

Southampton may sue over contaminants in Hampton Bays wells

October 9, 2017 By Rachelle Blidner rachelle.blidner@newsday.com



The Hampton Bays Water District has taken two wells offline because of contamination from perfluorinated compounds, which can affect fetal health and development and cause cancer. (Credit: Newsday / Megan Miller)

The Southampton Town Board is considering litigation against the makers of chemicals that have contaminated wells in the Hampton Bays Water District, Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said.

The board, which serves as the commissioners of the water district, is set to vote during a special meeting Tuesday on retaining a law firm to “pursue environmental damage claims for possible groundwater contamination,” according to the meeting agenda.

Before any legal action is taken, officials will need to investigate how the perfluorooctanoic acid and/or perfluorooctanesulfonic acid — known respectively as PFOA and PFOS — got into the public water supply and determine which manufacturers could be responsible, Schneiderman said.

“These companies in general are still in existence and they’re large companies with the financial resources to address the impacts to the community,” Schneiderman said Monday.

Two public supply wells have remained shut since May, when the Hampton Bays Water District detected that PFOA and PFOS exceeded a federal health advisory level. The contamination also prompted state Department of Environmental Conservation officials to consider adding a Hampton Bays Fire District parcel on Montauk Highway to the state Superfund list as a potential hazardous waste site.

Exposure to the perfluorinated compounds can affect the immune system and fetal health and development, as well as cause liver damage, cancer and thyroid problems, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has said.

The board is planning to hire the law firm Napoli Shkolnik PLLC and would only have to pay the firm if it wins a case, Schneiderman said.

Manhattan-based Napoli Shkolnik, which has an office in Melville, previously represented the town and the water district in a federal lawsuit against the manufacturers of fuel additive MTBE that contaminated Long Island groundwater. The water district’s \$1 million settlement from that

case is now being used to filter out PFOS from the Hampton Bays water system, Schneiderman said.

“That is a million dollars we could be spending on other water infrastructure,” Schneiderman said. “We’ve also had to turn wells off during a busy time of year, leaving our system vulnerable in terms of pressure.”

Napoli Shkolnik is also representing Westhampton Beach residents in a lawsuit against Suffolk County and the state, as well as a lawsuit against PFOS manufacturers, alleging the residents were exposed to the chemical in water near Francis S. Gabreski Air National Guard Base, which is now a state Superfund site.

The special town board meeting is at 12:45 p.m. Tuesday at Town Hall.

[< back to article](#)

advertisement | [advertise on newsday](#)