

LONG ISLAND

Oyster Bay Town critic ordered to remove online posts in defamation lawsuit

BY TED PHILLIPS

A New York State judge on Wednesday ordered a former Oyster Bay political candidate to remove Facebook comments and to not post “defamatory remarks” about a water district official.

New York State Judge Antonio Brandveen in Mineola granted a preliminary injunction restraining Massapequa resident Robert Ripp from disseminating defamatory information about Massapequa Water District Superintendent Stanley Carey.

Carey sued Ripp in August over alleged false and defamatory statements Ripp posted on Facebook, YouTube and in the comments section of Newsday.com. The injunction was issued in advance of an Aug. 15 pre-trial conference for a defamation lawsuit Carey filed against Ripp.

Ripp’s attorney, John Palmer of Mineola, said Wednesday that he will appeal the injunction.

“The First Amendment protects us all and we’ll have the appellate court decide whether this is First Amendment protected speech,” Palmer said. He called the lawsuit politically motivated and said the burden of proof for defamation is high because Carey is a public figure.

Carey’s attorney, E. Christopher Murray of Uniondale-based Ruskin Moscou Faltischek P.C., said Wednesday the lawsuit was not political and the speech was not pro-



E. Christopher Murray.

Photo provided by Ruskin Moscou Faltischek P.C.

tected by the First Amendment.

“Mr. Carey is a civil servant,” Murray said. “You just can’t go out and accuse people of wrongful or criminal acts when it’s completely false.” Carey is seeking unspecified damages, Murray said.

Newsday previously reported that since 2016, three defamation lawsuits, including Carey’s, have

been filed against Ripp, a frequent critic of Oyster Bay government who last year ran unsuccessfully for Oyster Bay Town supervisor. The two other cases have been dormant. One plaintiff, Oyster Bay town employee Linda Herman, also sued the town, alleging that officials failed to protect her from Ripp’s behavior.