Water

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action taken by the Water Resources Board, especially when their own rules and regulations are explicitly designed to encourage a more cooperative approach.

Further more, Keiser reported that General Manager Mariscal acknowledged that the board had unilaterally decided to raise their standards of review without general notification being sent to the appropriate parties.

Keiser said that he met with board staff members prior to the meeting and pointed out that several of their findings were erroneous, including an inaccurate estimate made by the state indicating a 38-percent increase in the town's customer base since 1999, as well as baseless allegations of poor water quality in the Jamestown Shores. Acknowledging their mistakes, the staff subsequently asked that those findings be deleted from the board's record.

In the end, that was not enough to prevent the board from ruling almost unanimously in favor of a non-compliance designation.

However, the town was not without some support. According to Keiser, coming to the defense of the island was one member of the resource board as well as a neighboring town water manager who had been sitting in the audience. Jon Schock, a Water Resource Board member and Public Services director for the Town of South Kingstown, and Henry Meyer, manager of the South Kingstown Water District both voiced their support for the town, Keiser reported.

Keiser conceded that he was not satisfied with some of the work that had been done by the town's consultants, but added that it was nothing that would amount to an issue of non-compliance. He further stressed that "at no point during the review process was the town notified…We were on the outside looking in." Long quipped "we weren't even on the outside looking in; we didn't even know it was going on."

Councilwoman Barbara Szepatowski asked if the non-compliance status could negatively impact the town's bond rating. Keiser responded "potentially yes," adding that the board's decision represents "an unnecessary black eye for a town that has been singled out for its water management."

However, the town does have recourse. According to Keiser, the town can file an appeal with the state once official notification of non-compliance is received.

Long remarked that "there has been some serious damage here," and went on to ask Keiser to invite Mariscal to the next council meeting set for June 25. Councilman William Kelly also suggested that a letter be sent from the council to the governor and water board expressing the discontent with the Water Resources Board and their actions.

Long also expressed dismay over reports that the board had acted on misinformation provided to them by an unnamed island resident who had made allegations of mismanagement by the town. At one point, council members were so exasperated by the allegations that they went so far as to inquire about the possibility of taking legal action against the unnamed resident.

Concluding, Kelly remarked that "we've been singled out."

Town officials are expected to next address this issue at next week's regular town council meeting on Monday.

Mandate

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ity. Though the town was gauged to be at a low risk for contamination, the report urged that protection efforts are necessary to ensure continued potable water.

For more information, the full report will be made available on the town water department's website.

Water rules to be reconsidered

Below average rainfall for May has left the town reservoir slightly down, but the lack of rain is not stopping Town Council from considering relaxing the town's water restrictions for July and August.

Council members will hold a special public hearing on Monday, July 2, to discuss the possibility of relaxing the town's municipal water conservation measures to allow residents to engage in outdoor water usage.

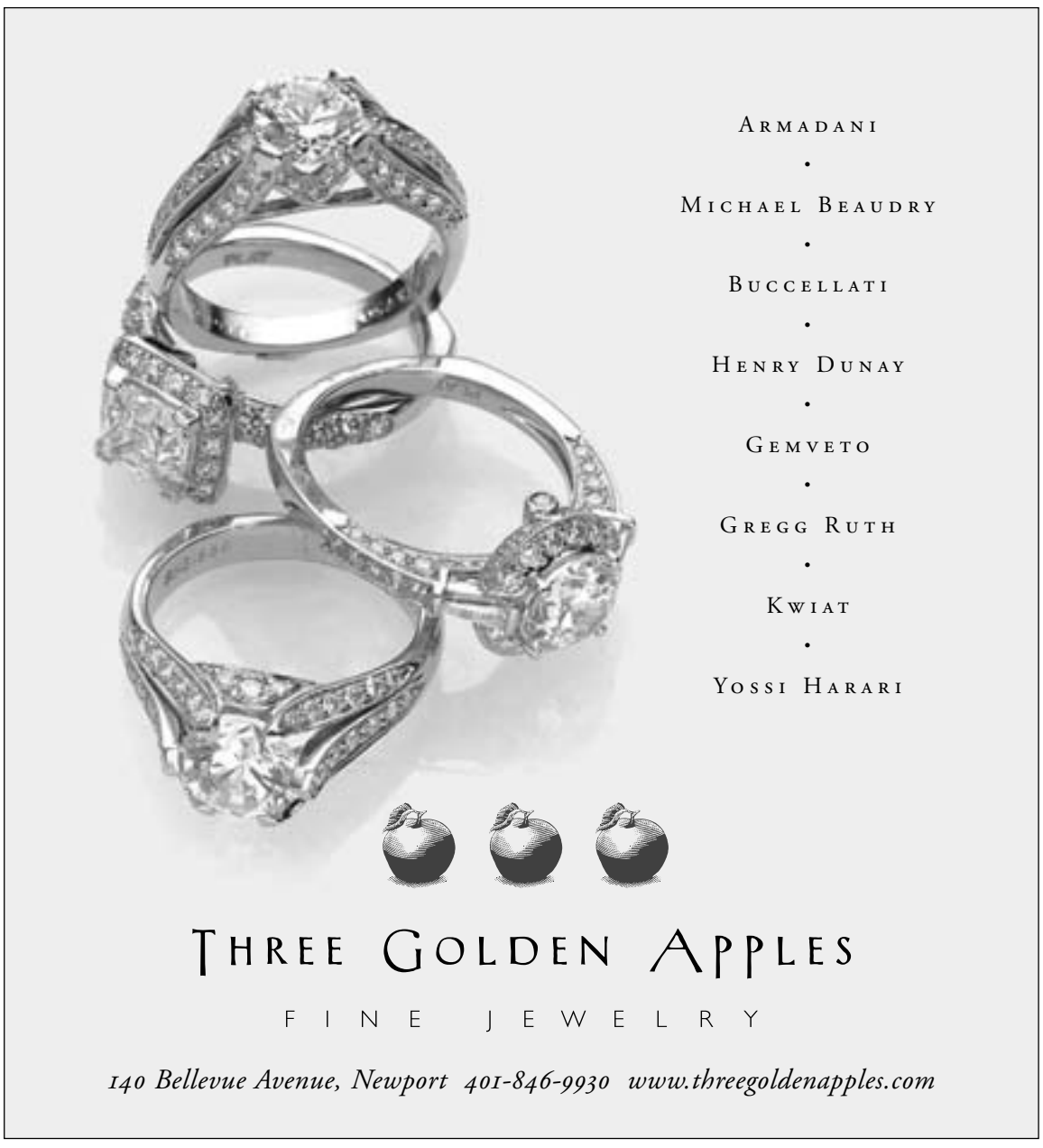
Currently, per the town's water conservation rules and regulations, residents are prohibited from using town water for outdoor purposes including lawn irrigation, house washing, and boat or car washing.

Tower painting set to begin

Painting was scheduled to begin on the new water tower this week. According to Goslee, interior and exterior coating should take about four weeks depending on weather. After taking another approximately two weeks to fill, the tower should be operational sometime in August.

In other news, plans to crack down on illicit water and sewer connections are progressing. Planning what are being described as "graduated measures," the town will be sending notices to all ratepayers in the upcoming June bill notifying residents to report any suspected or known illicit connections, followed by individual letters and ultimately fines for those homeowners illegally tapped into the town's infrastructure.

Bids for construction on the town's treatment plant have been pushed back one week to June 27 in order to avoid a conflict with two other water plants which have set due dates of June 20. According to Goslee, a pre-bid conference held for prospective bidders on the treatment plant yielded a high turnout and several bids are expected.

The town should learn the status of its affordable housing project at 44 Southwest Ave. by the end of the month. According to Goslee, the state has not made a decision yet on the state housing bond but expects to make one by the end of the month.

Councilman William Kelly expressed reservations over the status of the project and asked if the town should explore alternative developers in order to secure "the best and highest price" for the property. However Councilman Schnack noted that if the building were put out to bid it would significantly set the town back in its affordable housing development and could impact the island even more if a private development firm took possession of the property.