

# Beavertail lighthouse stakeholders prepare for ownership

By Sam Bari

The U.S. Coast Guard, owners of the Beavertail lighthouse, will soon transfer ownership of the facility to the General Service Administration; then the state Department of Environmental Management will petition for ownership.

According to the assistant director of the DEM Larry Mouradjian, the town, the DEM, and the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) will then enter a three-party agreement that defines the future use of the property. Although a timetable has not been set for these events to occur, dialogue from the Coast Guard has given reason for the BLMA to believe that ownership will be trans-

ferred after environmental issues have been addressed and resolved. One of the concerns was layers of lead paint that had been used in years past on the interior of the building.

Recently, the Coast Guard disallowed use of the caretaker's quarters for affordable housing, claiming that the only consideration for tenants was for qualified caretakers. Specifically, in a letter to the town dated April 11, J. J. Metcalf, commander of the USCG Civil Engineering Unit Providence, based in Warwick, wrote "we will not be permitting residential occupancy at Beavertail Lighthouse since this type of occupancy is not directly related to the maintenance of the

property."

Metcalf also wrote, "Our goal under our licensing process is to work towards appropriate and safe usage of historic sites, while attempting to maintain a balance with the historic characteristics to which we are all so committed." The commander concluded, "We look forward to our continued partnership with the town of Jamestown and to fully executing the pending license for Beavertail Lighthouse."

Mouradjian said that the DEM does not want the standard of maintenance to diminish while the lighthouse is without a caretaker. He added that "while issues are being resolved, the DEM will do what it has always done and make every effort to work together to get the job done despite lack of direction and documentation defining responsibility."

Later in the meeting, Mouradjian added to the DEM maintenance commitment when Beavertail Acquisition (BAC) Committee Chairman Varoujan Karentz mentioned that the perimeter fence was in worse repair, by "20-percent," than it was at the last meeting in October of last year. Mouradjian said that the DEM would take over responsibility until an official position is established and he will look into making temporary repairs to the fence.

He said that this summer when the tall ships visit Narragansett Bay, the DEM will make provisions for parking and extra personnel as needed, particularly for the "Parade of Sail," the last weekend in June. He promised to work with the town to assure the event goes smoothly and that visitors will not be affected by inadequate personnel or inferior services.

Additionally, he said that DEM would look after graffiti that had

been written and painted on rocks around the park.

At the beginning of the meeting, Regional Park Superintendent Bob Paquette led the discussion on posting tick signs that included the Rhode Island Department of Health telephone number for comprehensive information about the dangers posed by ticks that are a summertime hazard on the island. BAC Secretary Felicia Celeberto also wrote a flyer containing tick information for distribution to park visitors.

BAC member Frank Meyer passed out notebooks to other committee members containing detailed information about the legal history and standing of Beavertail State Park. Committee Chairman Gary Galkin thanked Meyer for his efforts, saying that accurate knowledge of the history is important.

Mouradjian said that he would study the documentation closely because he felt sure that more information was available than the notebooks contained.

Karentz mentioned that a draft of the BLMA "Master Plan for the Future" of the lighthouse had been printed and distributed. He said that if all goes well and according to plan, the approximately \$500,000 in improvements and expansion projects as outlined in the document would be implemented as soon as the state acquires the facility from the General Service Administration.

Before adjournment, Chairman Galkin personally congratulated Mouradjian on his promotion to associate director of the state DEM.

The next meeting of the BAC and BLMA is scheduled for October 17 at 3 p.m.

## Peace event set for Monday

Island Progressives is sponsoring a "peace picnic" at Brenton Point State Park, on Ocean Drive, Newport, this Memorial Day, May 28, from 1 to 6 p.m.

All are invited to join the group for this family-friendly community-building event. They will present a "Peace House" display with in-depth information about the devastating effects of the Iraq war.

Bring a picnic lunch, meet fellow progressives, and help plan actions to end the war and change

U.S. foreign policy for the future. The event is free of charge, and a rain date has been scheduled for June 2.

Island Progressives is a chapter of Progressive Democrats of America (PDA) for residents of Jamestown and Aquidneck Island. PDA is a national organization composed of local grassroots groups dedicated to reforming the Democratic Party from within, to bring it back to its liberal/progressive roots. For more information, call Bruce Crabtree at 423-2992.

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