STATE OF NEW YORK

2701

2025-2026 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

January 22, 2025

Introduced by Sen. PALUMBO -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Local Government

AN ACT in relation to the trustees of the Freeholders and the Commonalty of the town of Southampton, county of Suffolk

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

Section 1. Legislative findings. The legislature enacted chapter 255 of the laws of 1818 and chapter 283 of the laws of 1831, addressing the respective powers of the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton, a body politic created by the Dongan Patent of 1686, and the trustees for the proprietors of the town of Southampton, a body created by chapter 255 of the laws of 1818, with respect to the title to and use of the ocean beaches in the town, and further, to make clear the continuing ownership of the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton of the underwater lands in the town and the taking of the products thereof, and their right to protect the public's right to use and enjoy the easement upon the ocean beaches that was granted to them by the Dongan Patent. The trustees for the proprietors of the town of Southampton sold the last of the ocean beach lands owned by them and disbanded the board of trustees in 1882 and thereafter ceased to exist. The legislature enacted chapter 257 of the laws of 1892 and chapter 872 of the laws of 1896 authorizing the Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton, "from time to time, whenever in their judgment it shall become necessary" to determine the necessity and location of one or more inlets in the town of Southampton from the Atlantic Ocean to Shinnecock Bay, or into Mecox Bay, or into Sag Pond, and to exercise the power of eminent domain over ocean beaches in order to locate such inlet or inlets. For more than a century the courts of this state have rendered inconsistent decisions with respect to the powers of the said trustees over the ocean beaches. The legislature wishes to confirm that the Proprietors' Trustees no

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets [-] is old law to be omitted.

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longer exist, address the powers of the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton in light of contemporary circumstances, and clarify the application of chapter 255 of the laws of 1818 and chapter 283 of the laws of 1831.

§ 2. The legislature confirms that the Trustees for the Proprietors of the town of Southampton, created by chapter 255 of the laws of 1818, are extinguished as a body politic.

§ 3. Notwithstanding any provisions of chapter 255 of the laws of 1818 and chapter 283 of the laws of 1831 to the contrary, the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton have and shall continue to have the authority to enforce the public's easement and access upon the ocean beaches within the town of Southampton, including all rights of the public with respect to the said ocean beaches which were conferred upon them by the Dongan Patent of 1686. The legislature recognizes that any authority over the ocean beaches that may have been conferred upon the trustees for the proprietors of the town of Southampton revert to the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton.

§ 4. For the purposes of this act, "ocean beaches" shall be the area of the Atlantic Ocean beaches within the town of Southampton that lies between the crest of the primary dune and the high water mark of the Atlantic Ocean.

§ 5. The trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton shall continue to have and exercise all of the rights of ownership over the waters of the town of Southampton and the products thereof that they had and exercised by virtue of the powers conferred upon them by the Dongan Patent, as well as the rights of ownership over the said waters and the productions thereof that they were authorized to have and exercise by chapter 255 of the laws of 1818 and chapter 283 of the laws of 1831.

§ 6. Nothing in this act shall be construed to take from the trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the town of Southampton any of the powers conferred upon them by chapter 283 of the laws of 1831, including the power to make rules, orders and by-laws for the management of the property and franchises of the town; to regulate their affairs; to impose penalties on any person offending against such rules, orders or by-laws; and to appropriate and apply the funds arising from their activities as they deem most proper to promote the interest of the town.

§ 7. Nothing in this act shall be construed as affecting any power or authority of any incorporated village within the town of Southampton over lands, beaches, and waters within such villages, pursuant to the village law, the general municipal law, the municipal home rule law, or any other state law.

§ 8. This act shall take effect immediately.