

# Oyster Bay leaders strain public trust

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Town of Oyster Bay Supervisor John Venditto in 2011. Mangano and Venditto were special guest speakers at four of the last five fundraisers for Singh's father's nonprofit organization. (Credit: Newsday/Karen Wiles Stabile)

According to New York State's constitution, it's illegal for municipalities to guarantee or co-sign loans for individuals or companies. Yet the Town of Oyster Bay appears to have done exactly that to the tune of millions of dollars for politically connected restaurateur Harendra

Singh, albeit via some creative legal wording.

Newsday reported Sunday that Singh obtained loans with a total value of almost \$16 million, and emails from deputy town attorney Frederick Mei indicate that Mei negotiated with the lenders and arranged for the town to guarantee the loans. Singh also has been in the news for his cozy relationship with Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano, which documents indicate has led to a no-bid county contract for Singh and a vacation for Mangano and his family paid for by Singh.

Oyster Bay has been in the news because its planning commissioner, Frederick Ippolito, is under federal indictment for allegedly evading income taxes on \$2 million in "consulting fees" from a paving company that contracted with the town. He has pleaded not guilty.

It's clear that Oyster Bay's outside counsel let Mei know it would be illegal to guarantee Singh's loans and put taxpayers on the hook if Singh failed to pay. It's also clear that even if that weren't illegal, it would be irresponsible. Also irresponsible was Oyster Bay's granting of concessions to Singh at both Oyster Bay's golf course and Tobay Beach for more than 50 years. And it is clear that Supervisor John Venditto bears overall responsibility for the town's approval of the agreements.

At what point does it become clear that top officials in Oyster Bay can't be allowed to keep their positions because they can't be trusted to run the town?

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