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**OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISOR
TOWN OF SOUTHOLD**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: February 12, 2021
Contact: Southold Town Supervisor Scott A. Russell
Re: Supervisor Russell Demands Changes to the COVID-19 Vaccination Process

The current State process for distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine is an outrage and it needs to change now. The current State plan, which distributes vaccines to pharmacies, various healthcare agencies and healthcare providers on a seemingly random basis lacks transparency and places undue burdens on our residents, especially our seniors and those with critical underlying conditions. This “pop-up” style plan provides no meaningful advance notice to the residents who must primarily rely on word-of-mouth, often finding out too late. The current plan directs residents to make appointments at various locations only for them to find out that appointments aren’t being accepted or there is no vaccine available. Further, New York State-run vaccination centers currently located at Jones Beach and in Stony Brook place undue burdens on our Southold residents, especially our seniors, which forces them to drive for hours if they are lucky enough to get an appointment.

Southold Town Supervisor is calling for action to fix the problems and stated, *“Frankly, the current State process put in place for vaccine distribution is fragmented and chaotic. The lack of advance notice to the community when vaccines are available at different locations leads to disappointment and frustration for those who simply don’t know when vaccines are being offered. The public shouldn’t have to rely on rumors or spend hours day and night scouring the internet in the hope of finding an opportunity. There is no communication with the towns which are in the best position to help get the message out and, certainly, the healthcare agencies and businesses aren’t to blame because they aren’t notified until the last minute that they are receiving vaccines to administer. Intentional or not, it creates the appearance of a lack of transparency.”*

In an effort to create a program that meets the need of our residents, Southold has:

Coordinated with all of the Supervisors and Mayors of Suffolk County’s five east end towns to demand that New York State open a vaccination location on the east end. The two current locations are too far west and our residents deserve more equitable treatment.

We have worked with New York State, at the State’s request, and Eastern Long Island Hospital to identify town buildings that can serve as vaccination centers. We have also committed to offer transportation from their home to the center for our immobile residents yet, the building sits vacant. We have done our part, now is the time for New York State to do its part.

We continue to communicate with the State Governor's representatives, Suffolk County officials and public health agencies to advocate on behalf of Southold residents. Southold has a large older population and those who have underlying critical health issues. They deserve a process that is transparent and provides equal opportunities for access to the vaccines.

According to Supervisor Russell, "*We recognize that vaccines are limited and that this is a problem statewide, however, a shortage of vaccines doesn't mean there should be a shortage of information, too.*"

In the meantime, until there are improvements to the program, we urge all residents to continue to register and monitor the New York State website, call your local health care providers and the Suffolk County Department of Health to keep up with the latest information. You should also feel free to contact Southold Town Supervisor Scott Russell's Office at 631-765-1889 if you have any questions.