



**G.C. Hospital begins antibody testing**  
Page 7



**Lavine helps to fill a pantry**  
Page 8



**Schools closed for rest of year**  
Page 2

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## YOUR HOT SHOT



Courtesy Roni Chastain

### It's dinnertime!

While we spend our time worrying about Covid-19 this seagull's only concern is finding its next meal. Bayville is home to many birds, which continues to delight residents and visitors alike.

# Support for mayors amid pandemic

By **LAURA LANE**  
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A bipartisan group of Long Island congressional leaders met once again on May 5 on the video-conferencing platform Zoom. U.S. Representatives Tom Suozzi, Peter King, Kathleen Rice, Lee Zeldon and Gregory Meeks shared their perspectives and answered questions, as they did during an April 23 Zoom meeting that focused on helping small businesses. But this time their purpose was to share a commitment to helping municipalities obtain federal funding, and to hear from their mayors. More than 100 people took part in the meeting, included journalists and several of Nassau County's 64 mayors.

Suozzi, a former mayor of Glen Cove, said he understood the burden that mayors are feeling. Every day they're dealing with people

who come to them for help, Suozzi said, and the mayors are also consumed with finding ways to operate their villages with reduced revenues.

"The shutdown has caused you to lose your building permit revenues because there's no construction going on, you're not getting revenues in from your recreation fees and parking tickets," Suozzi said. "You're not getting all different types of revenue that would normally come in, and that's our big concern for all of you and how it's effecting your villages."

**I** give credit to them for hearing the mayors and promoting our position for federal help. But I'm not sure how much they can do. The issue is the Senate.

**EDWARD LIEBERMAN**  
Sea Cliff mayor

The entire New York House delegation sent a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer on Tuesday, requesting additional aid for state and local governments. It also asked for flexibility on how the money would be spent.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

# Bipartisan pledge to help municipalities

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Securities Act, known as the Cares Act, was passed to stimulate the economy. It provided for funding to counties, but the formula was specific to Covid-19 related expenses. The act set a population threshold of 500,000 for qualification. There is talk in Congress, said U.S. Rep. Lee Zeldin, to reduce the threshold to 50,000. "It's not about reducing, it," said Zeldin, a Republican from Suffolk. "It's about getting rid of it. We need a pot of money for cities, villages and towns and need to drive the funding for the lowest level of government."

Bayville Mayor Bob De Natale said he agreed that the threshold should be reduced. There are only 7,000 residents in his village and 5,000 in the neighboring Village of Sea Cliff.

"The current inequality of aid isn't fair," he said. "We are at the epicenter of the pandemic as Tom said. The federal government needs to understand that we need more help than anyone else."

A couple of weeks ago U.S. Rep. Kathleen Rice, a Democrat, said she was on a call with 24 mayors from her district. She asked them to put a dollar figure on their losses. It is important to know how much is needed, she said.

Freeport Mayor Robert Kennedy, a Democrat, is the past president of the Nassau County Village Officials Association and currently the president of the New York Conference of Mayors. He said he sees the lost revenues as a big problem.

"Freeport has experienced an estimated



Laura Lane/Herald Gazette

**A BIPARTISAN GROUP** of congressional leaders, including, clockwise from top left, Peter King, Lee Zeldin, Tom Suozzi, Gregory Meeks and Kathleen Rice, took part in a Zoom meeting, expressing their support for municipalities and hearing from area mayors.

\$3.2 million loss in revenues in the first three and a half months," Kennedy said. "We lose roughly \$300,000 a month from our recreation center and we have to also reimburse the members who don't have use of it. Our village building permits have dropped off — many of the developers have just walked away from the projects. And

licenses are not being renewed, building code violations are on hold."

And Freeport police are not issuing violations because they sympathize with residents and also worry that the illness could be transferred from residents to police officers. Fifteen village police officers have tested positive for Covid-19, Kennedy said.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo's prediction of a 20 percent reduction of revenues in the state would have a rippling effect on municipalities, Kennedy said. "I don't expect that the dust is going to settle here until September, October."

Suozzi voiced his concern regarding a comment made by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell that the coronavirus is a blue state bailout. "This is no time to be partisan," Suozzi said. "And we are the biggest net donor to the federal government of any state. We send more money to the federal government than we get back every single year."

For the past five years, he said, New York has sent \$150 billion dollars to the federal government more than the state has received. Whereas Kentucky, McConnell's home state, has received \$150 billion dollars more in federal dollars for different services and contracts than the state has put in.

Elliot Conway, the mayor of Upper Brookville, said after the meeting that he appreciates the congressional effort. "This was a call to action," he said, "and I think the bipartisan group needed to get the support from mayors and I think they got it."

Sea Cliff Mayor Edward Lieberman, who is also the president of the Nassau County Village Officials Association, said the meeting was a nice display of congressional unity. "I give credit to them for hearing the mayors and promoting our position for federal help," he said. "But I'm not sure how much they can do. The issue is the Senate."