

North end citizens continue opposition to highway barn site at former landfill

By Dotti Farrington

Town officials are working to gather data about the sole-source aquifer designation that Ellen Winsor, a North End Concerned Citizens (NECC) activist, has been pursuing for the town.

The town and Winsor gave reports about the status of the designation for the town.

W. Michael Sullivan, director of the state Department of Environmental Management, early last month endorsed Winsor's efforts with the caveat that all parties understand that the sole-source designation has no role in the ongoing discussions about closing the town's former landfill and the possibility that the town might build a highway garage at the landfill site. The town released the existence of the letter as part of Monday's council meeting.

The NECC has hired lawyers and engineers to help it pursue strict rules for closing the landfill, and to help it oppose the building of the highway barn there. The town has been conducting most of its talks about the landfill and about the barn in executive or closed session because officials

believe NECC is going to sue the town over the two issues. The NECC has publicly dismissed reports of a potential lawsuit, but town officials have reported that NECC leaders have said several times privately that they will sue the town to get their group's goals met.

Winsor's work with the NECC led to her efforts to get the sole-source aquifer designation for the island, regardless of the outcome of the landfill and barn issues.

In his endorsement of the designation, Sullivan said the aquifer status is important for the protection of the island's water supply for everyone, whether they have town water or have private water wells.

The designation is co-ordinated by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and is intended to have implications for use of federal money for projects that could affect water supplies.

Jamestown Councilman William Kelly said he was concerned that the designation has been used by the EPA's Office of Environmental Justice to block projects that are opposed by some communities. He said he saw the designation used to assist areas with aggressive politicians and wealthy residents to prevent

some projects and to force some projects on areas or neighborhoods less able to fight them.

After the meeting, Kelly said that having Jamestown designated as a sole-source aquifer "could actually be to the town's advantage," because it could open the door for the town to tap into the resources of the federal government under the little known EPA Office of Environmental Justice, which was established to "fairly and equitably site projects" that have an impact on the environment. The justice division was established, Kelly said, to make sure that projects do not always end up in poor communities because wealthy citizens are better able to defend themselves from unwanted development in their neighborhoods.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said the town currently has no project that would be affected by the designation, nor does it expect to have any in the foreseeable future. He said he was arranging to have a federal official speak to the town Water Resources Committee and the Town Council about the sole-source designation program, as one effort to determine if the town should sign onto it.



Some 'awesome' kids

These kids at the Melrose Avenue School were "caught being awesome" during the month of November and rewarded with lunch with Assistant Principal Mike Franco. From left are Nico Bour, Erica Smith, Michaela Colognese, and Emma Lennon. Not pictured are Weston Limoges, Ula McCarthy, Jackie Tantimonico, Samara Hancock, Marc Desvaux, and Amanda Nolan.

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