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Editorial: Start digging

by the Editors

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So here's the deal: The \$154 million cash infusion from the massive federal stimulus bill will not be enough to lift the Long Island economy out of the doldrums.

The major projects set to begin, including the reconstruction of Route 112 in Suffolk County, improvements to the Route 110 and Long Island Expressway interchange and repaving and rebuilding of the main Melville thoroughfare, won't inspire anyone on Long Island to think boldly.

And with huge projects, such as the Lighthouse in Uniondale and the enormous Riverhead Resorts in Calverton, still little more than pretty drawings, road work seem mundane.

But at least it's going to put some people back to work, and for that we should be grateful.

The stimulus money is expected to create 3,700 jobs on Long Island, which currently has a 7.5 percent unemployment rate. Work on the projects selected by New York will begin immediately, which is important to note because the new jobs are desperately needed.

Economists are predicting this region won't dig out from under the recession before late 2009. Any help is welcome, even if the projects aren't game changers.

United

One of Long Island's top nonprofit jobs has gone to a woman. Last week, Theresa Regnante was named the new president and chief executive of the United Way of Long Island.

The region's corner offices remain, far and away, the provinces of men. So it's refreshing to see a woman take over such a high-profile position. Her predecessors include Patrick Foye and Christopher Hahn, both whom remain major players in Long Island business.

Foye originally left the United Way to be Gov. Eliot Spitzer's Empire State Development Corp. downstate chief. He is now a partner at Rivkin Radler.

Hahn, a former Sen. Charles Schumer aide, left the United Way this year and joined Mineola-based law firm Meltzer, Lippe, Goldstein & Breitstone, where he heads the practice's government group.

Regnante, the current vice president of development at Education & Assistance Corp., faces a challenge in running a nonprofit in a bleakly unprofitable climate. Here's hoping she succeeds at the United Way, which would help recognize the largely untapped merit of the other half of the work force.



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