

Former Conservative Councilman Anthony Senft, guess he didn't see the big green truck either dumping the contaminated soil- now a judge



Costs to rehabilitate the public pool in Roberto Clemente Park will go up, town officials say

August 10, 2015 By SARAH ARMAGHAN sarah.armaghan@newsday.com

Officials tour the drained swimming pool at Roberto Clemente Park in this file photo taken on August 27, 2013.

(Credit: Johnny Milano)

The discovery of the estimated 50,000 tons of contaminated materials at Roberto Clemente Park pushed back Islip's plans to rehabilitate the pool there by at least two summers -- and potentially will raise costs by hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The pool in Brentwood was last open in summer 2012, before it was shuttered months later, because of what town officials described then as budget cuts.

The total cost to rehabilitate the public swimming pool -- once estimated by officials to be \$750,000 -- is still not known. The last available estimate, from the lowest public bidder in 2013, was \$1.5 million, according to the town's comptroller, Joseph Ludwig, who said that a quote two years old would now be low.

"The bid will now have to be re-advertised, so we don't really know what the cost is really going to be," Ludwig said.

The Islip Town Board authorized \$750,000 in bonds for the pool project in June 2013, Ludwig said, but the town does not have a \$500,000 grant from the state Dormitory Authority for the project they once thought they had. Ludwig said the then-Islip parks commissioner, Joseph J. Montuori Jr. -- who is under indictment for his alleged role in allowing the dumping to occur at the park -- told other town officials in 2013 about the grant, but never applied for it. Montuori, along with five other men and four companies, have all pleaded not guilty to their alleged roles in the dumping across four sites. They are due back in court Sept. 29.

At last Tuesday's town board meeting, the board passed two modifying bond resolutions -- one for the \$6 million authorized last year to pay for the cleanup of the park, but decreasing it to \$5 million. The remaining \$1 million would come from state funds allocated earlier this year. On April 1, state Sen. Tom Croci (R-Sayville), who was the supervisor in Islip at the time of the dumping, stood at the gates of the park with town officials, saying that \$1 million from the state would save Islip taxpayers money.

At the Tuesday meeting, the board voted to take that \$1 million from the original remediation bond resolution and shift it to an amended bond resolution for the pool, Ludwig said. A \$300,000 grant from the Islip Community Development Agency, which was set aside in 2013, remains, which would give the town \$2.05 million to rehab the pool.

"We're not increasing the amount of authorized debt in any way, shape or form," Ludwig said at the meeting. "It's the same amount of

bonds that have already been approved by the board."

The state dormitory grant is now being applied for, Ludwig said, but would, if received, be applied to a spray park at the site, which the original plans included. A spray park would be a "second-phase project," Ludwig said, likely taking place in 2017 and costing an **additional \$1 million.**

Public outcry over the shuttering of the only public pool in the hamlet led town officials to announce plans to fix the facility at a news conference in August 2013. Board members and other officials stood in the empty, decrepit Olympic-sized pool, vowing to have it reopened by summer 2014.

The plans were halted when Suffolk County District Attorney Thomas Spota uncovered a dumping scheme in and around Islip Town, where contaminated materials ended up dumped in several areas of the park, shutting down the entire 27.9-acre site since April 2014. The park is currently undergoing excavation and cleanup of the contamination that is expected to be completed by October.