

# A responsible budget

I want to thank the Press and reporter Dotti Farrington for the thoroughness in reporting details of the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2008 and the discussions at the recent Town Council workshops. Some might consider talking budget numbers a good antidote for insomnia; Dotti might be commended for staying focused for the lengthy, three hour budget workshop.

To summarize for readers, the budget under consideration by the Town Council proposes spending increases amounting to \$799,393, or 4.21 percent more than the current year adopted budget. The town portion of the budget will increase by \$321,688 (4.14 percent) and the amended school budget will rise by \$477,705 (4.26 percent) over the current year.

The overall tax levy necessary to fund the FY2008 Proposed Budget amounts to \$16,012,802, or 4.61 percent more than the current year and under the 5.25 percent state tax cap. If adopted by the Town Council and approved at the financial town meeting, the tax levy would raise the average tax bill by 3.3 percent. (Growth from development in 2006 expanded the tax base accounting for the difference between the tax levy and the



From the  
Town  
Administrator

By Bruce Keiser

tax rate changes.) However, due to the update of real estate values generated by the state-mandated statistical revaluation, individual residential and commercial property tax bills will change more or less than the town-wide average.

While this column is too brief to discuss all facets of the proposed budget, I would like to comment on the principal accounts that contribute to the additional town spending requirements. The first major component consists of spending to fund personnel costs for wages and benefits. Generally, this element represents baseline expenditures to pay for annual salary increases for union and non-union employees as well as changes in health and retirement benefit costs. The proposed budget projects higher costs for benefits and negotiated pay hikes of \$164,550, amounting to 2 percent of the total

town budget.

The second element comprises initiatives that will address an identified town need or priority. Major initiatives the town has adopted or proposes to undertake are entirely debt-related. These include the first full-year debt service for the new Town Hall (\$299,000), a proposed \$3 million bond to permanently protect 160 acres of scenic farmland (\$195,000), and a five-year lease purchase for two fire tanker trucks (\$87,000). The combined total of the new debt-related expenditures equals \$581,000.

Due to the June 2007 retirement of the 20-year golf course bond and current year interest-only funding for the Town Hall debt, the net debt service expenditures in FY2008 will increase by \$352,250.

To offset the burden of the added payments for debt service, we have proposed to curtail the level of spending for capital projects and equipment. This budget line item is reduced from \$915,460 to \$627,648, a savings of \$288,112. The adjustment to a lower spending level can be achieved with a recognition that projected capital budget needs can be accommodated in future budgets.

As all of us who manage our household budgets know, a one-year financial plan is no plan at all. Working with the School Su-

perintendent Bob Power, active discussions have begun to estimate spending needs and priorities over the next three to five years. A look at community growth and school enrollment trends shows that municipal and school service demands are stable. On the town side, anticipated new spending will accompany the implementation of bondable capital projects, including closure of the landfill, construction of the highway barn, a long-term systematic road improvement plan, and the Fort Getty Master Plan. In addition, we will be pursuing grant opportunities and possible capital support for affordable housing, bicycle paths, and ballfield improvements.

I believe each of these projects can be managed within the constraints of responsible budgets.

Through sound financial management, the community has established a secure fund balance and is in excellent financial shape. The recent credit rating upgrade by Moody's Investor Service from A1 to Aa3 places Jamestown in good company as one of only nine communities in the state to earn this distinction. Given the community's financial stability, Jamestown is well-positioned to not only maintain existing assets but to add new amenities that will diversify opportunities and further improve our already high quality of life.

*The Secret Garden*

**Garden Center/Florist**  
12 Southwest Ave Jamestown  
401-423-0050 • 800-252-1594

**Spring has Sprung!!**  
and it's time...

**Time to prep those gardens!**  
• Compost • Peat Moss • Top Soil •

**Time to start those seeds!**  
• Seeds • Potting Mix • Starter Trays •

**Time for Blooming Bulbs!**  
• Tulips • Daffodils • Hyacinth •

**Time for Spring Hours!**  
Open Sunday - Saturday  
10:00am - 6:00pm

## Fatherhood

Continued from page 1

Long's magic decade. He met his love, and got married at 51. Soon after, he and his wife, Dana, announced their expected babies. "It was terrifying. I found out on Labor Day Monday that we were pregnant, and then a week later that it was twins."

The excitement of the double birth reminded him of his first election to the Town Council eight years ago. Not only was he elected, but he became president of the body because he received the most votes of any candidate. "Wow, I didn't sign on to this," he remembered saying to himself.

Long is now in his fourth term and eighth year on the council.

Both he and his wife were home for the first eight months of the girls' new lives. Dana then went to work for American Power Conversion. She travels often, "So I'm here a lot alone with the girls," he said. Long was quick to give credit to his mother, who enjoys her grandchildren living on the same island. "Between friends, they've offered to help many times, and my mother, I have a lot of help. My mom has done a lot," he said.

In retrospect, Long could not imagine any other way to raise a family. He expressed amazement at how much easier two are than

one. "It was a blessing. They help each other and they help me," he said.

Hazel-eyed Sophie and blue-eyed Jessica are not identical twins, and they turn 3 on April 20. They became potty-trained the same day, and also learned to walk within 24 hours of each other. "That's been the norm around here," he said about their parallel steps in learning.

Long confessed to being "a little more patient at this age." He has found guidance from his nieces and nephews. "Seeing them grow up, I see the ups and downs and positive things that hopefully I can utilize," he noted.

Despite the fears and the physical challenges, Long experienced no difficulty in transitioning into a full-time father's role. "We used to comment about all the things we wouldn't be able to do if we had kids. But we still do the same, just incorporate the girls into our lives," he continued.

According to the March 2002 Current Population Survey from the United States Census Bureau, among two-parent households, 189,000 children are growing up with stay-at-home dads. Long noted the small number, as compared to 11 million children with stay-at-home moms; yet the number of children living with stay-at-home dads has risen almost 20 percent since 1994.

all that." He also said he spoke to council members individually by phone about the need to put all funds into the farmland fund and he felt assured they would support that effort.

A few residents who overheard his comments expressed concern that private phone conversations may be misused as a way to avoid open meeting discussions mandated by state law. They said they understood needs for some private talks, but said appearances are increasing that the town may be abusing options.

Like all parents, Long marvels at the emerging personalities in the two girls. But unlike many other parents, Long has noticed the girls developing intuitive skills to help overcome his physical limitations in simple activities. He pointed out how attuned they are to other people's needs, even at the toddler age. He explained how the twins had to do many things for themselves like climbing up onto the changing table for Daddy. "Before they could walk, I couldn't carry them to the car. When they started walking, they needed to climb up into the car by themselves," he said. They also help him do the laundry and other chores that require bending.

Long never questioned whether the task of a stay-at-home dad would be too much physically. "All my life I've had to assess a situation and figure out how to do it," Long said.

Now that we're living together...



Why don't we make it legal?

Yes, you **MUST** have a license for your dog!

Getting a dog license in the Town of Jamestown is easy and cost effective. Treat your pooch to some doggie jewelry. It comes with a numbered tag for easy tracking if your dog gets lost or picked up by the Dog Officer.

It's the Law... Avoid a \$30/day fine!

Call: **423-7200**

During the month of April you can receive a license at the Town Clerk's Office, 245 Conanicus Avenue (Golf Course Building). You **MUST** have a current rabies vaccination certificate.

## Complaint

Continued from page 24

to maintain the practice of setting aside money for other land purchases that might become available on short notice.

After the meeting, Keiser was asked about the incompleteness of his report, specifically not mentioning council interest in continuing the water resource appropriation and not listing all account spending. Keiser responded that, "Council members know about

Simply the best!

**TOYOTA OF NEWPORT**

www.toyotaofnewport.com e-mail: sales@toyotaofnewport.com

Don't let these tokens keep you from the best deal on a new or used Toyota.

We supply the tokens every time you visit us!

If You Purchase Your Vehicle From Us You'll Receive LOANER CARS When In For Service NO CHARGE!

We'll Even Pick Up Your Vehicle For Service & Leave You A Loaner Vehicle NO CHARGE!

**TOYOTA**

moving forward ▶

**LUBE, OIL & FILTER**  
For Toyota only **\$24.95**  
While you wait!  
Only at Toyota of Newport.

NEW & USED CAR SALES & SERVICE  
Hours: Mon.-Thurs. 7:30 am-8 pm  
Fri. & Sat. 7:30 am-6 pm

Phone 847-1144 • Fax 847-4559  
285 East Main Rd, Middletown