

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2016

Let's Be Honest

In 2011, I attended an environmental roundtable discussion hosted by County Executive-elect Steve Bellone. During this forum, I challenged him on the driving force behind the county's ambitious sewer-ing plans: "Mr. Bellone, I keep hearing the county talk about expanded sewer-ing, but I'm not seeing water quality protection as the priority, but rather economic development." When his response focused on the economy and the need to create jobs, I knew right then that my instincts were correct.

When the narrative of our elected officials emphasizes economic growth over cleaning up our waters, their logic warrants scrutiny. This holds true for the proposed sewer district for Southampton Village ["Troubled Waters," January 14]. This is not to say that a down-town sewer district is not without merit—but let's be honest about the discussion, because it's not about cleaning up Lake Agawam.

In 2013, the Village Planning Commission and Board of Trustees were furnished with a scientific study and action plan conducted by Lombardo Associates, which I commissioned, as the former Baykeeper, to help guide Lake Agawam's water quality restoration efforts. The principal finding of the study was that the phosphorus being released from the organic sediments was the controlling factor of water quality.

There are significant cost implications to cleaning up Lake Agawam. Asking taxpayers to support the sewer project when no meaningful water quality improvements will be realized may compromise future financing for legitimate restoration actions.

Let's be mindful of this and let the community decide.

Kevin McAllister

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Mr. McAllister is founding president of Defend H2O in Noyac—Ed.