

# Benefits of historic districts to be discussed at June 21 meeting

By Michaela Kennedy

Stone chimneys rise above gabled roofs. Columned verandas stand below shed dormers. Painted wood trim work accents weathered wood shingles. These architectural sights are only a few of the designs to be preserved if historic preservation is formalized in Jamestown.

The Shoreby Hill Historic District study committee, formed by members of the Shoreby Hill Association, will hold an open talk at the library on June 21. Pamela Kennedy, deputy director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission (RIHPHC) is invited as the featured speaker. Kennedy, a former island resident, will offer her expertise on how communities adopt a historic district ordinance and what significance it could hold for Jamestown. She will also provide information on financial incentives available for residents in historic districts.

At present, no historic district exists on the island. However, some homes are listed on the National Register, and a number of areas are labeled as being of historic significance, according to the state historical commission. Committee members agree that these recognitions offer strength to the possibility of obtaining zoning for a historic district.

The RIHPHC defines a local

historic district zone as a special zoning area created by a community to help save historic buildings and to preserve the special sense of time and place that exists in some parts of a community. A community with this special zoning monitors and guides construction activity in its historic areas. Currently, thirteen communities in the state have adopted local historic district zoning.

The committee from Shoreby Hill will release a working document at the meeting, which outlines benefits and drawbacks to such a designation. Arguments in favor of a historic district are strong, including enhancement of property values and opportunity for tax credits. At the very least, a historic district ordinance would preserve the character of a neighborhood, as stated in the initial overview of the committee's report.

The draft compiled by the committee also outlines information about state programs offered to help historic district home owners meet the costs of maintaining their historic properties. In addition to tax incentives, preservation easements, low-interest loans and architects are available for help with restoration projects through RIHPHC.

Town documents show that two-thirds or more of all dwellings

in Shoreby Hill were built between 1898 and 1936, with few alterations to date. By 1936, a total of 65 homes stood in this area. The committee expressed concern that some of them were demolished in recent years, and replaced with larger structures that do not necessarily consider the character of the neighborhood.

Nevertheless, the committee acknowledges that such a district cannot be implemented unilaterally. A historic district ordinance, which would require a review board, must be approved by the town.

The idea of creating a historic district in Jamestown has been tossed about for decades. Now, Shoreby Hill residents have taken the lead and formalized a discussion about the possibility. The talk on June 21 offers Shoreby Hill as a first consideration, but part of the goal is to spark interest in an island-wide discussion. The main question driving the study committee is whether Jamestown residents want a historic district. "The only way to find out is by talking about it," says committee member Betty Hubbard.

For more information about the historic district study, e-mail Jim Buttrick at yankeereal@aol.com or Betty Hubbard at jackhub@aol.com.



## Hula night a big success

Melissa Minto and the Teen Center planned a Hawaiian-themed night for local teens last week at the Community Center. Here, old fashioned cut outs had everyone posing for cameras.

Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

## Route

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storm is imminent, the governor will recommend evacuation. At this point emergency personnel will go around the island in the coastal "Evacuation A," (see map, on website) areas and encourage people to leave. If the storm is a category four or five, we will then evacuate the inland "B," areas, he added.

Pogue said that traffic control points are set up to maintain order and direct or reroute traffic at places that could be problematic with situations like bottlenecks. They can also direct evacuees to the nearest shelter if conditions warrant, she said. "The important thing is to start early and give everyone plenty of time so the evacuation is complete and people are in a safe place when a storm makes landfall," Pogue said.

"Our responsibility is to evacuate and secure the island in case of a disaster like a hurricane," Chief Tighe said. "Once people are off the island, state personnel on the mainland will take over and direct them to shelters. They will probably be sent to facilities set up at the University of Rhode Island and I believe in Cranston, or they will be sent further inland to safer areas," the chief added.

After a hurricane passes, emergency personnel will inspect the island, clear debris, repair downed power lines, and anything else that could put people in harms way before allowing residents to return to their homes, Chief Tighe explained.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2007 Atlantic hurricane season outlook indicates a very high, or 75-percent chance of an above-normal hurricane season, a 20-percent chance of a near-normal season, and only a 5-percent

chance of a below-normal season. This outlook is produced by scientists at the NOAA Climate Prediction Center (CPC), National Hurricane Center (NHC), Hurricane Research Division (HRD), and Hydrometeorological Prediction Center (HPC). For more information, visit <http://www.noaa.gov> on the internet.

The outlook calls for a very high likelihood of an above-normal hurricane season, with 13-17 named storms, 7-10 hurricanes, and 3-5 major hurricanes. This prediction signifies an expected sharp increase in activity from the near normal season observed in 2006.

The prediction for an above-normal 2007 hurricane season reflects the expected combination of two main climate factors:

- The continuation of conditions that have been conducive to above normal Atlantic hurricane seasons since 1995.

- The strong likelihood of either ENSO-neutral or La Niña conditions in the tropical Pacific Ocean, according to the report on the NOAA website.

A complete map of the Jamestown evacuation route can be found online at the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency website at [www.riema.ri.gov/hazards/hurricane\\_evac.php](http://www.riema.ri.gov/hazards/hurricane_evac.php).

## Visit secret gardens in Newport

The annual Secret Garden Tour in Newport runs June 15 to 17 in the historic point section.

Tour-goers will be treated to several gardens, many tucked-away behind classic Colonials, where they can only be seen on tour days.

Friday hours are noon to 5 p.m. The tours are open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday.

Tickets are available, at \$20 each, at the Newport Visitors' Center, 23 Americas Cup Ave., and at the start of the tour at 33 Washington St.

For more information, call 847-0514 or visit [www.secretgardentours.org](http://www.secretgardentours.org).

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