

## Legislators attempt to navigate Irondequoit Bay outlet controversy

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By Linda Quinlan

It's no "April fool" to those who like using the seasonal swing bridge, at the Irondequoit Bay Outlet, between Irondequoit's Sea Breeze area and Lake Road in Webster.

In recognition of the span's annual closing to motorists April 1, opening the waterway underneath to boaters seeking access between Irondequoit Bay and Lake Ontario, County Legislators, town leaders, business owners, residents and others gathered at the outlet late this morning.

Recognizing that there are continued calls from the community for more equitable access to the bridge, County Legislators Vincent Esposito, D, Irondequoit, and Carmen Gumina, D, Webster, were on hand to report that they have cosponsored and introduced legislation to change the operational schedule of the seasonal swing bridge, known as IBOB for short, to give an even six-month access to drivers and boaters.

The legislators' newly proposed schedule would allow maritime access through the outlet from April 1 to Sept. 30 and vehicular access over the bridge roadway from Oct. 1 to March 31.

Those who gathered also pledged to work with the Monroe County administration, the United States Coast Guard and community stakeholders to improve access to the bridge. The county manages the bridge operations; the Coast Guard must approve its season.

In addition, ongoing efforts were discussed to provide permanent, year-round access for boaters, drivers and pedestrians.

"Since it was opened in 1998, the community and officials from various levels of government have worked together to improve the operation of the swing bridge," Esposito said. "We are continuing those efforts by proposing an equitable, six-month schedule ... At the same time, we remain focused on finding a practical and affordable solution that allows year-round access for everyone. Doing so would increase economic activity, safety and overall enjoyment of this beautiful area."

The present swing bridge schedule, Nov. 1 to March 31 (five months) for cars; April 1 to Oct. 31 (seven months) for boats, was implemented in 2002.

Also on hand for the event were Irondequoit Supervisor Mary Ellen Heyman; Irondequoit Councilwoman Stephanie Aldersley, a former County Legislator who worked for many years on this issue; Kevin Klee, owner of Vic & Irv's restaurant who organized a petition drive in 2007; and Fran Beth, owner of Marge's Bar and Restaurant in Sea Breeze and resident of Lake Road in Webster – just across the channel.