

## EDITORIALS

# Sewer plant shows how consolidation can work

Flash back to 1998. State and federal officials were seeking to reduce nitrogen flowing into Long Island Sound. Their actions led years later to a consolidation of two sewer districts in Great Neck. And that is now producing a classic win-win: a cut in pollution and savings for taxpayers, savings that will increase this fall when new efficiencies kick in.

The rest of Long Island should take note.

The happy ending began 16 years ago when New York, Connecticut and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency agreed on a plan to reduce nitrogen pollution in the Sound. Dozens of sewage treatment plants ringing the Sound suddenly were on the hook for costly upgrades. Included were the plants of the Great Neck Water Pollution Control District and the Village of Great Neck Water Pollution Control Department. In a classic example of the balkanization of Long Island special districts, the two facilities had operated for more than 70 years some 500 feet apart on either side of East Shore Road.

The commonsense solution is not always the one adopted, but this time it was: After much agita, the district and village agreed to consolidate the village's sewer system into the district, a \$60-million expansion that now covers most of the Great Neck peninsula.

The district's new plant masks noise, has tanks 12 feet above ground to avoid storm surges and is energy efficient. It has a rooftop solar panel and microturbines that will burn methane, a waste product, to produce 20 percent of the electricity needed by the plant and nearly all of its heat. The microturbines will come on line in October, but even without them the plant costs about 10 percent less to run — a savings of nearly \$900,000 for 2014 — than two new ones.

The new facility is a state-of-the-art marvel. But its greater importance to the region is as an example that consolidation can work. **N**