



Scott Sherman and his father, Steve. Scott recently purchased Jamestown Hardware from this father. Photo by Jeff McDonough

Jamestown Hardware's new owner follows his father's footsteps

Every customer is important for the Sherman team

By Jeff McDonough

There may be a new name on the manager's office door inside Jamestown Hardware, but you won't find much else different.

Scott Sherman recently purchased the Narragansett Avenue institution from his father, Steve.

Scott has been working alongside his father at Jamestown Hardware for eight years. Before that he spent nine years at Home Depot. He's well versed in the hardware business.

There's not much that he's planning to change at Jamestown Hardware where customer service is the mantra, the 39-year-old Scott says.

"Everything works well the way it is now," Scott says. "We're here to help. We'll find an answer to your question. If we don't have the product in stock, we'll get it by the following Thursday if not sooner."

The elder Sherman purchased the hardware store in a family partnership in 1991. Steve became the sole owner in 1995. Over the

years Steve has grown the business and expanded its services. He has also done quite a bit of work on the building, improving its historic curb-appeal.

Now 65, Steve says he will continue to work at the store three days a week. He has a passion for the place. "I've always liked the term 'general store,'" he says. "We do our best for everyone."

"I'm proud of the fact that we have always treated everybody like they are important," Steve says. "That's how we feel about everybody and it's what keeps our customers coming back. It is so easy for a customer to go someplace else."

Steve says he was initially hesitant about asking his son Scott to come to work at the store with him "because it is so easy to destroy a family relationship."

"I'm glad I did it. This has worked well. If anything, Scott and I have become closer," Steve says. The store has three full-time employees and 10 part-time workers.

"I have to say that the people of Jamestown have been great," the elder Sherman says. "We couldn't have done a good job if they didn't support our efforts."

Scott says he is looking forward to continuing the Jamestown Hardware tradition. "I plan on being here for a long time," he says.

Hearing on revised 'developer' fees proposal continues next month

By Michaela Kennedy

A proposed "developer" ordinance has a number of islanders worried that the town may hire high-cost consultants at a developer's expense. The amendment is scheduled for a continued public hearing with the Town Council on April 9.

As written, the ordinance would allow the town to charge anyone making changes to their property for consultants to review a development plan prior to the start of a project. The main complaint from business owners and home owners is that the amendment was poorly crafted.

"The way it's written, there's no right of appeal," said Michael de Angeli, head of the Harbor Commission. Writing as a concerned citizen, de Angeli sent his criticisms regarding the proposal to town officials. He cited unlimited power, conflicts of interest, and no limit on costs and proceedings.

Town Planner Lisa Bryer recently met with the new Town Solicitor Peter Ruggiero to discuss changes to the proposal addressing the complaints aired at the first public hearing.

In the revised ordinance, the developer fee could only be allowed by the Planning Commission or the Zoning Board of Review, Bryer said.

In the first draft of the proposal, the planner and the building official had been given authority to request consultants on behalf of the town for development applications. "By leaving it up to the boards, it will put the discussion in a public realm, so everyone can know what's going on," Bryer explained.

According to the town planner, Ruggiero suggested putting thresholds in the ordinance. "Some things would not be subject to review, such as a subdivision under five lots, and a commercial development of less than 2,000 square feet," Bryer said.

Bryer emphasized that leeway for the town to hire needed expertise for a development was critical. "When you don't have the professional staff necessary in order for the planning commission to make

an informed decision, it's crucial to bring in outside help," Bryer said. She referred to a plan where the town hired an architectural consultant because of questions on the design that could not be answered by board members or municipal staff. "Everyone was happy about the outcome. The property owner was happy to pay the fee," she said.

Planning Commission Chairman Gary Girard supported the planner's view, and used the Cedar Lane major subdivision plan submitted by Joseph Manning as another example. "Abutters asked for well testing. But we know nothing about hydrology, because we don't have a hydrologist on staff. So we got the expert advice. When they have their own engineers, we need help," Girard noted.

The proposed process would benefit the developer also, Girard said. By spending roughly \$2,000 in the beginning, the applicant ends up with a better plan in the long run. "Now, it takes us a lot longer to explain what we need and get the help," he said, adding that having the ordinance in place would shorten the process for the developer, not lengthen it. "It provides a step that allows the process to keep moving forward."

Girard called for more education about why the proposal is on the table. "If a developer comes in with all their experts and offers analysis, we have no one to tell us if it's correct or not."

Islanders agreed that if an amendment addressing consultant needs is proposed, it should be drafted it so the process is clear. "It's not just a big subdivision issue, but it affects the little guy as well," said Michael Swistak, a former president of the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce. Because the proposed amendment was so loosely written, "they can hire anybody they want, there's no opportunity to give input; yet he pays the bill," he said.

Swistak said improvements to a property increase property values

and increased taxes. He suggested offering a tax break if the town planned on charging a developer up front, or to take the fee out of the new tax increase. "You're going to get the money from the guy ultimately; it's part of the total budget problem," he said. "Planning should have a legal expense budget, and the town should fund it."

Swistak gave credit to Councilwoman Barbara Szepatowski for suggesting that a developer be offered the choice of two or three professionals. "The council should include a sunset clause, so in 12 to 18 months we can come back and look at it to see if it works," he added.

Conanicut Marine Services owner William Munger questioned why the amended clause was needed. Munger said that unless large retail chains want to build here, the town has "plenty of expertise for all these routine things." Munger suggested that the review process could be used in a neighbor versus neighbor contention. "If you're a developer and want to put a back porch on your house, who will stop your neighbor from getting involved?" he asked.

Munger also said that no parameters were attached to the amendment as to when it would be used. "If a commissioner wants to spin an applicant's wheel, here is the way," he said.

Others did not interpret the same threat as those present at the hearing. Builder and contractor Dick Rembijas considered the amendment to target large developments or subdivisions, not his smaller work. "I figured it goes after the big guy, not me," he said about the proposal.

Council President David Long was not convinced the handful of critics in the audience represented the greater community's point of view. He said that the new solicitor would look at the proposed ordinance and make necessary revisions based on the community's comments. "The council thought it was a good idea," Long said.



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