

Brookhaven Town Councilwoman Connie Kepert

Councilwoman Connie Kepert was first elected to the Brookhaven Town Council in November of 2005 and is currently serving her fourth term in office. Prior to being elected, she demonstrated her dedication to the community for more than 18 years through her active participation in civic affairs and in various leadership roles, including president of the Affiliated Brookhaven Civic Organization, president of the Longwood Alliance, and president of the Middle Island Civic Association.

For her hard work and dedication to the community Councilwoman Kepert has received the following awards:

- APA 2010 National Planning Leadership Award for Planning Advocate
- North Shore Sun's 2007 Public Servant of the Year Award
- Open Space Council Dennis Puleston Conservation Award
- Brookhaven Town Women of the Year Award
- Suffolk County Volunteer of the Year Award
- Paumanok Bike Club Recognition
- PTA Distinguished Service Award
- Woman of the Year Award from the Times Beacon Record
- Vision Long Island's Community Leadership Award.
- Designated as a Paul Harris Fellow by the Middle Island Rotary.
- Recognized by the Long Island Progressive Coalition as a "Long Islander who has made a difference."

Councilwoman Kepert is married to Andrew Kepert, and has 3 sons, Shaun, Christopher, and Daniel. She teaches at Longwood High School, and holds a M.S. in Public Policy from the University of Oregon, a B.A. in Psychology from SUNY Oneonta, and Teaching Certifications from Dowling College in both Social Studies and Special Education.

Councilwoman Kepert has made it her top priority to help the local economy grow and create jobs. She has led the way on several "Smart Growth" projects that are both fiscally and environmentally sound.

- **Jobs and Sustainable Development:** In the 4th Council District, Councilwoman Kepert has spearheaded a number of projects which will create jobs, move away from the sprawl model and create sustainable communities where people can live, work and play.
- **The Meadows at Yaphank:** This project will create over 2,600 sustainable jobs. It includes offices, a mix of residential units, shops, and recreational opportunities such as a multi-purpose field, baseball fields, and a community center as well as a \$2 million fund to remediate the invasive species in Yaphank Lakes

- **The Coram U.A. Theater:** This mixed use pedestrian center will create 112 permanent jobs and eliminate the blight that has attracted vandals and homeless people since the theater shut down in 2004.
- **Artist Lake Plaza / The Former K- Mart Property in Middle Island:** The redevelopment of the K-Mart site into Artist Lake Plaza is important to the revitalization of Middle Island. Councilwoman Kepert has worked hard to transform this dilapidated site into a job generator which will help to fuel the local economy and uplift the entire area. The Town Board has adopted the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and approved the change of zone.
- **Farmingville's Bissett Nursery / The Arboretum:** A mixed use proposed development which will include residences, shops and desperately needed public spaces, a playground, and park area. The applicant has also agreed to traffic calming features such as sidewalks, street trees, and historic period lighting.

Money Saving Energy Conservation Initiatives

Councilwoman Kepert has led the way on Energy Saving legislation which has not only helped the environment and created jobs, but has also saved thousands of dollars for Brookhaven homeowners. These programs create green collar jobs, boost the economy and protect the environment by reducing carbon emissions by 130,000 tons a year, while costing the taxpayer nothing.

- **Energy Star:** Councilwoman Kepert introduced groundbreaking legislation in 2006 requiring any new single-family dwelling, multiple-family dwelling or Planned Retirement Community (PRC) to meet Energy Star guidelines.

Consider the following facts:

In the next 5 years it is estimated that 8,000 homes will be built in the Town of Brookhaven. An Energy Star home will avoid 2.25 tons of greenhouse gas emissions per year. That equates to 18,000 tons of greenhouse gases which otherwise would have been emitted into the environment. That is the equivalent of taking 3,500 cars off the roads annually, or 38,000 barrels of oil not burned each year, that's making a difference!

Energy Star reduces energy usage by 30% for both heating and cooling. An average homeowner holding a 30-year mortgage can look forward to saving \$23,400 over that period, and that is calculated by today's oil and gas prices, so the savings will most likely be much greater than that.

Energy Star Enhancement: On May 19, 2010, Councilwoman Connie Kepert, enhanced her 2006 legislation with a two-fold amendment. The first amendment requires larger homes that use more energy to score higher on the Home Energy Rating System (HERS) test. The second amendment closes a loophole that allowed old building permits issued prior to the adoption of Energy Star legislation to be renewed without complying with the more efficient building code. Over the last four years, the Town of Brookhaven has renewed an average of 1000 building permits per year and these enhancements will equate to a substantial economic and environmental impact in the Town.

- **Green Homes:** The Green Homes program provided home owners with a benefit assessment to invest in energy conservation measures. This measure helps to reduce energy usage and saves the average homeowner over \$1000 a year in energy costs.

How it works: Town certified building performance specialists are sent to the homes of residents who are interested in participating in the program. They conduct a home performance evaluation and provide the homeowner with a report that evaluates each sector of the house, such as the boiler, windows and attic. Finally, the homeowner chooses from a menu of energy efficiency options. The Town provides the homeowner with a benefit assessment of up to \$10,000 to increase the energy efficiency of their homes and decrease their costs. The repayment for upgrades is structured so that the payment is slightly less than the projected energy savings.

Councilwoman Kepert advocated for the Caithness Energy Facility, the cleanest facility in the entire northeastern United States.

Caithness is a combined cycle plant, which means it captures the heat that normally escapes from the stacks of other power plants and uses that heat to create additional power. Below is a break down detailing how the Caithness Energy Facility helps to clean the environment.

- The Caithness Energy Facility is 64% more fuel efficient than the Power Plants were on today.
- Global warming is a serious threat facing our planet. Caithness offsets the release of 640,000 lbs of CO₂ into the atmosphere.
- Caithness offsets enough pollutants from older dirtier Power Plants to equal taking 125,000 cars off the roadway.
- LIPA states that ratepayers save approximately \$80 million a year on fuel costs due to the Caithness Energy Facility.

Councilwoman Connie Kepert Negotiated an Historic Host Benefit Package

Over the next 20 years the Caithness Energy Facility will generate \$139,000,000 in tax revenue. Since the project is located within the South Country School District, the district will be able to take advantage of approximately \$100 million dollars of additional tax revenues.

Furthermore, Councilwoman Kepert worked to insure that, even though the plant is not located within their boundaries, the Longwood School District, and Patchogue-Medford School District will both receive \$1 million dollars, at commencement of construction of the Caithness Energy Facility.

Councilwoman Kepert was able to negotiate a \$5 million community development package to support projects in the vicinity of the plant, and an additional \$1 million dollars toward the building of the Boys & Girls Club in North Bellport.

Caithness will also contribute \$25,000 per year to a scholarship program for students of the Longwood, Patchogue-Medford and South Country School Districts.

Traffic Safety

Councilwoman Kepert has been fighting for bicycle and pedestrian safe roadways for decades underscoring that a quarter of the people in Brookhaven who die in traffic accidents are pedestrians, which is more than twice the national average. She also stresses both the health and environmental benefits of making it safe and convenient to walk or cycle.

- **Complete Streets:** In September 2010, Councilwoman Connie Kepert passed progressive legislation to establish a sustainable Complete Streets policy designed and operated to enable safe access for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists. The Complete Streets Policy includes:
 - ✓ Sidewalks and bike lanes
 - ✓ Frequent crossing opportunities and median islands
 - ✓ Accessible pedestrian signals, curb extensions and more

- **Safety Town:** Councilwoman Kepert has championed traffic safety measures throughout the Town, including Safety Town at the Holbrook Ecology Center, where children are taught how to remain safe on our roadways. secured funding for other Traffic Safety measures including:
 - Sidewalks on Wilson Avenue
 - Sidewalks on Granny Road
 - Major roadway improvements along Long Island Avenue in Medford that include bike lanes and turning lanes
 - New high technology traffic signals which measure the speed of cars 300 feet in advance of the signal, and turn red if cars are traveling beyond the speed limit on both Randall and Ridge Roads in Ridge
 - A bike lane on Smith Road in Ridge
 - Driver Feedback devices, crosswalks, bike lanes and school zone speed limit signs on Longwood Road in Middle Island

Councilwoman Kepert also passed legislation creating the Glacial Ridge Off Road Bike Trail, and created the Towns very active Bicycle Advisory Committee.

Parks and Recreation

Councilwoman Kepert is committed to providing safe, positive recreational opportunities for our children and young people. Her leadership has been the driving force behind the development and renovation of new community parks including:

- Robert Rowley Park:
- Medford Athletic Complex:
- Community Gardens:
- Granny Road Park:
- Brookhaven Dog Park in Middle Island: Councilwoman Connie Kepert researched best practices at dog parks throughout the United States, searched for sites, and overcame the objections of naysayers to establish the first Dog Park in Brookhaven Town. The Dog Park is located in Middle Island, east of CR 21, and the K-Mart Shopping center. The site has water access, benches and an obstacle course for dogs. The site also has two separate areas, for large and small dogs. To take your pet to the dog park contact the Town Clerk's office to get your Pooch Pass.

Open Space Preservation

Since taking office, Councilwoman Kepert has been a leader in the Town's efforts to protect the environment and preserve open space. Results of her work include:

- \$9,000,000 added to the 2012 capital budget to acquire open space
- Acquisition of parcels located within the Carmans River Corridor:
- The 30 acre Lake Grove Property in Yaphank was a major victory for land preservation in precious Carmans River Corridor.
- The 7.5 acre Holy Trinity property adds to the wealth of preserved lands within the Carmans River Corridor.
- A parcel located along scenic South Country road within the Beaver Dam Creek Watershed within Brookhaven Hamlet
- More than 23 acres of land located south of Longwood Road in Middle Island
- Four parcels in the old "Flower City" development south of Middle Island Golf Course

Quality of Life Issues

Councilwoman Kepert has worked to combat a number of Quality of Life issues including:

- **Sign Ordinance:** Councilwoman Connie Kepert received the full support of the Town Board for a code amendment that simplifies the sign code and helps clean up our roadways, while providing business owners ample time to come into conformance with the new code. These amendments, which include an amortization period for non-conforming signs, will protect the public from distracting signage and will serve to improve the aesthetics of our roadways. Brookhaven's sign ordinance is also intended to serve the public's need to be given helpful directions, and to be informed of available products, businesses, and services.
- **Anti Graffiti: Graffiti:** Councilwoman Connie Kepert successfully moved forward legislation requiring that graffiti is removed from businesses faster. The legislation reduces the amount of time local business owners have to remove graffiti from 14 days to 5 days. Keep America Beautiful, an organization that compiles studies on how to reduce blight, such as litter and graffiti, states that the sooner graffiti is removed, the less likely it is that business will be hit again. Data shows that removal within 24 to 48 hours will result in a nearly zero rate of recurrence.

It is estimated that graffiti mitigation costs the Town of Brookhaven close to \$200,000 per year.. Graffiti vandalism costs the entire nation more than \$8 billion a year to clean up. That cost does not include the negative visual impact that graffiti vandalism has on neighborhoods, cities and towns across the country.

- **Mega –Laundromats:** An issue that was brought to Ms. Kepert’s attention early in her first term of office was the negative impact that 24 hour Mega-Laundromats have had on residential communities. Through meetings with the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Suffolk County Health Department, Councilwoman Kepert discovered that these Mega-Laundromats pose a substantial, negative environmental impact. From monitoring wells placed around these mega facilities, the Suffolk County Health Department has found several plumes of MBAS (detergent), forming agents, DEET (insecticide), and traces of pharmaceuticals.

In response Councilwoman Kepert drafted a resolution requiring all proposed Mega Laundromats must receive a special permit from the Town Board. Laundromats that hold 50 or more double load machines; have 5000 square feet of interior space; and generate 30,000 gallons of waste water per day are deemed Mega Laundromats. Due to Ms. Kepert’s efforts, these Mega Laundromats must now be located a minimum of 100 feet from the building to the property lines on a parcel size of at least 65,000 square feet provide a minimum of 175 feet of natural and undisturbed buffer from any freshwater and/or tidal wetlands and a minimum of a 150 foot buffer from the property line of the nearest residence or parcel zoned for residential use.

- **Sex Offenders:** Councilwoman Kepert’s Child Protection Act was approved by a rare 7-0 vote. The law prohibits registered sex offenders from living within a quarter mile of a school, park, or playground. The previous code was 1000 feet and this change brings the Town Of Brookhaven into conformance with the Suffolk County Ordinance.

The new law also cuts in half the time a sex offender has to re-locate, from 90 days to 45 days, when he is found to be living in a restricted area. In addition Councilwoman Kepert’s legislation holds the landlords who rent to sex offenders in restricted areas responsible as well, with fines from not less than \$250, up to \$2,500. Each week that the violation continues constitutes a separate offense.

- **Universal Design:** In September of 2009, Councilwoman Kepert introduced legislation that provides incentives to developers to build homes which incorporate basic design features that make them accessible to the disabled population so they can have the ability to visit friends and relatives with ease.

Councilwoman Kepert was approached by the Suffolk Community Council and asked to consider enacting legislation to break the architectural barriers that exist in homes which impede access to an entire population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau of the 2006 American Community Survey there are 57,868 people in the Town of Brookhaven living with a disability, or 12.3% of the town’s population.

Councilwoman Kepert's legislation creates a new permit for builders to apply for that costs less than standard building permits that do not include universal features. This legislation, provides builders with an incentive to include universal design features in their homes. Some of the standard design requirements included in the permit are:

- Zero-step Entrance
- Doorways and passageways on the first floor shall have a minimum clearance of 34 inches.
- At least one room on the ground floor that can easily be converted into a bedroom.
- Sufficient floor space in ground floor bathrooms that will allow for individuals using a wheel chair or other mobility aids to enter into and exit out of facility.

This important legislation not only allows our seniors to age in place, but provides people with special needs the ability to visit friends and family without difficulty.