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Town budget passes without fanfare

By Tom Shevlin

Just over 70 residents gathered at the Lawn Avenue School on Monday night to vote in the town's annual Financial Town Meeting.

In proceedings that lasted just thirty minutes, Town Moderator James Donnelly guided town officials and residents through a swift and unanimous vote to approve the town's \$19.8 million budget. Town Administrator Bruce Keiser remarked that the low turnout must be a reflection of residents' satisfaction with the proposed budget, which had been worked on during a series of three public workshops in March.

The budget, which will go into effect at the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1, 2007, represents a 4.53 percent increase over the current year's \$18.9 million tab and falls well below the 5.25 percent limit on property tax increases adopted by the state.

The tax rate, which will be officially certified next week, will be between \$7.85 and \$7.90 per \$1,000 of assessed value, or almost \$1.50 less than the current year's rate.

However, that number doesn't represent a tax cut.

The town's tax rate, which currently stands at \$9.49 per \$1,000 of assessed value reflects a median household value of \$384,000. The new number follows a 22-per-

See "Budget" on page 12



And they're off

Kids cross the starting line at the Children's Fun Run, a portion of the Ali's Run races held Sunday, June 3.

Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

State bickers with Jamestown over water data

By Dotti Farrington

State Water Resources Board officials late last month renewed recommendations to rule the Jamestown Water Department in non-compliance because required water supply data is long overdue. A board vote on the recommendation is set for June 12.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said Monday that he was working, via consultant Pare Engineering, to determine the evolution of the problems and the timing with the town report. "We want an opportunity to sit down with the full board to determine how they reached these conclusions," Keiser said.

Keiser said he was confident that all requirements could be met. He also questioned the accuracy of some information the state cited as being incomplete.

State officials said they were uncomfortable about having to make the negative ruling, because Jamestown has generally had a good reputation, especially in its water conservation efforts. Jamestown had been commended by the board when it tied for first place to submit an acceptable report under the new system established in 1999. Some of the latest data provided by the town was also cited as being good to outstanding, such as the town's water rate structure.

On May 29, state officials were critical of Jamestown's failure to provide all required data in the new report. They explained the information is needed by several state and federal agencies to evaluate the town water supply for long-term adequacy and conservation, as well as for planning for shortages before a drought occurs.

Staff members and the board's Public Drinking Water Protection Committee originally recommended the non-compliance rating in February. The consultant challenged it and the state board then ordered reconsideration of the rating.

The board consists of direc-

tors or their designees from the state departments of environmental management, administration, health, economic development and agriculture. The board itself and its representative agencies have roles in water project financing, as well as technical and administrative oversight.

The non-compliance rating gives towns an automatic one-year extension for the data to be provided. That rating does not have specific financial consequences, but must be referred to the state Public Utilities Commission as a complaint, subject possibly to hearings and unspecified penalties, accord-

See "Water" on page 12

Hurricane evacuation routes

By Sam Bari

June 1 is the official start of hurricane season in New England.

Town Emergency Management Director and Police Chief Thomas Tighe said that the Town Emergency Evacuation Plan is in place for the hurricane season. The evacuation signs are posted on major thoroughfares and along the evacuation routes. He also said the signs are clearly visible and all signs direct traffic to state Route 138 westbound.

The chief emphasized the importance of following the directions to the mainland by the westbound route even though traffic will be heavier traveling in that direction. "Evacuation routes on the west side of Aquidneck Island will direct traffic to the mainland via state Route 138 westbound, taking them through Jamestown. We will share Route 138 westbound to the mainland with Aquidneck residents," the chief said.

He said traffic on the east side of Aquidneck Island will go east to get to the mainland over the Sakonnet River Bridge. Aquidneck is split, with

traffic on the Newport half going west and the other half going east. Any Jamestown traffic traveling eastbound on state Route 138 will be turned around at the traffic control point and told to go west, the chief said.

"Traffic control points are marked on the evacuation map at the Jamestown end of the Pell (Newport) toll bridge and at the entrance to state Route 138 at North Main Road. Follow the directions given by the personnel manning the traffic control points and you can't go wrong," Chief Tighe said.

The chief works with State Floodplain Program Manager Pam Pogue of the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency to coordinate the execution of all evacuations. "Chief Tighe calls me after the governor recommends evacuation and tells me if he needs additional personnel, like the National Guard, to help control traffic," Pogue said.

"The governor must make the decision to evacuate," Tighe explained. If a category two or higher

See "Route" on page 15



One of the emergency evacuation signs located at the corner of Walcott and Hamilton avenues.

Photo by Jeff McDonough