

# Public forums

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Lynch's new guide specifies that "any or all of the members of a public body (school committees included) may respond to comments initiated by a member of the public during the open forum portion of a meeting even if the matter was not previously posted on the agenda, for informational purposes only."

### The way it was

Previously, according to his office rulings last year, if council members wanted to respond, they had to vote to amend the agenda, and in the case of school committees, discussions were not allowed without scheduling another forum for specific topics and required notices given.

Some officials here and elsewhere equated the interpretations as gag orders. Not all the councilors or residents liked the lack of exchange or agreed about its being protective of the public's rights. The councilors previously allowed rather free-flowing, forums, sometimes becoming involved in the discussions or asking questions.

Many viewed last year's "no-comment" as a closing the open forums. That was especially so for residents seeking answers, confirmation or guidance about facts and procedures, and not necessarily about something on which the residents were seeking any vote or consensus.

However, some officials either embraced the rulings or at least used them to their advantage. Some avid watchers of ongoing concerns about the local landfill and putting a highway barn on the site thought the rulings were used to bar or diminish some participation in the still-unresolved issues.

### Varied implications

The state advisories last year were reinforced when the town's Associate Solicitor A. Lauriston Parks advised councilors to say nothing more than "thank you" when residents spoke at open forums. Parks said he based his ruling here on the advisory from Lynch's office. Jamestown's Town Solicitor J. William W. Harsch followed up Park's ruling with a slightly less strict one that allowed one or two councilors, "but not three or more who would represent a quorum," to respond to citizens. Harsch said he didn't like the opinions issued by Lynch's office, but believed he was bound to uphold them.

Harsch has since been waging a major effort as the Republican candidate to unseat Democratic Lynch as the state attorney general. He pledged at the start of his campaign "to keep my roles as solicitor and as a candidate as clearly defined as they need to be."

### New rules

In explaining the new rules at last week's summit, Lynch cautioned that the new freedom to discuss matters during open forums does not allow a board or committee action without prescribed notice about a future meeting to act on the specific topic.

Among other legislative improvements is the ability of a complainant to go unnamed in investigations of public records violations.

It was also noted that further action is awaiting legislation that would allow people with disabilities to participate in a meeting by phone.



### Summer Stock

The grade 1 summer school program performed "Mrs. Wishy-Washy" to an audience of appreciative parents.

Photo by Andrea vonHohenleiten

## Islanders walk to fund cancer research

On Sunday, Sept. 17, more than 6,000 people will walk the 18th Annual Boston Marathon Jimmy Fund Walk, and among them will be Jamestown's Vicki, Deken, Blakeley, and Benjamin Schmidt, Joanne Phillips, Mary Lovegreen, Eileen Tiexiera, and Maryanne England.

All the walkers are committed to improving the lives of those with cancer. They are part of team Just Wings, formed in memory of Anabelle Blakeley Peterson, the Schmidt's 7-year-old niece, who died on Aug. 26, 2005 after a three-year battle with brain cancer.

Anabelle loved visiting Jamestown. Collecting shells and sea glass was her favorite activity. The Jimmy Fund Walk follows the historic course of the 26.2-mile Boston Marathon route. The Jimmy Fund supports the fight against cancer at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, whose research raises the chances of survival for both children and adults. Dana-

Farber is consistently ranked the number one cancer hospital in New England. Those interested in learning more, providing support, or joining the team Just Wings should visit [www.jimmyfund-walk.org](http://www.jimmyfund-walk.org).

## Introduction

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that the schools "are one of the best kept secrets in the state."

"A lot of great stuff goes on here," Power said, adding, "I hope I don't screw it up."

Power began his post Monday, Aug. 7.

Appointed to the position of assistant principal was Michael Franco, who spent 30 years teaching in the South Kingstown School District.

Franco was unable to attend the Aug. 3 meeting due to a prior commitment teaching at a summer gymnastics camp.

Sipala noted that Franco was her daughter's gymnastic coach many years ago.

Franco is due to begin his position next Monday, Aug. 15, and will draw a salary of \$76,000 for the 195-day-per-year post.

Wendy Williams, a severe/profound educator, was appointed to replace Peggy Wark, who moved to the pre-school.

## Water tower

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ing to Fay, Spofford and Thorndike of Burlington, Mass., engineering consultants hired by the town for the water system improvements. The firm is also building the new water treatment plant on North Main Road. The 400,000 gallons is less than the maximum needed by municipal water customers for one day.

When the new tower is completed, the town's supply of stored water will be doubled. Two million gallons of stored water will provide just under 800,000 gallons or a two-day supply for emergencies, according to the consulting engineers. The engineers also said that the installation of a second tower will ensure adequate protection in case of a major fire in the village.

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