

## Venditto: Oyster Bay officials will tell town's side in Singh case

September 1, 2015 by TED PHILLIPS / [ted.phillips@newsday.com](mailto:ted.phillips@newsday.com)



Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto is seen in this photo from 2011. (Credit: Newsday/Karen Wiles Stabile)

Oyster Bay officials plan to release previously withheld documents about the town's controversial concessions agreements with Harendra Singh, Supervisor John Venditto said Tuesday.

"The part of the story that's missing . . . will come forward," Venditto said at a town board meeting.

Documents are to be released over several days, he said. He did not specify what they will entail.

"The public does have an absolute right to know, and they will know," Venditto said.

The document release may begin Wednesday, town spokeswoman Marta Kane said.

Newsday reported last month that Oyster Bay backed loans on behalf of Singh's companies -- exposing the town to millions of dollars of liabilities -- and that Singh's companies had arranged and paid for trips by town and county officials.

Singh's companies, which provide food and beverage service at the town golf course, Tobay Beach and Tappen Beach, have struggled financially and faced lawsuits from creditors in recent years.

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The town has not released its most recent concessions agreements with Singh; and Venditto refused to answer a reporter's questions about Singh before or after Tuesday's meeting.

Singh's attorney Howard Greenberg of Smithtown said Tuesday that he did not know why the documents had been withheld. "Some of them I believe are public record," he said.

Greenberg also disputed Venditto's claim on Tuesday that if the town terminated its agreements with Singh without cause, it would owe nothing at Tobay Beach and up to \$2 million at the golf course.

"It's contrary to all the recent and current agreements," Greenberg said. The payments to Singh would be based on the amount of capital improvements he made at the facilities, which town officials said last year amounted to \$11.7 million.

Greenberg said Singh's companies are current in their payments to the town and that he expects they will continue their long-term concession agreements.

At the meeting, Hicksville resident Paul Molinari, 66, said he was "very disturbed [by news reports] that town employees in their official capacity have been accused of accepting travel paid by a contractor . . . and negotiating agreements more favorable to the contractor than to the town . . . In town government, the buck stops with you, Mr. Supervisor, and the town board."

Venditto defended the town's limited responses on Singh, saying "outside agencies" are looking into the matter, which could involve "very significant litigation."

He added, "There's a way you need to do things, and sometimes being quiet and doing it the professional and the right way to protect your residents is much more difficult than standing up and pounding your chest," Venditto said. He also said residents should "allow for the possibility that the town might have been victimized," but he did not elaborate.

He referred to a deputy town attorney as a "bad apple" whose actions should not affect residents' view of their board. Deputy Town Attorney Frederick Mei figures prominently in documents obtained by Newsday that show he was involved in negotiations over the town's backstops for Singh and took a trip paid for by the businessman.

A call to Mei on Tuesday was not returned.

Oyster Bay Democrats have seized on the Singh issue, last week calling for the Securities and Exchange Commission to investigate whether the town violated disclosure laws over the financial backstops.

Robert Freier, an executive recruiter from Woodbury and Democratic candidate for town board, tried to ask the board Tuesday how they had voted on them, but Town Attorney Leonard Genova advised board members not to answer due to potential litigation.

The town board on Tuesday retroactively hired the firm Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP beginning on May 1 to represent it in the Singh matters but did not disclose what it was being paid.

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