dumpsters open during the day.

Herrington said the board has been in contact with commercial properties in the area to work on the issues.

Rino Dimaria, the owner of the pizzeria, denied responsibility for the rodent infestation. He said exterminators come three times a week, employees regularly ensure the dumpsters are closed and they have begun locking the dumpsters at night to prevent unsolicited trash from being dumped.

He said the real issue is a neighbor's yard where the rodents are burrowing. "The problem isn't the dumpsters; they're just looking for food wherever they live. The problem is because the property behind this is overgrown, and the people who own it leave garbage out. They do nothing," he said.

He said he had a meeting with the village, the inspector, the Department of Health and the exterminator to show the dumpsters and said the village is now putting pressure on the neighbor. "We've been in business for over 30 years. We've never had a problem like this. We've had A ratings with the Board of Health for over 30 years," Dimaria said.

Efforts to reach Dunkin Donuts for comment were unavailing.

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Insufficient parking on Ridge Drive West has also raised concerns among residents who live in the area. The board spoke with a parking and traffic consultant on Long Island, who suggested three ideas to create more parking: adding parking on Middle Neck Road in front of an apartment building, implementing two-hour parking from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on adjoining streets or having businesses allow employees to park in a lot farther away and shuttle them to work.

The board will meet with the county to discuss parking on Middle Neck Road this week.

The board received a signed petition from 20 residents who opposed implementing new parking restrictions in the area. One unidentified resident at the meeting said, "For those of us with driveways on Middle Neck Road, parking is already treacherous, so proposing additional parking back there and moving the lines further east towards our homes is going to make it harder."

The resident said she believes more parking given to commercial spaces on Middle Neck Road will only allow businesses to continue asking for more parking and will affect residents negatively. However, the board said there are no parking spaces available for employees, let alone customers and actions must be taken.

Additionally, the board announced that Nassau County residents are eligible for financial relief from FEMA after the remnants of Hurricane Ida battered the island.

Herrington said residents whose homes were underinsured, those who were displaced or had to rent a hotel due to the hurricane are just some of many eligible for aid. Information

is available on the village website, or residents can call the Village Hall for additional information.

Herrington told residents that this is their opportunity to find some financial relief to pay for storm damage. "The village will also be pursuing financial funding through that as well," he said.

Board members also discussed a potential policy to mandate COVID-19 vaccinations for village employees. Trustee Ronnie Shatzkamer said that most small villages do not have a policy but after speaking with officials from Mineola and Freeport, she described two potential policies.

The first would recommend vaccinations but those who decline would be required to get regular COVID tests and wear masks.

The second suggested policy would mandate vaccinations unless an employee is exempt. Village Attorney Steven Leventhal suggested that if the second suggested policy was implemented, the language should allow exemptions for medical reasons or hardships to give the village flexibility.

A vote did not take place and Mayor Herrington said it would be moved to next month's meeting.

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