

Verizon to extend service to Babylon Village and beach communities

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By NICHOLAS SPANGLER nicholas.spangler@newsday.com



The headquarters for [Verizon Communications Inc.](http://www.verizon.com) in Manhattan. (Credit: AP, 2005)

Access to a fiber-optic network for telephone, television and high-speed Internet is no longer a luxury but a necessity, say civic and elected leaders in the Village of Babylon and the town's barrier beach communities.

Verizon, which offers access to the rest of the town, offers no service in those places.

Jim Schappert, vice president of the Oak Beach Civic Association, said copper landlines now used by Verizon in the beach communities are aging and sometimes out of service for days at a time.

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"Besides the daily necessities of communication, there are real emergency situations" like calling an ambulance in which the existing infrastructure could critically fail, Schappert said.

He is to appear at a news conference Wednesday at Babylon Village Hall with Suffolk County Legis. Kevin McCaffrey (R-Lindenhurst), village officials and Babylon Town deputy supervisor Tony Martinez to discuss service gaps they say Verizon could fill.

However, Verizon spokesman Philip Santoro wrote in an email that "the Company is presently focusing its resources on meeting its franchise obligations to those municipalities where it currently provides cable television service and has no plans to expand FiOS in New York," referring to the service the company offers over its fiber-optic network.

Verizon has in recent years sold services to all three Nassau County towns as well as Babylon, Huntington, Smithtown and Islip in Suffolk.

McCaffrey said those deals come with the responsibility to provide broad access similar to that borne by electric and telephone utility companies.

He said he would pursue an "amicable" dialogue with Verizon and supported petitioning the New York State Public Service Commission, a regulatory agency that has oversight of the telecommunications industry in the state.

Schappert, a teacher in Babylon village schools, said he has students who are unable to do homework assignments and neighbors who have trouble doing work because of bandwidth constraints.

He said he was familiar with Verizon's decision last year to bring fiber-optic cable to western Fire Island, where superstorm Sandy destroyed miles of underground copper cable.

"We have every reason that Fire Island has for needing the FiOS," he said. "In this day and age, high-speed access is nearly as necessary as all the other utilities."