

New school chief ready to do what it takes for Jamestown

By Donna K. Drago

Jamestown's new school superintendent, Dr. Robert Power, who was hired as a part-time employee, already knows that his job will require more of him than the 90 days he was hired to work.

"I will be here when I need to be here," Power said last week, adding that he had to be on the job "when it's important to the community."

Power said he liked the idea of coming to Jamestown because he wants to be a hands-on administrator. He plans to get involved with the schools at all levels, he said, adding, "If I want to spend time with the kids, I can just walk down the hall." He is equally comfortable negotiating union contracts, working on budgets, and doing work at the state level, he said.

"I think that PTO concerns are just as important as those of the commissioner" of education, Power said. He plans to give everyone's — parents', teachers', and students' — concerns as much of his time as possible, he noted.

"What I do will be very visible," Power said, adding that he will always be accessible by cell



phone even if he is not in the building.

In his first days on the job, Power has already made a bold move by suggesting to the school board that they create a policy by which the Jamestown schools can accept tuition-paying kids from other districts.

"It would be found money," Power said about the potential for revenue in the district with a steadily declining enrollment. With a tuition of about "\$7,500 to \$7,800 or maybe less," Power

said, the schools could draw students whose parents might be thinking about other private schools.

When he was hired, School Committee Chairwoman Cathy Kaiser called Power a visionary who had a lot of good ideas. Power said it is not so much that he is a visionary. "I try to generate a lot of different options, and then take a look at all of them," he said. "Sometimes it's my staff that comes up with the best ideas. I just give them a chance to be creative with their thoughts," he added.

Power retired from the Newport School District, where he served as acting superintendent until 2004. He took a job in the private sector and then began to realize "my talents lie in education," he said.

He admits he was not paying any attention to what was going on in the Jamestown schools until a friend "put the Jamestown Press in front of me and said I might want to take a look at this ad," he said referring to the classified advertisement that described the superintendent's position.

When he learned more about the job and talked to both Kathy Sipala and Beth Pinto, colleagues

who formerly worked in the Newport system, "I knew it was a good match for me," Power said.

A sharp dresser with a penchant for Ralph Lauren shirts, Power said he is a "suit-and-tie guy," adding, "When you're the boss, you should look like the boss."

When he is not at work, Power likes to walk around Newport with his black 80-pound standard poodle Zeke. "We do about 3 to 4 miles a day," Power said. He also likes to check out the Newport dining scene. His favorite restaurant is the West Deck, off Lower Thames Street, where he recommends the filet mignon.

A former sailboat racer, Power said he's content to play occasional golf, but admits to having a lousy handicap. "It is about as high as you can get," he said.

The School Committee voted earlier this year to cut spending by changing the district's administrative structure. Instead of a full-time superintendent, who also served as principal of the Lawn Avenue School, the schools are now headed up by Power, who will work two days per week, a principal and assistant principal, who will oversee day-to-day

operations, and a special education director.

The cost of the superintendent position was cut by more than half when Power was hired at the per-diem rate of \$500, with no benefits, for a maximum of 90 days per year to fulfill the requirements of his municipal pension plan. In all, Power's salary will be \$45,000 a year.

Town receives public records grant

Jamestown is one of 13 Rhode Island towns to receive a grant from the secretary of state's office to help preserve town records.

"As secretary of state, I am committed to working with local officials to preserve municipal records and make them accessible to the public," said Matt Brown. "This grant program gives city and town clerks the assistance they need to manage public records — everything from historic records to local meeting minutes," Brown added.

In all, Jamestown will receive \$1,200 to be used to process probate records.

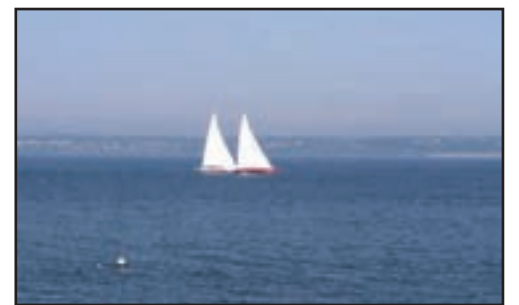
Beavertail Storm Watch

Photo by Vic Richardson



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