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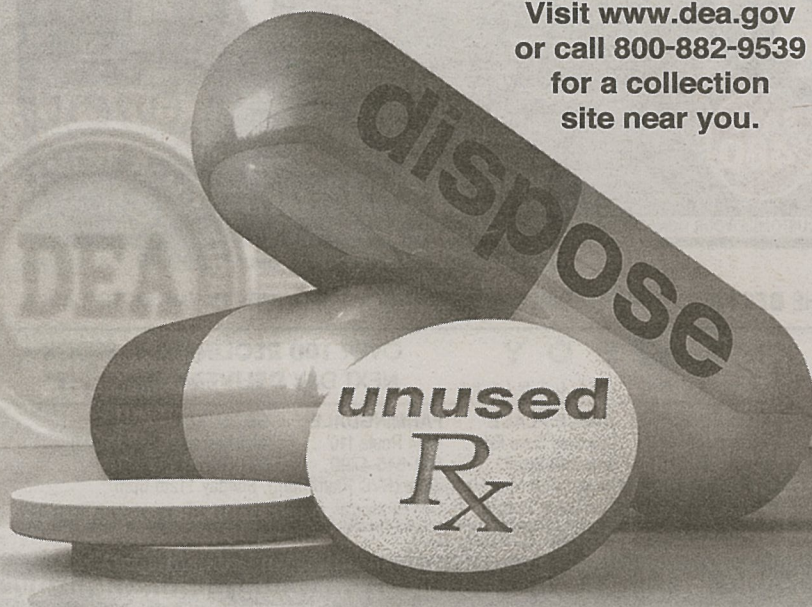
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OUR TOWNS

PORT JEFFERSON STATION

Road project moves closer to finish line

BY CARL MACGOWAN
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A \$25.6 million project intended to clear up traffic bottlenecks at the intersection of state routes 112 and 347 in Port Jefferson Station is nearing completion, state Sen. Kenneth LaValle said yesterday.

LaValle (R-Port Jefferson) released a statement from the state Department of Transportation saying that “jug handle” turning lanes in the northwest and southeast portions of the intersection will be completed by the end of next month.

Additional work is to be completed by Thanksgiving, and surface work — such as paving, curbs, sidewalks, landscaping and pavement markings — will be completed by next spring, the DOT said.

LaValle said completion of the project should ease traffic headaches for many drivers, who have been “exasperated” by long delays caused by reconstruction of the intersection. He added many business owners near the intersection felt they lost customers due to the work.

“There were too many [drivers] that have suffered traffic fatigue,” LaValle said in an interview. “It was an area to be avoided. People found creative ways to avoid going through this area.”

He said he requested the DOT up-

date because many constituents feared the project would not be completed until late next year.

The project, including raised medians, a bicycle path and new sidewalks, was intended to improve traffic flow on Route 347, which is used by about 71,000 vehicles every day.

In a statement, DOT officials said completion of the project has been delayed because workers had to relocate or replace underground utilities such as water, gas, electric, cable and telephone lines.

LaValle said the addition of jug handle lanes, in which drivers exit from the right to make a left-hand turn, should help reduce congestion at the busy intersection. He said residents who attended DOT-sponsored community meetings several years ago preferred the design, commonly used in New Jersey, over plans for an overpass or cloverleafs.

Ed Garboski, president of the Port Jefferson Station-Terryville Civic Association, said traffic jams have been “horrendous” during the reconstruction, but he said the improvements should make the intersection easier to navigate.

“Usually those jug handles, they do work,” said Garboski, who works in road construction but not the Route 347 project. “People will have to get used to it, but it will definitely help the flow of traffic.”

PATCHOGUE

Award reduced in cop crash

BY DAVID M. SCHWARTZ
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A state appellate court has reduced a jury award of more than \$1 million to a Patchogue man rear-ended by a Suffolk sheriff's deputy's vehicle in 2007 to \$250,000.

The four-judge panel of the Appellate Division Second Department in Brooklyn ruled that the prior amount, awarded in August 2012, was “excessive.”

Christopher Cicola, an accountant who is now 42, said he suffered injuries to the cervical region of his spine, which required two spinal fusion surgeries, physical therapy and other treatments, after he was hit by Suffolk Deputy Sheriff Glenn S. Muller on Jan. 11, 2007. Muller was driving a Suffolk County vehicle.

Suffolk County Attorney Dennis Brown said yesterday, “We think it's a fair decision. It speaks for itself.”

Jason Firestein of Sayville, an attorney for Cicola, said he planned to file a motion to reargue the case before the appellate court. He said the panel “applied precedent poorly.”

Firestein noted that the appellate court cited as precedent a court decision that reduced a jury award of \$750,000 to \$400,000 — a proportionately smaller decrease than Cicola received.

Firestein also said the order misstated the jury award for future pain and suffering as \$550,000, instead of more than \$1 million. Brown confirmed that the order had an error, which he called a typo.

The jury had awarded \$325,000 for past pain and suffering and \$700,000 for future pain and suffering. The Appellate Division reduced the award for past pain and suffering to \$150,000 and for future pain and suffering to \$100,000.