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Chemical dumping alleged at Newport bridge

RITBA officials find no evidence of contamination

By Jeff McDonough

Jamestown's search for a site to build a new highway garage took a new twist last week when concern was voiced over possible pollutants that may have been buried on the Newport Pell Bridge property.

The Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority on Thursday announced that it was investigating reports made by a former employee that in the 1970s construction contractors had dumped and buried solvents and paint on bridge property in Jamestown.

RITBA officials have pledged to clean up any contamination that may be found. To date, though, no evidence of chemical dumping has been discovered, bridge officials said.

The allegations arose because property owned by the town of Jamestown adjacent to the Newport bridge is being considered as a possible location for the new highway garage.

The area of concern is located underneath the bridge, just north of Freebody Drive.

Nick Robertson, a former three-term Town Council member, said he recalls that painting-related chemicals were dumped in a succession of trenches at the base of the bridge when he was an RITBA employee during the 1970s. Robertson was the maintenance foreman at the bridge.

In 1999, Robertson was a member of the town Building and Facilities Committee that reviewed highway barn sites. When the bridge site was proposed, Robertson recalled that he suggested that the town should be wary due to possible pollutants in the soil. The committee recommended to the council that the barn be built on Lot 47 on the north end.

Two weeks ago, Robertson said, he was contacted by Town Council member Julio DiGiando who asked what he knew about possible pollutants on bridge property. Shortly thereafter, Robertson was contacted by concerned RITBA officials.

Last week Robertson showed RITBA officials where he remembered the trenches had been located. Robertson told the Press that several chemicals were dumped in the trenches. They include methyl ethyl ketone, also known as 2-Butanone, which is used to clean paint from spray guns, and dimethylformamide, which was used to soften the old paint on the bridge prior to applying new paint,



Nick Robertson looks at the Pell Newport Bridge maintenance site on Freebody Lane where he believes paint solvents were buried during the 1970s. Rhode Island Turnpike & Bridge Authority officials say they are investigating Robertson's allegations but have found no evidence of chemical dumping.

Photo by Jeff McDonough



Bill Piva, a Jamestown police sergeant, has been named the interim director for the town parks and recreation department.

Photo by Jeff McDonough

Piva named interim parks and recreation director

By Michaela Kennedy

William Piva knows how to work with the folks in Jamestown to make things happen. He plans on using the position to give back, on a new level, to the community where he grew up.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser confirmed last Friday, March 2, that Piva has been named interim director of the parks and recreation department. Piva, who

is currently a sergeant with the Jamestown Police Department, will start work in his new position on March 12.

Keiser expressed confidence in Piva's ability and qualifications. He spoke "at great length" with Piva and other islanders about his involvement with youth, and participation in the town and

See "Piva" on page 8

Revaluation to determine new tax rate for next year

By Robert Morton-Ranney

The whole idea of the current real property revaluation process, says Jamestown Tax Assessor Ken Gray, "is that people carry their fair share," and its purpose is to try to pick up variations in home values so that fairness can be maintained.

Final information is not yet available, but Gray believes there will be an "overall 20 percent increase in values" though "we don't know for sure," he added.

Information from the current revaluation process will be

fed into the budget process and a new property tax rate will be determined for Jamestown's 2007-2008 fiscal year, which begins July 1. The current rate, often referred to as the "mill rate," is \$9.49 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Homeowners will see their new assessments reflected in the tax bills coming out in August.

Waterfront homeowners will not be surprised to hear that their values will probably rise the most. "If you look at sales,"

See "Tax" on page 9

See "Bridge" on page 8