

# Fire district continues effort to install water tanks

By Michael Fonseca

The Shelter Island Fire Department this summer installed a new water holding tank on St. Mary's Road as part of a program to protect high-risk fire areas around Shelter Island. It was part of a program in which a total of four 10,000-gallon fiberglass tanks have been installed so far by the Highway Department at a cost of approximately \$15,000 each.

Fire Commissioner Andy Steinmuller explained that, in the past, the Fire Department "had to go a mile of hose" to get water. "Tanks go in spots where the fire department doesn't have [water access]," he explained, such as inland areas.

Fire Chief Stanley Beckwith said the program was launched about three or four years ago. The new water tanks are "very important. It's

like bringing 10,000 gallons of fresh water to the scene for the initial attack," he added.

The need for the strategically placed tanks has increased in recent years. "New buildings going up are taking away water" from the Island's aquifer, said Mr. Steinmuller.

Compared to other fire safety options, the holding tanks are priced comparably well. "It works better than buying a 10,000 gallon pumper and truck," said Chief Beckwith.

The Fire Department brings about 4,000 gallons of fresh water in a truck to a fire, Chief Beckwith explained, and having the extra water helps very much. "It's nice to have 10,000 gallons nearby where we have trouble getting water," he said.

In addition to the recent installation on St. Mary's Road near Burns Road, one has been installed on Country Club Drive, one on the corner of Midway and Bateman Road, and one other in Hay Beach. Three red pipes emerge above the ground from each tank.

Firefighters pump bay water onto fires when they can use town landings for access. But certain landings in poor condition may not support the weight of a pumper or provide close enough access to the beach.

"We have been pushing the town to fix ramps that have deteriorated," said Mr. Steinmuller. "These ramps have been around for many years.

## Underground reservoirs provide backup when water supply is hard to reach

We're just rebuilding them. It's not that we're building a new one. They are for emergency use only."

Earlier in the year, a fire broke out at a house in the Silver Beach area, destroying it. Firefighters lost several minutes when a town landing off Peconic Avenue proved too high off the beach to put a pumper in. "We closed off the area," said Mr. Steinmuller. "The hose went across the road" to Silver Beach Lagoon, the next nearest landing.

Mr. Steinmuller and the Fire Department have called for repairs to town landings at meetings and in writing for five years. "It's an emergency," said Mr. Steinmuller. "We have to get those ramps in."

The town must secure permits from the Department of Environmental Conservation before rebuilding the town landings. Highway Superintendent Mark Ketcham said. He has a meeting scheduled with the DEC and is currently in the process of securing 10-year maintenance permits for renovations to several landings, including the Heron Lane and Brander Parkway South landings, he said. "We have the money in hand and are ready to go," said Mr. Ketcham, and they will be renovated before winter.

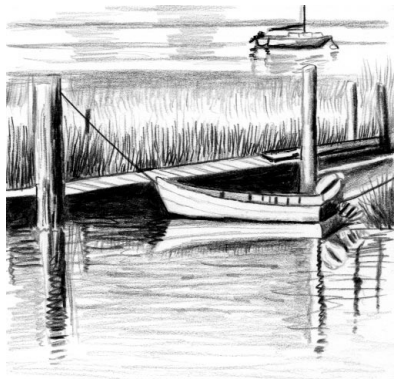
The Fire Department plans to install an additional storage tank

each year. Officials at the department recently discussed plans for the next installation site. If the town landing at Heron Lane is not fixed soon, said Chief Beckwith, the new tank will go in Shorewood. If the landing is fixed, then the department will choose another site in need of water in case of fire.

Most of the Island draws from private wells into the single-source aquifer. Shelter Island Heights has a community water system and fire hydrants but they also draw from the aquifer. Chief Beckwith said that an Island-wide public water system with fire hydrants would be the best way to assure adequate water for fire fighting but that installing all the pipes would be extremely expensive. Many Islanders oppose the arrival here of the Suffolk County Water Authority, which would provide water from wells on the South Fork, because it might interfere with the Island's tradition of autonomy.

A provision in the Town Code says that builders of large developments are required to install a water tank during construction, according to Mr. Steinmuller.

The installation of the holding tanks adds to older existing tanks on the Island. One 7,500- and one 8,000-gallon steel tank were  
*(Continued on page 10)*



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	AM	PM
Oct. 15	11:43	—
Oct. 16	12:09	12:28
Oct. 17	12:57	1:18
Oct. 18	1:49	2:13
Oct. 19	2:47	3:16
Oct. 20	3:52	4:25
Oct. 21	5:05	5:38

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