

# Levittown

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## Cell Tower Proposal Sparks Controversy

BY CHRIS BOYLE

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The Levittown Property Owners Association (LPOA) enjoyed one of the largest turnouts in its existence on June 10. However, the occasion itself was not one to crow about, as the meeting room at the Levittown Public Library was jam-packed with residents furious over plans to install a Verizon cell tower within a residential neighborhood.

The proposed cell tower would be located on the property of the Veterans of Foreign Wars [VFW] Post 9592, located at 55 Hickory Lane.

At the meeting, audience members claiming to live as close as 300 feet

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## Trecherous Turnpike

BY DANIEL OFFNER

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Nassau County Police are on the hunt for a hit-and-run driver, who struck and killed a 13-year-old Levittown student along Hempstead Turnpike early Father's Day morning.

According to police, Wisdom Lane Middle School student Brianna Soplin was crossing at the corner of Gardiners Ave. when she was struck by the driver of a blue Town and Country minivan at 12:02 a.m. on Sunday. She was immediately rushed to Nassau University Medical Center with head and body trauma and was pronounced dead by hospital staff at 4:30 a.m.

In response to the tragedy, Levittown School District Superintendent Dr. James Grossane informed students, faculty, staff and parents that grief counselors will be made available to students as needed.

"We are extremely saddened to learn of the tragic death of Bryanna Soplin...she was always smiling and had a zest for life," Grossane said. "Bryanna was an enthusiastic participant in school and always lit up the room. She touched all of her classmates and teachers in a special way and the children and staff will miss her deeply. The Levittown Board of Education, administration, faculty and staff extend their deepest condolences to Bryanna's family and friends during this difficult time."

News of the ongoing investigation comes just four months after another incident in February, when a 14-year-old Levittown student

## Veteran Spotlight:

American Legion Post Commander Joe Simpson

BY MARLO JAPPEN

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After serving in the U.S. Army from 1961-1962, Levittown resident Joe Simpson was told he was not eligible to join the American Legion. Now, decades later, he is its Post Commander.

With the United States on the verge of the Cold War, Simpson was assigned to Redstone Arsenal in Huntsville, Ala. While he was stationed in Huntsville, Simpson specialized in repairing electronics.



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"I was never sent to Vietnam," Simpson said. "The only exciting thing that happened was the Cuban Missile Crisis."

During the crisis, Simpson said his unit was in charge of sending missiles down to Miami Beach, but his unit would never be sent to Miami.

"I was very annoyed because my whole family lived in Miami Beach," he said. Looking back, he sees the great significance of this event: "We were very close to war, but we didn't realize."

It was the missile crisis in the early 1960s that would eventually lead to the Bay of Pigs invasion—a failed CIA operation that was intended to remove the country's communist leader Fidel Castro.

After his time in the Army, Simpson returned to New York, where he got an apartment in the Bronx. He would later decide to move his family to Levittown after learning that his next-door neighbor had been stabbed.

Forty-seven years later, Simpson lives at home with three children and five grandchildren—three of



which have already graduated high school.

Simpson spends much of his time at the American Legion Post #1711 in Levittown, which is open seven days a week from 10:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

"It gives you a good feeling when you help the people," he said.

The four pillars of the American Legion include helping the veterans, the children, the community, and the country.

With over 300 members, the American Legion in Levittown hosts and sponsors numerous events for veterans throughout the year. Some of their past efforts have included fishing trips for children with down syndrome, collecting non-perishable food items for some of the local food pantries, and services for injured veterans. "Many members from other posts come to this one in Levittown," he said. "I personally think that it's the best post on Long Island."

**All Summer-long, The Levittown Tribune will look to profile a different veteran each week. If you would like to suggest a veteran to profile, please email us at levittown@antonnews.com.**

**TURNPIKE from page 1**

suffered multiple injuries after being struck in a hit-and-run at the corner of Hempstead Turnpike and Shelter Lane. Last May, another pedestrian—81-year-old Robert Chapman Sr.—died around the intersection of Hempstead Turnpike and Gardiners Avenue.

More recently, on Mother's Day, five teenagers in the nearby Village of Farmingdale tragically lost their lives when their car collided into a GMC Suburban driving along Conklin Street—which is also known as Rt. 24, Fulton Ave. and Hempstead Turnpike in other parts of Nassau County.

Over the past 10 years, an average of three pedestrians a year have died along Hempstead Turnpike, making it one of the most dangerous thoroughfares in the state.

Detectives have also indicated that the driver of the minivan failed to stop after the collision and was last seen traveling eastbound on Hempstead Turnpike and then northbound onto the Seaford-Oyster Bay Expressway. Police are requesting anyone with information regarding this crime to call Nassau County Crime Stoppers at 1-800-244-8477. All callers will remain anonymous.

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