

Long Island

ROAD WARRIORS

A PUBLICATION OF THE LONG ISLAND CONTRACTORS' ASSOCIATION

Fall 2026



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BUILDING
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PAGE 10



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Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is the official magazine of the Long Island Contractors' Association, Inc. (LICA). LICA represents the interests of the region's premier heavy construction general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and industry supporters. Focused primarily in the transportation infrastructure construction industry such as highways, bridges, rail, sewers and other public works, LICA's member companies play a significant role within Long Island's Nassau and Suffolk Counties. The economic impact of the industry contributes \$4 billion to the area's local gross regional product. © LICA 2026 Long Island ROAD WARRIORS is copyrighted but portions may be reprinted with permission of LICA.



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Building What Comes Next

Infrastructure is ultimately an act of stewardship. We inherit roads, bridges, waterways and communities shaped by those who came before us, and we carry the responsibility of strengthening them for those who will follow.

That responsibility runs through every story in this Fall issue of *Road Warriors*.

Our cover story features New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner **Amanda Lefton**, a Long Island native whose personal connection to our coastal environment has helped shape her career in public service. She shares her vision for greater collaboration among state agencies, the construction industry and the communities we collectively serve. Her perspective is a valuable reminder that economic growth and environmental responsibility need not be competing priorities. With communication, predictability and partnership, they can advance together.

In “The Driver’s Seat,” LICA Executive Director **Marc Herbst** explores the history of Port Washington and how the influence of its harbor helped shape a future leader of the NYSDEC.

That connection between place, public policy and infrastructure continues throughout the issue. Assemblywoman **Rebecca Kassay** discusses Brookhaven’s critical infrastructure needs, including the debate surrounding the proposed rail yard. **Rocco Carriero** offers practical guidance for business owners planning amid continued interest-rate uncertainty.

**“Infrastructure
is ultimately an
act of stewardship.”**

We also highlight the work happening across our industry every day. United Fence and Guardrail demonstrates its commitment to safety while completing work along Robert Moses Causeway. Inside the Local 1298 Training Center, we see the comprehensive education and hands-on preparation that give laborers the skills they need to arrive on the job ready to work safely and productively.

Readiness also means caring for the people behind the work. The Outreach Center’s confidential services connect LICA members and their families with support for substance use, mental health challenges, family concerns and job-related stress. Building a strong industry requires us to treat personal well-being with the same seriousness we bring to physical safety.

FOREWomen Long Island, an initiative of LICA, recently carried that conversation forward at its Workforce Development Summit. Industry leaders **Marie Milord**, **Leah Rambo**, **Buket Agdere** and **Rebecca Clark** joined moderator **Rosalie Drago** to discuss how we attract, prepare and retain the next generation of construction professionals, particularly women who may not yet see a place for themselves in our industry.

Finally, our photo gallery takes us to Ronkonkoma, where DARR Construction is helping bring the next phase of Tri-Tec’s Station Yards development to life.

Together, these stories show that infrastructure is about far more than individual projects. It is about partnership, preparation, opportunity and the people whose work keeps our region moving.

Thank you for reading,

Jaime

Jaime Quent
Editor-in-Chief
Long Island Road Warriors



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ANY PORT IN A STORM

More than a century ago, the Long Island Contractors' Association began its history as member firms excavated sand from the shorelines of Port Washington. Founded as the Nassau-Suffolk Sand and Gravel Association, we continue today to represent the region's heavy construction industry, with great respect for the natural resources of the place we call home.

Port, as locals call the community, remains a fitting reminder of the enduring connection between our natural environment and our economic needs.

Nestled on the Cow Neck Peninsula in Nassau County, Port Washington juts into Long Island Sound, with Manhasset Bay to the west and Hempstead Harbor to the east. Beginning in the 1870s, this sand-mining community boasted what was considered the largest sandbank east of the Mississippi River. Its navigable waterways provided easy barge access, allowing an estimated 140 million cubic yards of local sand to help build the famed New York City skyline, including the Empire State and Chrysler buildings, as well as the city's subway system.

Today, little remains of that once-dominant sand-mining industry. Former mining property has been reclaimed for new uses, including the beautiful Harbor Links golf courses. Port Washington's evolution illustrates how economic development and environmental stewardship can coexist across generations.

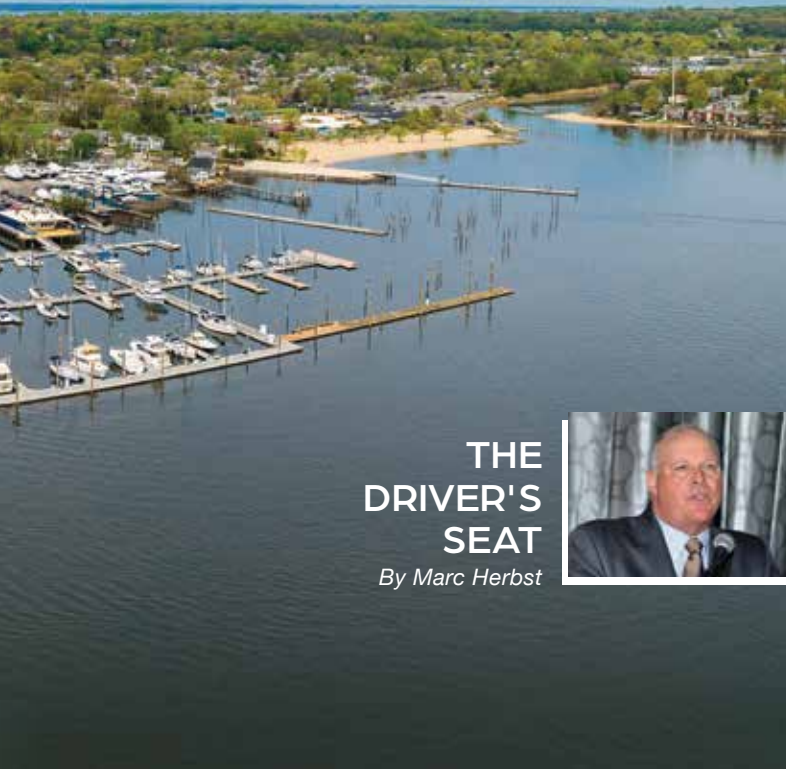
The expression "any port in a storm" suggests that when circumstances become difficult, we take whatever safe harbor is available. But Port Washington isn't exactly "any port." It is a community with a long history of confronting changing circumstances while planning for the future.

Like many Long Island communities, Port Washington continues to balance environmental protection with economic sustainability. Earlier this year, local officials celebrated nearly \$2.2 million in federal funding secured by U.S. Representative Tom Suozzi for aging sewer infrastructure in Manorhaven and the Port Washington Water Pollution Control District. That investment follows an earlier \$5.8 million federal award for improvements to the district's wastewater system, helping protect Manhasset Bay while supporting the community's future.

Port Washington is also at the center of discussions surrounding the Propel NY Energy project, a major transmission initiative designed to strengthen the downstate electric grid. Proposed submarine transmission facilities in and around Hempstead Harbor have prompted scrutiny from local leaders and residents as the project moves through the regulatory process. It is another example of the challenge facing Long Island: meeting our environmental, economic, public health, and energy needs responsibly and simultaneously.

LICA has always worked to promote infrastructure projects that seek collaborative and successful solutions to those challenges.

Perhaps it is fitting, then, that another leader with roots in Port Washington now occupies one of New York's most important



THE DRIVER'S SEAT

By Marc Herbst



environmental posts. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Amanda Lefton grew up in the community and understands firsthand the relationship between Long Island's natural resources and its economic vitality.

"As Long Islanders, we know that things like water quality and natural resources are critical to our livelihood," Lefton recently told a Long Island Association audience. "These things are not in competition but actually complement each other."

Those words could just as easily describe Port Washington's evolution over the past century. They also reflect the challenge Lefton now faces as DEC Commissioner, overseeing an agency responsible for protecting the state's air and water, wildlife, and natural resources while administering environmental regulations that touch nearly every major infrastructure project.

That is no small responsibility.

Our industry knows that protecting the environment and building the infrastructure necessary for a strong economy need not be opposing objectives. Done thoughtfully, each can strengthen the other.

We hope you enjoy our cover story on Commissioner Lefton, a Port Washington native whose roots provide an appropriate foundation for the challenges ahead.

After all, when it comes to navigating those challenges, it helps to know how to find a safe port in a storm.



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PLAY TO WIN: BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT LONG ISLAND

By Jaime Quent

Growing up in Lindenhurst, flooding was just a part of life. My family lived on Surf Street, just one block from the Great South Bay in homes that were converted from summer bungalows. There, high tides and Nor'easters would flood the block so regularly that my father used to joke that we had "occasional waterfront property." A "No Wake" sign sat at the top of the block, and for good reason: when the water got high enough, boats could actually make their way down the street.

It seemed almost normal at the time. On Long Island, water has always been part of the bargain. It surrounds us, sustains us and helps define where and how we live. But increasingly, it also presents some of our greatest challenges.

Amanda Lefton, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner, fostered the same deep experiences from the other side of the Island. Lefton grew up in Port Washington, where some of her earliest memories are tied to the waterfront.

"I used to walk down to the harbor all the time, and that's how I spent time with my family," she said. "I learned how to skip rocks on the harbor and watch the sunsets."

But there was something else she noticed, too.

"It was always so interesting to me that people didn't really go swimming there," Lefton said.

For Lefton, those childhood experiences became an early lesson in both the value and vulnerability of Long Island's natural resources. "It was my Long Island roots that really got me so involved in understanding the importance of environmental conservation," she said.

That perspective now informs her work at the helm of DEC, an agency whose responsibilities touch nearly every aspect of the built and natural environment, from drinking water, wetlands and coastal resilience to brownfields, environmental permitting and economic development.

For Long Island's construction industry, that can sometimes make DEC the agency standing between a proposed project and the moment shovels finally hit the ground.

Lefton understands that tension. But she challenges the premise behind it.

"One of my core tenets of what I believe strongly is that you can have a strong economy and strong environmental protection," she said. "Not only can those things go hand in hand, in fact, they need to go hand in hand."

On Long Island, perhaps nowhere is that relationship clearer than in the water.

Protecting the Water, Building the Solution

"I think Long Islanders know better than anybody the importance of water quality," Lefton said.

Our drinking water comes from beneath our feet. Our communities hug bays, harbors, the Long Island Sound and the Atlantic Ocean. Our beaches and waterways are part of our identity and a significant piece of our economy. But protecting them increasingly requires more than conservation alone; it requires infrastructure.

"We've seen water quality sometimes be degraded across places on Long Island," Lefton said. "We've also seen the opportunity for it to be recovered through things like smart regulations, through investments in infrastructure, and through things like environmental conservation and restoration."

That combination is particularly important in Suffolk County, where nitrogen from cesspools and septic systems has long posed a threat to groundwater and surrounding waterways. Efforts to address it are driving major investments in sewerage, wastewater treatment and advanced septic systems. For the construction industry, those environmental investments translate into something tangible: projects.

And for Lefton, that is precisely the point.

"Why do you like living on the South Shore?" she asked.

"The water, the beaches, the parks," I answered

Protecting those things and building the infrastructure Long Island needs are not separate missions. In fact, few places illustrate the relationship between environmental policy and infrastructure as clearly as Long Island.

For Lefton, that contrast helped demonstrate both the consequences of environmental degradation and the possibility of recovery. Across Suffolk County in particular, nitrogen contamination from traditional septic systems and cesspools has driven a generational push for sewer construction and advanced wastewater treatment. The state and county are investing heavily in both sewer infrastructure and replacements for outdated on-site wastewater systems.

Lefton pointed to the evolution of the state's work from the Long Island Nitrogen Action Plan toward the broader Long Island Watershed Action Plan.

"We know that nitrogen is still something that is critical that we tackle, but thinking more holistically and comprehensively about how we manage our water bodies in order to be as successful as we can, because we know there are other threats," she said. "It's not just nitrogen. It's emerging contaminants, it's coastal erosion, it's sea level rise."

The state has also funneled significant resources into septic replacement programs, helping local governments reduce the nitrogen entering Long Island's groundwater.

For contractors, those environmental goals translate directly into physical projects: sewers, treatment systems, drainage improvements, coastal work and other major public infrastructure.

Environment or Economy? Lefton Says Both.

The premise running through Lefton's approach to DEC is that environmental protection and economic development do not need to sit on opposite sides of the table. Meeting environmental goals requires construction.

The state's multibillion-dollar commitment to clean water infrastructure is perhaps the clearest example. Wastewater treatment plants and sewer systems may protect bays and groundwater, but they are also major capital projects that employ tradespeople, contractors, engineers and suppliers.

"Clean water infrastructure, as we know, is so critical for reducing things like nitrogen and other nutrients and protecting water bodies," Lefton said. "It's also big infrastructure, and that puts people to work."

And it enables something else Long Island badly needs: housing. Lefton pointed to efforts to make water infrastructure funding available to support new housing development, an example, she said, of government responding to concerns raised directly by industry.

"It's a great example of how protecting the environment and a strong economy really go hand in hand," she said, "but also about what we can achieve together when we have strong conversations."

Certainty Matters

For contractors and developers, the tension often arises not over the existence of environmental protections, but over the time, uncertainty and complexity involved in navigating them.

Lefton says she understands the concern.

Her experience leading the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, where she worked on the development of the nation's offshore wind industry, reinforced a lesson she now brings to DEC.

"I believe that it is critical for industry to have certainty," she said. "That doesn't mean that it's certain that you're going to get a permit," Lefton explained, "but that it's certain that you understand the rules of the road, of what it's going to take."

That predictability matters to investment.

"That certainty is really important for investment," she said. "And that's what I want to deliver as a regulator."

For an industry where equipment, workers, financing and schedules can hinge on government approvals, the distinction is significant. Lefton said DEC has been examining its permitting systems and seeking ways to improve how applicants interact with the agency. She also pointed to the state's Smart Access initiative, intended to create a more accessible online portal for regulatory and permitting processes.

But she repeatedly returned to something considerably less technological: communication.

"First, I think communication is really critical," she said. "I've really appreciated the opportunity to sit down with the builders, to sit down with contractors on Long Island, because I think that kind of communication and dialogue is really critical."

Regulators, she said, need to hear from those who actually have to comply with the rules.

"In order for us to build strong regulations and guidance, we do need to have a real dialogue with the industry that's impacted by them to ensure that they're achievable, to ensure that they're both protective but also efficient."

Clear Rules of the Road

Lefton cited recent DEC work involving protections for bats as an example of that approach.

Certain bat species have suffered dramatic population declines, prompting habitat protections and restrictions on activities that could destroy critical habitat at particular times of year. But Lefton said DEC recognized that guidance surrounding those protections had created uncertainty for industry.

"We had a lot of discussions with the industry, and we ended up coming up with guidance that was to clarify how to move forward," she said.

She acknowledged that regulated industries will not always welcome every restriction, but they should know what is expected.

"I think it's very much my job and our job as DEC to make sure that the rules of the road are really clear, that we well communicated those, that we're willing to listen and to be a partner," she said.

That philosophy could prove consequential as New York attempts to simultaneously address housing shortages, aging infrastructure, water quality, climate resiliency and economic development.

'You've Got to Play to Win'

In 2022, New York voters approved the \$4.2 billion Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act, creating an enormous source of funding for projects ranging from water quality improvements to climate resilience.

But for contractors eager to see announced funding become bid-ready projects, there is often a frustrating gap between the headline number and the excavator arriving on site.

Lefton said some of that disconnect results from the way Bond Act dollars are distributed. Rather than inventing entirely new bureaucracies to spend the money, much of the funding has flowed through established state programs.

"If you're getting funding from a specific program, it's actually money coming from the Bond Act," she explained.

And when it comes to municipalities hoping to capture more of those resources, Lefton offered an unusually simple piece of advice.

"You've got to play to win," she said.

Communities must apply.

"I remind Long Island communities, especially municipal leaders, of that a lot because you've got to apply for the funding in order for us to grant you that funding," Lefton said.

For Long Island's construction industry, the stakes extend well beyond environmental policy. Grant applications that become awards become engineering work, procurements, contracts, jobs and eventually built infrastructure.

"You've got to play to win."

Lefton's message to Long Island municipalities:
State and Bond Act funding is available, but
communities have to pursue it.

Preparing for the Water That Is Coming

If water quality is one defining infrastructure challenge for Long Island, water quantity may be another. Flooding, coastal erosion, sea level rise and increasingly severe weather are already forcing communities to rethink the infrastructure designed for a different era.

"It's not just a big storm that's causing our communities to flood," Lefton said. "It's regular rainy day flooding. And I think that makes us have to think differently about how we tackle these issues."

There is no single solution.

Some projects will involve traditional hard infrastructure. Others will restore marshes, seagrass and natural shorelines capable of absorbing storm impacts. Still others may be as specific as replacing an undersized culvert beneath a road.

"Sometimes there are infrastructure solutions, sometimes there are restoration solutions," Lefton said, "but really looking at tackling each of those challenges and ensuring that we've got the right tools in the toolbox."

One of the most significant efforts underway is the Fire Island to Montauk Point project, with DEC serving as the non-federal sponsor alongside the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The approximately \$1.7 billion effort is designed to reduce coastal storm risk across roughly 83 miles of Suffolk County coastline. State sources confirm DEC's role as non-federal sponsor in the long-term Army Corps project.

But Lefton stressed that resilience is also tied to environmental health.

"If we have healthy marshes, if we have seagrass, if we have healthy coastlines, that actually helps absorb some of the flooding," she said.

For Long Island, once again, the environmental project and the infrastructure project are not separate conversations.

Getting Government Talking to Government

Contractors know another source of project delay well: the maze of jurisdictions involved in major public works. A single project can touch DEC, DOT, municipal governments, utilities and federal agencies. Lefton believes part of the solution is deceptively straightforward. People need to know each other well enough to pick up the phone.

She cited her working relationship with New York State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez, joking about calls over permits while making a larger point about collaboration among state agencies.

"We really need strong communication and collaboration across our agencies because what DOT does is also really consequential for communities as well as for the environment," Lefton said.

That coordination has practical consequences. A culvert replacement, for example, can simultaneously make a roadway

more resilient to flooding and improve passage for fish and aquatic species.

The same philosophy applies locally.

"I see local governments as really one of DEC's biggest stakeholders that we partner with all the time," Lefton said. DEC's nine regional offices are critical to that effort because the relationships that determine whether issues are solved quickly often exist below the commissioner level.

"It's really our teams that need to talk every day to make sure that we're having the collaboration needed to move forward," she said.

Making It Easier to Do the Right Thing

With responsibilities ranging from Superfund sites to wetlands, Lefton describes DEC's mission as consequential precisely because its decisions affect so many aspects of New Yorkers' lives. Among her priorities is what she calls **sustainable development**.

"How do we make it easier to do the right thing?" she said.

That can mean directing development toward previously disturbed land rather than environmentally sensitive areas. It can mean making regulatory pathways clearer. And it can mean using tools such as the Brownfield Cleanup Program to turn contaminated parcels into productive community assets.

Lefton pointed to affordable housing developments increasingly using the Brownfield Cleanup Program as an example.

"You're getting something cleaned up and you're giving it back to the community for beneficial use," she said.

It is another area where the goals traditionally put into separate policy boxes: cleanup, housing, environmental protection and economic development, intersect.

Leadership and Making Space

Lefton is serving in a New York State administration notable for the number of women occupying some of its most influential leadership positions. She said serving under New York's first woman governor and alongside women leading agencies across state government is a source of pride.

"It's not about trying to fill a man's shoes, but it's about what we are uniquely bringing in the conversation and driving and getting done," she said.

Lefton believes that representation carries another obligation: creating room for the people who come next.

"We know that there's just not as many spots for us," she said. "And I think it's our job to help create more space for other

women to be able to step in because there's such incredible opportunity when we make that happen."

She recalled being approached by a woman after a speaking engagement who told Lefton that hearing her talk about women belonging in positions of leadership helped inspire her to start a consulting company.

Lefton was struck by the power of something as simple as giving someone permission to imagine herself in a place she had not occupied before.

Among the leaders who shaped Lefton's own thinking is former U.S. Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, whom Lefton watched lead with a style different from the traditional models she had encountered earlier in her career.

"I saw Secretary Haaland get things done in a different way and with empathy and inclusivity," Lefton said. "And you know what? It was just as effective."

That experience, she said, changed the way she thinks about leadership and results.

Protecting Home

Asked to name the place on Long Island she most wants protected for the next generation, Lefton initially resisted choosing a favorite, but one stretches across virtually her entire life.

"I have been going to Fire Island every year of my life since I was in a stroller," she said.

Her family still returns annually to Davis Park.

She also retains an attachment to Sands Point Preserve in Port Washington, another reminder of the landscapes that shaped her. Ultimately, however, Lefton's answer was broader than any beach, harbor or preserve.

Protecting Long Island for another generation will mean protecting its water and open spaces while also building the infrastructure necessary to allow communities to thrive.

"We know that the investments in water quality, the investments in conservation and having really that sustainable development on a place that needs affordable housing, that needs more sewerage, that needs more infrastructure in many places," she said, "that's what I really want to see for Long Island for future generations."

It is a vision that leaves plenty of work for both environmental regulators and the construction industry, as partners in building what comes next.



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Political Perspectives

Investing in a Modern Infrastructure Network Means Investing in Our Future



Rebecca Kassay

As District Four's Assembly representative, and as a longtime community member, business owner, and village-level official, I have seen firsthand how important thoughtful infrastructure investments are to our communities. When we invest in diverse transportation systems, we are improving how people get from one place to another and, in that, building stronger, safer, more connected communities.

Route 347 is one of the most heavily traveled roadways in Suffolk County, and the boulevard-style improvements that have been made along this corridor are already making a real difference for local residents and businesses that rely on it every day. This ongoing project has improved travel time, safety, and accessibility not just for vehicles, but also for pedestrians and cyclists. Like all of my neighbors, I look forward to the Route 347 improvements— including the new bridge over Nicolls Road— being in the rear-view mirror so that we can fully enjoy the smoother flow of traffic and the seamless, safe connections for those traversing Suffolk by bike or on foot.

Building a more robust, modern transportation network also includes incorporating the trailways that meander through our treasured open spaces. This year, I was proud to champion legislation permanently protecting the Setauket-Port Jefferson Station Greenway as a multi-modal, nonvehicular trail. This 3.4-mile pathway connects our neighborhoods, schools, businesses

and natural spaces, and has become a beloved community asset. The Greenway was established in the early 2000's, with over \$7 million of federal and state funding invested into the creation of a corridor that's now used by thousands of local residents for everything from commuting and exercising to dog-walking and teaching children how to ride a bike. It spans from Port Jefferson Station, which is currently seeing tremendous investments in transit-oriented housing and business development, and on its other end, it stretches near to Stony Brook University, where students, faculty, and staff appreciate diverse transit options to and around campus. Additionally, the Greenway trail connects communities along the way to train and bus stations on either end. My legislation, now signed into law, ensures that the Greenway will remain a green, safe non-vehicular transit corridor for generations to come.

But that's not the only transit-related win delivered by this bill: this legislation also helped resolve a longstanding land-use conflict and cleared the way for approximately 40 acres of the blighted former Lawrence Aviation site to be sold to the MTA for potential future use as an electric railyard. This would replace the diesel railyard at the terminus of the Port Jefferson Branch of the LIRR. With an electric yard would come long-awaited improvements for Port Jefferson riders, including one-seat ride to New York City, improved air quality, and shorter travel times.

This is what smart infrastructure investment looks like on Long Island: improving existing roadways, expanding safe multi-modal transit opportunities, and preserving open space while unlocking the potential for cleaner, faster public transportation.

Long Island deserves its fair share of investment, and I stand strong with my colleagues in local and state government in our work to bring taxpayer dollars home for our roadways, greenways, and public transit systems. As we invest in local infrastructure through efforts like these, we are building a roadmap to success for the next generation of Long Islanders.

-Rebecca Kassay
New York State Assemblywoman, District 4





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Business Planning Amid Interest Rate Uncertainty

Strategies for when Rates Go Up, Down or Sideways



Need cash access but are reluctant to make a move? It's easy to see why. There is a lot to consider such as geo-political risks, tariffs, unemployment, consumer confidence and inflation which is hovering around 4%, roughly double the Fed's preferred 2% rate. Technological advancements, such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), are reshaping jobs and promising transformation, adding pressure on business owners considering hiring and expansion decisions. In the midst of this, we have a new Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System (the Fed) in Kevin Warsh. While Warsh must guide the markets between managing inflation and spurring economic growth, with so many macro-economic factors at play, which is the best course for you and your business?

In his first press conference as Fed Chairperson, Warsh held rates at the 3.5% – 3.75% range. Further, after initially saying there was room to cut, the current climate now forecasts a hike before year-end but no one's saying how high. This is just one part of the story. The U.S. economy is nothing if not dynamic and we should expect some changes from the Fed as Chair Warsh assumes his position. As the Fed can address inflation, we may see quantitative easing and the government purchasing Treasuries to lower rates. On a \$350,000 loan, after a half-percent interest-rate drop, buying power rises by about \$17,500. It goes the opposite way when rates rise. If you're concerned about meeting business cash needs, there's a range of solutions you can utilize in an environment where rates may be going in an unfavorable direction. A good place to start is with greater capital control. Consider the following:

- **Know Your Liquidity:** Take inventory of all cash and cash-equivalent positions.
- **Consolidate Cash:** Consolidate cash balances to reduce service fees.
- **Revisit Your Supply Chain:** Will suppliers extend payment terms?
- **Consider Technology:** Can automation make your business more efficient?
- **Foreign Exchange:** Automated FX solutions can streamline multiple-currency management.

- **Know Your Credit Score:** A good credit score will give you greater leverage with lenders.
- **DIY:** What is your ability to self-fund to mitigate financial risk?

Time for a Line of Credit?

It's often wise to get a credit line long before one's needed but you must understand the terms before doing so as they come with risks. Often issued when interest rates rise, credit lines are short-term "demand loans," generally callable at any time for any reason. A securities-based line of credit provides borrowing against eligible, non-retirement investment accounts. It features variable interest rates, flexible repayment options (only monthly interest) and no application, origination or annual fees. A home-equity line of credit (HELOC) allows borrowers to use available equity in their home. Qualified borrowers may receive such benefits as credits toward closing costs.

Bottom line: Economic indicators have been sending mixed signals. While interest rates are arguably the single, most important economic number, it's difficult to say in which direction inflation will head based on the price of oil and other geo-political factors. However, if you'd like to see how a rate-strategy discussion can help you to better manage your business, contact our office.



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MEMBER Spotlight

UNITED FENCE & GUARD RAIL CORP.

As a general contractor that has worked on Long Island's roadways for more than 65 years, we have witnessed firsthand the changes, challenges, and evolving standards that have shaped the industry into what it is today. Throughout that time, one principle has remained constant: safety comes first. Whether it involves protecting workers within a work zone, ensuring proper installation, or providing a safe roadway for the millions of motorists who travel Long Island every day, safety is at the forefront of every project and every decision.

One of our latest projects, Guide Rail Rehabilitation along the Robert Moses Causeway, is a strong example of how those standards continue to evolve. Originally awarded in August 2022, the project called for the installation of more than 8,000 linear feet of steel-backed timber guide rail along the roadway shoulders and an additional 18,000 linear feet within the median.

In April 2023, however, the project was brought to a halt when the Federal Highway Administration determined that the guide rail configuration required additional safety measures and proposed the incorporation of a rub rail along the lower portion of the system. The change was driven by the continued evolution of roadside safety standards, extensive crash testing, and the changing characteristics of the vehicles traveling our roadway vehicles that are larger, heavier, and faster than those for which many older roadside safety systems were originally designed.



Although this is more of a one-off major design change, projects undergo revisions frequently, and on the contracting side, we do our best to take a hands-on approach and adapt accordingly. We stay up to date on all current specifications, standards, and engineering bulletins across all areas of our work, whether that be guide rail, signs, fencing, or other roadway work, so that we can be as prepared as possible when issues arise. By staying informed and anticipating potential changes, we can coordinate our crews and equipment when necessary, shift resources, and keep production moving on all fronts. This approach allows us to minimize disruptions and keep projects operating as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Oftentimes, our work comes toward the end of major roadway projects, with much of the construction already completed by the time our crew arrives on site. The work we perform is heavily influenced by elevations, slopes, utilities, drainage, and other elements of the roadway, making coordination between contractors who come before us essential to the job. We also must have open communication with the agencies we work for, adhering to schedules and deadlines that may be, as well as keeping the expected quality of work maintained.

With three generations of family working in the business, we've developed a strong understanding of what it takes to get this work done. Each generation brings its own ideas, perspective, and experience to the table, while carrying forward the knowledge that has been passed down. We take a lot of pride in being a part of developing and maintaining Long Island's roadways and infrastructure, knowing that our work becomes part of people's everyday lives, whether they're commuting to work, running an errand, or simply traveling from one place to another. We look forward to continuing in this industry, building on what we've learned, and passing that experience on to the next generation.



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Help Is Available: Confidential Support for LICA Members and Their Families

By Ellen Barker
Vice President, Development and
Communications



Working in the construction industry takes strength, resilience, and teamwork. But being strong doesn't mean having to handle everything on your own. Job-related stress, mental health concerns, substance use or challenges affecting a spouse, child or other family member can happen to anyone—and sometimes the most important step is simply knowing where to turn.

Through its partnership with the Long Island Contractors' Association, Outreach provides members and their families with a confidential place to turn when they need support. For more than four decades, Outreach has helped individuals and families across

New York address mental health and substance use challenges and build healthier lives. Its Member Assistance Services brings that experience directly to LICA members and their loved ones.

Sometimes the first conversation is the most important. Outreach's confidential support line is available 24 hours a day at 1-917-280-4802, connecting members and their families with trained staff who will listen, answer questions and help determine the best next step. When additional care is needed, Outreach can connect individuals with its network of outpatient and residential programs for adults, young adults and adolescents.

Available services include:

- Substance use counseling
- Mental health screenings
- Mental health counseling
- Medication management
- DWI programs
- Veterans services
- Telehealth services
- Enhanced family services
- Mobile services that bring assistance directly to those in need



Outreach also understands that long and demanding work hours can make seeking help more difficult. Telehealth and mobile services can make care easier to access, while staff can help members and families navigate treatment options rather than leaving them to figure out the system on their own. Throughout the process, privacy and confidentiality remain at the heart of the program.

"Outreach has a long-standing commitment to supporting union members and their families, and we are proud to continue that tradition through our partnership with the Long Island Contractors' Association," said David Vizzini, Outreach's Chief Administrative Officer. "We understand that LICANYS members and their families may face challenges both on the job and at home. We want them to know that whenever they need us, Outreach is here to provide compassionate, confidential support and help them take that next step."

Asking for help doesn't diminish the strength it takes to do a demanding job, provide for a family, or support the people who depend on you. Often, it is an important step toward feeling better and moving forward. For LICANYS members and their families, Outreach is here to make sure that when that moment comes, there is someone ready to listen and help.



For confidential support, call Outreach's 24/7 Member Assistance Services at 1-917-280-4802 or visit www.opiny.org.





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Building Skills, Protecting Lives:

Inside Local 1298's Training Facility

On a seven-acre property designed to mirror the conditions laborers encounter in the field, members of Laborers Local 1298 are learning how to work more safely, efficiently and confidently. During a recent tour led by Dennis Feeney and Business Manager George Truckio, *Road Warriors* received an inside look at the union's growing training program and its commitment to preparing members for the realities of modern construction.

A Training Ground Built for Real Work

The facility has a clear mission: improve members' skills, strengthen safety practices and provide signatory contractors with a more productive workforce. Instead of limiting instruction to classrooms and manuals, Local 1298 has developed outdoor training areas where members can operate equipment, practice essential construction tasks and learn to recognize hazards before encountering them on an active job site.

A roughly 2,000-foot trail system winds through the wooded property, providing space for clearing, maintenance, chainsaw

instruction and equipment training. The trails were initially created by operating machinery along the natural path of the property.

"We kind of just took the path of least resistance with the machine," Feeney explained during the tour.

Elsewhere on the property, concrete slabs are poured so members can practice cutting with demolition saws. A test-pitting area is being developed to teach hand digging and excavation, skills that remain essential even on increasingly mechanized construction sites.

"I get big complaints. Guys don't know how to dig. They can't dig holes. They can't put fence posts in," Feeney said while describing the planned training area.

Future additions will support road building, curb grading, sidewalk installation, landscaping and manhole placement. The goal is to give apprentices and newer members hands-on exposure to tasks they will regularly perform in the field, from setting forms and installing pipe to bringing manhole covers to grade.





Additional courses include OSHA 10 and OSHA 30, fire prevention, fire-watch responsibilities, 811 “Call Before You Dig” awareness and Long Island Rail Road track-safety training. Members can also receive instruction in concrete mixing and placement, backfilling, compaction, demolition-saw operation and chainsaw safety.

Grant funding has supported trench-safety infrastructure that includes barricaded work zones, concrete structures and pits for practicing wood sheeting and protective systems. A manhole simulator allows members to train for confined-space entry, harness use and emergency procedures in a controlled environment. The site also includes a makeshift crane for teaching hoisting, rigging, hand signals and radio communication.

Inside, the training shop contains chainsaws, demolition saws, concrete mixers, hand tools and personal protective equipment. AEDs, first-aid kits and an emergency shower reinforce the message that preparation for an emergency must be part of every construction operation.

The facility maintains a strict personal protective equipment policy requiring hard hats, safety glasses, gloves, high-visibility vests and work boots. Members who arrive without proper equipment may be turned away, just as they would be unable to work safely on a job site.

“We expect it to be followed,” Feeney said of the PPE policy. “If we issue one warning during the day, the second time, you’re dismissed for the day.”

The tool-safety classes protect workers while also helping contractors avoid costly equipment damage.

“You don’t want to break Jimmy Pratt’s \$2,500 chainsaw,” he joked. “And you don’t want to cut your arm off.”

Specialized instruction is responding to Long Island’s changing infrastructure needs. Basic poly-fusion training introduces members to equipment increasingly used on sewer, water-main and utility projects. Gas-fuser preparation helps participants prepare for National Grid certification examinations.

“This work is becoming more popular, the sewer and water-main work, and we want to make sure that we’re ahead of that,” the trainers explained. “We want to make sure that we have an adequate workforce to supply contractors.”

Preparing the Next Generation

The facility also plays a central role in Local 1298’s apprenticeship program. New groups of approximately 25 to 30 apprentices are prepared for the workplace through a combination of field experience and about 300 hours of training over approximately two to two and a half years. Once an apprentice begins working, the union has 30 days to formally indenture that individual with the state.

Local 1298 would like every participating contractor to employ an apprentice. Reimbursement may be available, particularly when apprentices are assigned to projects supported by state or federal funding.

“Every contractor should have an apprentice,” he said. “To be an active participant doesn’t mean you just pay in. You’ve got to take an apprentice. You’re participating in the program. You’ve got to have an apprentice on your payroll.”

The union is also considering moving from periodic application windows to continuous enrollment. Leaders believe open enrollment would create a stronger applicant pool, prevent interested candidates from being turned away simply because they arrived outside an application period and better align Local 1298 with LIUNA training centers nationwide.

“We don’t want to turn anybody away,” he said. “It’s better for the contractors. It’s better for our local. It’s better for the members. It’s just better for everybody.”

A Call for Greater Contractor Participation

Contractor participation remains critical. Training is already supported through employer contributions, so members do not pay an additional fee to attend. However, courses require advance planning because instructors, equipment and materials must be scheduled. When employers reserve classes but workers do not appear, training resources and instructor time are lost.

“We really want to get more contractor involvement because the guys listen to the contractors,” Feeney said. “We’re only here to help you better your career. It makes safer, more productive workers.”

The facility welcomes donations of surplus construction materials, including manhole covers, structural steel and wood timbers that can be incorporated into exercises. Used tools are not accepted because of safety and liability concerns, but assistance obtaining new materials at reduced prices is appreciated.

Taking Training to the Job Site

Outreach also extends beyond the facility through job-site visits and toolbox talks on hearing protection, skin-cancer prevention and other health and safety issues. Local 1298 has reached hundreds of members through these efforts and is encouraging more contractors to invite representatives onto their job sites.

The union is also involved in high school pre-apprenticeship initiatives in Brentwood, Roosevelt and Westbury, with hopes of expanding into additional school districts. Union meetings, health fairs and family events at the training facility are being considered as ways to introduce more members and their families to the opportunities available there.

Protecting Workers on Long Island’s Roads

Feeney and Truckio also support a greater police presence around roadway projects. They noted that even one marked police vehicle can cause drivers to slow down and pay closer attention.

“The presence of a police officer is better than anything else,” they agreed. “People are not going to speed through the work site. When I see a cop car, my foot comes right off the gas.”

Training alone cannot eliminate the dangers posed by distracted, impaired or speeding drivers. However, Local 1298 believes that a combination of properly trained workers, effective traffic-control plans, contractor involvement, police presence and greater public awareness can make roadway work zones significantly safer.

Training That Benefits the Entire Industry

The tour made clear that training is not simply a union benefit. It is an operational asset for the entire construction industry. A worker who understands excavation hazards, traffic control, emergency response and proper equipment use is better equipped to protect coworkers, prevent delays and contribute productively from the first day on the job.

For members, the facility offers a pathway to a lasting career. For contractors, it provides access to a safer and more capable workforce. For the traveling public, it means better-trained professionals are building and maintaining the infrastructure Long Island depends upon every day.

At Local 1298, every classroom lesson, concrete cut and practice trench advances the same mission: keeping workers safe while developing the skills that move the industry forward.



International Brotherhood of Teamsters Local 282 Proudly Supports Long Island Road Warriors!



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FOREWOMEN LI

On July 29, FOREWomen Long Island, an initiative of LICA, hosted "Building the Workforce for Tomorrow," a panel focused on attracting, developing and retaining the next generation of construction professionals.

Industry leaders Leah Rambo, Buket Agdere, Rebecca Clark and Marie Milord joined moderator Rosalie Drago to discuss career pathways, mentorship and the barriers women face entering and advancing in the industry.

The conversation highlighted FOREWomen LI's commitment to creating stronger workforce pipelines and expanding opportunities for women across construction and infrastructure.







DARR Construction is moving forward on Phase 2C at TriTec's Station Yards project, marking the next step in the transformation of the Ronkonkoma LIRR train station area.

Demolition activities are now underway. All concrete from the demolition is being crushed and recycled on-site for use in the development, reducing construction waste and repurposing materials for future use.



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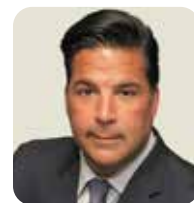
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