



long-island/suffolk

Town's request will delay plans to build \$20M fish farm

December 8, 2009 by PATRICK WHITTLE / patrick.whittle@newsday.com

The developers of a controversial tilapia fish farm must submit detailed plans of their proposal if the \$20-million facility is to get approval, Brookhaven's town board ruled Tuesday. The board's decision means it could be months before Blue Green Farms can break ground on the 25-acre site near the Lawrence Aviation Superfund area in Port Jefferson Station.

Hauppauge developer Eugene Fernandez says the site would be a sustainable farm for harvesting fish and organic vegetables, but several town officials have expressed reservations because of the proximity to the long-polluted Lawrence Aviation site and Fernandez's history of sand mining violations.

Town building officials had given Blue Green Farms a permit to build the facility without a site plan, but town officials revoked that permit in October. Brookhaven's town board unanimously upheld the revocation Tuesday after a public hearing in which several Port Jefferson area residents questioned the wisdom of building the tilapia farm.

Some town officials, including Councilman Steve Fiore-Rosenfeld, who represents the Port Jefferson area, questioned whether the fish farm should rise near Lawrence Aviation at all. "Right church, wrong pew," he said. "This might not be the best particular location."

Sy Gruza, an attorney for Blue Green Farms, said the company's building permit should stand, and the firm might sue the town. Thomas Kehoe, a consultant to the project, said the tilapia farm would provide needed jobs to the area.

"The green revolution is here and the economy's not strong," Kehoe said. "We need jobs." The town board also approved a development moratorium on 21 parcels of land in Port Jefferson Station and Terryville, including the Blue Green Farms site. Gruza said Blue Green Farms should be exempt from the moratorium because the firm proposed the development before the moratorium was enacted.

Town officials approved the moratorium for a year but said it was likely to last six months.