

Barn

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vided.

While opponents of the transfer station facility stressed the potential environmental consequences of locating the barn in a residential area with close proximity to the town's reservoir, Taylor Point opponents appealed to the council to listen to the recommendations of experts who have concluded that Lot 47 doesn't pose a significant environmental risk.

North end resident Donna O'Neil asked the council to focus on two things, "the where and

the who." O'Neil argued that "the where" should not be Lot 47 due to the threat posed to the island's water table and the need to alter the site's zoning from its current residential classification in order to accommodate a municipal facility. "The who," stressed O'Neil, related to who should make the final decision on the barn site and she urged the Town Council "to be leaders, not followers" and forego a referendum.

However, Pat Bolger, who has been researching the past usage of the landfill sites attempted to assuage concerns over contamination at Lot 47 saying that new information has determined that Lot

47 was not the subject of contaminated dumping in the past. Bolger, however did point to what he described as "almost incriminating" mismanagement of the town's landfill in the past, and called for a "need to change the way we're managing the landfill." Bolger stressed the complexity of the matter and recommended against leaving the decision to the voters.

Raymond Iannetta of the North End Concerned Citizens group expressed frustration over the town's historical mismanagement of the landfill and raised concerns over the contradictory reports issued by the New York-based GZA GeoEnvironmental, which had been hired by the town to conduct an environmental analysis of the North Main Road site. Iannetta, a former town Zoning Board member cited reports issued by GZA which showed groundwater contamination traveling southwest in 1988, northeast a decade later, and its most recent report reaffirming the original 1988 report. Without proper well monitoring around the transfer station, Iannetta warned, residents could not be certain of the environmental impact of locating a highway barn at Lot 47. "Be wary of your experts," Iannetta said, "they don't always make sense."

Richard Anderson of West Reach Drive voiced concern over the additional traffic that would result on the north end roads, especially Carr Lane. Anderson brought up that a similar debate over the location of the police station had occurred prior to the decision to locate it at its present location. In the end, the centrality of the location next to the Newport Bridge and RIBTA facility was a determining factor.

Ellen Winsor of East Shore Road, who has been organizing a petition to classify the island as a sole-source aquifer, urged council members to take any decision that could impact the town's water supply with the utmost caution. According to Winsor, in letters she

received from Newport and North Kingstown officials, should any long-term water contamination occur on the island, neither neighboring town would be capable of supplying the island with an adequate supply of potable water as they have in the past.

Former Town Council member Mary Meagher also expressed hesitation over the transfer station location, noting that her opinion had changed from previously supporting Lot 47 to favoring the RIBTA site due to the landfill's "large quantities of uncertainties," and the town's documented history of mismanagement.

However, former Town Manager Robert Sutton defended Lot 47 saying that the town specifically purchased Lot 47 for the purpose of building a highway barn and that north end residents' concerns were exaggerated.

Not all north end residents in attendance were opposed to the transfer station location, though. Nick Robertson of Carr Lane remarked, "quite frankly I think Lot 47 is the best spot." Dennis Webster of Mount Hope Avenue also spoke in favor of Lot 47.

Other residents in favor of the transfer station site argued that the same concerns raised by Lot 47 opponents can be applied to the bridge site as well. Concerns were also expressed over the potential loss of the \$30,000 the town receives from the bridge authority should the Taylor Point site be selected.

Other residents favoring the site adjacent to the bridge noted the potential to begin immediate construction, easy access to the town's water and sewer lines, and its central location, while Jane Kleister of

West Reach Drive urged the Town Council to "think green" in rejecting Lot 47.

Too Complex to Leave to Voters

Despite the sharp differences over the location of the highway barn facility, division over whether to put the issue to a referendum was notably less contentious. For the most part, residents agreed that the highway barn decision was too complex and too important to be passed off to voters.

Susan Little of North Main Road spoke against a referendum saying that it is a very complicated, very important issue while adding that the Town Council must "err on the side of caution when dealing with people's water."

Among residents voicing support for the Town Council's decision-making ability was former council member Meagher who urged against putting the decision to a referendum saying that the Town Council has the ability to make a decision of "independent mind and free from special interests."

One exception to the consensus of avoiding a referendum was offered by Craig Amerigian of Narragansett Avenue who urged the Town Council to make the decision on the technical merits of expert findings and "not amateur scientists with a vested interest." He, however, went on to say that "if it's going to be a political decision then let the voters decide."

Residents on both sides of the issue who attended this week's meeting will learn if the Town Council heeded their advice on Tuesday, May 29, when members are next scheduled to vote on a future course of action.

Bake sale to benefit hunger and poverty agency

On Saturday, June 2, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., One Bellevue's Executive Chef Kevin Thiele and Hotel Viking will be hosting a "Great American Bake Sale" in the hotel's courtyard. The event is open to the public and all proceeds are being donated to the Rhode Island chapter of Share Our Strength, a private, nonprofit organization leading the fight against hunger and poverty by inspiring and organizing individuals and businesses to fight hunger at home and around the globe.



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