

Vandervalk Proposes New Method for Flood Relief

Assemblywoman Charlotte Vandervalk, D-39, proposed a new anti-flooding tactic at the April 7th meeting of the Pascack Valley Administrators.

“Currently, each town must individually apply for a permit from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) for permission to desilt and desnag waterways that run through the town,” explained Vandervalk. “I suggested to the Pascack Valley Administrators that they consider doing this with a coordinated multi-town regional approach for the desilting and desnagging of the Pascack Brook as it runs from Montvale to Harrington Park. In fact, it may be possible for the towns to be removed from the permitting process altogether so that the effort would be controlled by the DEP along with the Bergen County Mosquito Control division which traditionally has been the agency that performs the actual stream cleaning.”

The Assemblywoman identified a number of problems with the current method of requiring each town individually to apply for a desilt and desnag permit to do only the portion of the brook which runs within the particular town’s borders.

“The current process requires each town to pay engineering fees and permit fees and deal with the DEP,” said Vandervalk. “By allowing towns to take a coordinated approach, we will avoid the need for individual permits, save money, save the frustration of each town working through the DEP process, and help to alleviate flooding. The DEP is already the watchdog on these waterways and already has all of the engineering data on these streams. With desilting and desnagging, we are simply trying to put the streambeds back to their original levels.”

“I have had several conversations with the DEP for clearance to perform this necessary desilt and desnag maintenance as I’ve described,” said Vandervalk. “So, I am cautiously optimistic.”

In addition, the Assemblywoman has long been a sponsor of legislation (A2440) to create a bistate commission to coordinate management and flood prevention of waterways flowing from Rockland County, NY into Bergen County, NJ. This bill has been approved and released by the Assembly Environment and Solid Waste Committee and is awaiting consideration by the full Assembly.

“However, since the weather will not wait, we must proceed with cleanup of our streams as efficiently as possible,” concluded the Assemblywoman.