

The Jamestown Press has generously offered me the opportunity to provide occasional reports to Jamestown about community issues before your town government.

Through this forum, I hope to keep readers informed about the status of current projects and programs that the town has underway. Certainly, it has already struck me in the short time that I have been the town administrator that the size of the island community has little to do with the number and variety of important and exciting concerns that percolate on a day to day basis.

Consequently, as time permits, I foresee ample opportunity over the coming months to fill this space with interesting news and comment.

It is apparent that the most prominent and pressing issue confronting the town is the 20-year-long effort to site and construct a much-needed new highway barn.

Following the defeat of a \$2.4 million referendum in November 2004 to locate the barn at Taylor Point, voters were presented with a proposal to use the landfill for this purpose. In June 2005, the voters approved an allocation of \$75,000 to be used for consulting and engineering of a highway



Notes from the Town Administrator

By Bruce Keiser

garage in conjunction with the landfill closure.

A Request for Qualifications was advertised to hire an engineering consultant for the highway garage and GZA, the firm that has been involved since 1999 with the landfill closure process, was selected. With this approval, GZA, the town's engineering consultant, was directed to design and incorporate a highway barn into the landfill closure design in a manner that would meet all requirements and standards necessary to close the landfill in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

The highway garage design began in July 2005. In order to ensure compliance with state environmental regulations governing municipal landfills, the town and GZA have worked closely with the Department of Environmental Management's Office of Waste Management

staff throughout the site assessment and review process.

To properly understand the management of the closure action and the role of the highway barn as a new component, several key milestones are worth noting. In May 2002, GZA released a Site Investigation Report describing its findings about the location and composition of the buried solid waste and the quality of the ground water beneath the landfill.

The SIR indicated that the solid waste was typical of residential household waste deposited over many years and that now is largely decomposed. Groundwater testing obtained from 13 monitoring wells placed in and around the perimeter of the site has documented that water quality currently meets drinking water standards as potable water.

Further, review of testing results from monitoring wells installed in the 1980s following the closing of the active landfill facility reveal that water quality beneath the landfill has been improving. Methane gas monitoring has shown intermittent, localized concentrations that are characteristic of decomposing waste at a municipal landfill.

Relying on accepted environmental engineering practices and

the EPA and the DEM approved analytical methods, GZA has developed plans to permanently close the landfill. In summary, the plans released in July 2005 as the 30 percent design stage detail the following main closure actions:

- Establishment of a minimum 2-foot vegetated soil cover necessary to reduce infiltration through the landfill.
- Development of stormwater control systems and structures to manage run-off in an environmentally safe manner; These include creation of detention ponds, installing catch basins and drainage piping.
- Excavate waste buried within areas that will be used for detention and water quality ponds, and haul solid waste off-site to the RI Central landfill.
- Maintain ongoing water quality monitoring systems for 15 years to track the constituents in the groundwater at the closed landfill.

It is significant to emphasize that each of these actions is required to close the landfill with or without the construction of the highway barn at the southwest corner of the property.

In 2005, GZA incorporated the highway garage into the design. We are currently at the 50 percent

level of design which includes all of the above improvements to the landfill and the following new items:

- Build a 12,500 foot Highway Barn with a paved parking area.
- Excavate the site of the new facility adjacent to North Main Road and haul this solid waste off-site.
- Expand the stormwater controls to incorporate the run-off from the highway barn and paved parking area.

The 50-percent design has been submitted to the DEM for review and action in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to landfill closures. As the designated state authority for environmental protection, the DEM is evaluating GZA's proposal and will determine what modifications if any are necessary prior to granting approval to move forward to final permitting. We expect to receive DEM's comments within the next few weeks.

This issue has become highly contentious within the community as signified by the more than 400 letters of comment to the DEM and the activism of the North End Concerned Citizens.

Clearly there are concerns regarding the environmental impacts of the landfill both in its current unaltered (pre-closure) condition as well as with the remediation measures proposed in the closure plans.

In my discussions with the

See "Town administrator" on page 23

NK parent hopes towns will share special education services

By Donna K. Drago

A member of the Special Education Local Advisory Committee (SELAC) from the town of North Kingstown addressed the School Committee at their March 16 session, asking the Jamestown board to consider sharing special education services with the neighboring town.

Sharon Schubert, a co-chairwoman of the SELAC, wrote to the School Committee, and her letter was discussed under correspondence. Schubert was in the audience and said that she had recently seen a presentation by William "Bucky" Brennan, the Jamestown liaison to the North Kingstown School Committee, that extolled the benefits of the Lawn Avenue School at that committee's March 8 meeting. Brennan was making a case for taking in some of North Kingstown's junior high students if they make potential major renovations to the Wickford Middle School.

Schubert, the parent of a special-needs student, said that she had recently observed the co-teaching class at the Melrose Avenue School, and she had found it to be a different approach to the special education services offered in North Kingstown. She asked if Jamestown would "tuition-in" special-ed students from another town.

"How can we get the talks going?" Schubert asked the committee.

Sipala told Schubert that there was currently no policy to either accept or not accept tuition-paying students from another district, but the request would have to come from the North Kingstown administration.

She advised Schubert and her SELAC to make a pitch to NK school superintendent.

"This would take awhile," Sipala said, but added, "It's not impossible." In other business, the school board:

- Approved the retirement request of grade 2 teacher Mary Lou Dudley, appointed Glenn Hopkins the Lawn baseball coach, and approved a two-year professional leave of absence to Sara Sweetman, who wants to participate in the GEMS-NET teacher-in-residence program.

- Unanimously approved the third and final reading of the "Family Vacation Policy," which "discourages vacation time beyond that already provided within the school calendar." The policy goes on to say that for any families choosing to take vacations outside the allotted times, advance requests for make-up work "will not be honored."

- Approved the 2006-07 school calendar that will begin on Tuesday, Sept. 5, and end on Tuesday, June 19. The holiday break will be from Dec. 23 to Jan. 2, and there will be three no-school days for teacher conferences and professional development on Nov. 7, Dec. 1, and March 16.

- Learned from the superintendent that the current enrollment at Melrose school is 267, Lawn, 247, and there are 242 students at North Kingstown High School.

The next School Committee workshop is April 6 and the next business meeting is on April 27.

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