

FROM LIBN.COM

Town of Hempstead IDA board members resign

Almost all of the board members of the Town of Hempstead Industrial Development Agency resigned Monday, officials said.

The announcement came amid a controversy over a payment in lieu of taxes agreement granted in 2014 between the IDA and Macerich, the owners of the Green Acres Mall.

The board members, with the exception of Florestano Girardi, submitted their resignation.

The agreement, which reduces the property taxes paid by the mall's owners, has been controversial to residents, who said their school taxes had increased as a result. Tensions have also been raised as to whether enough public notice was provided about the tax breaks, which include a \$14 million PILOT, according to published reports.

According to the board members, a pending report from Camoin Associates, a consulting firm, will demonstrate the merits of the Green Acres Mall project.

The IDA maintained in a press release that the project would produce more than \$13.5 million in new sales tax revenue for the county, more than \$450,000 of new revenue for the Town of Hempstead and 850 new jobs.

Last month, Hempstead Town Supervisor Anthony Santino called on the town board to remove its IDA board members, saying he was "outraged by the IDA's hearing process and handling of the Green Acres Mall PILOT agreement."

IDA Executive Director Fred Parola said at the time that the board has been "totally transparent."

— ADINA GENN

Attorney assists county in sex-offender case

An associate at a Uniondale law firm served as a pro bono assistant district attorney in a case that determined a defendant as a level-two sex offender.

Ralph Branciforte, an associate at Sahn Ward Coschignano in Uniondale, assisted in drafting an appellate brief for the appeal in People of the State of New York v. Widom before the Appellate Division's Second Judicial Department.

In this case, the Appellate Division affirmed the New York Supreme Court in Nassau County's order, which had designated the defendant a level-two sex offender. This was an upward departure from the defendant's level-one status, which was determined under the guidelines of the

New York State Sex Offender Registration Act, after it was established that there was a higher likelihood of re-offense or danger to the community than previously thought.

Branciforte assisted in successfully arguing that the defendant was correctly designated as a level-two sex offender because of certain factors, including the nature of child pornography that the defendant downloaded from the internet. It was also established that the defendant engaged in sexually explicit communications with a 15-year-old child, set up a time and place to meet, and traveled to the location at a pre-arranged time.

These factors were not adequately taken into account when the defendant was designated previously as a level-one sex offender, according to the Appellate Division.

The Nassau County District Attorney's office offers a program in which private-practice attorneys can serve as pro bono assistant district attorneys. The program focuses on appellate cases where the attorney works with an assistant district attorney in the Appeals Bureau to assist in writing a brief and arguing the case before the Appellate Division.

Branciforte has served as a pro bono attorney at the district attorney's office in two additional matters.

— ADINA GENN