

Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

It's time to build a new highway barn

An old islander once told me that Jamestowners can never get anything accomplished without first fighting about it for 10 years.

When you look at the history of past town projects, such as the police station and the wastewater treatment plant, that generalization appears to be true. The state Department of Transportation learned a difficult Jamestown lesson with the design of the cross-island highway. Don't forget that the new, just about complete Town Hall, while never exacting such a divisive debate as other recent efforts, was the topic of for nearly a decade.

We've been arguing about where to build a new highway facility for some 20 years. Next week we'll vote on the matter. On Tuesday, Aug. 28, islanders are asked to approve or reject a referendum authorizing the town to spend \$1.5 million to construct a new highway facility adjacent to the Newport Bridge.

The bridge site is an acceptable location. The proposal is sensible and is fiscally prudent. We've fought about the barn for long enough. We should approve the spending, build the facility next to the bridge and move on to other issues.

People do not want the highway facility anywhere near their homes. Notice that the loudest voices in the disagreement over the highway barn site debate are from those south of the bridge and from those who live on the north end near the infamous Lot 47.

According to all the town officials — from the town administrator to the police and fire chiefs, not to mention the public works managers — the site adjacent to the bridge will work just fine. The site meets all of the town's needs. It is also centrally located, which is good if we have a major emergency such as a hurricane. The site is affordable.

As planned, the proposed highway facility next to the bridge will be hard to see when crossing the bay. The facility will be surrounded by foliage. The beautiful vistas of our island will remain unspoiled. When we are crossing the bridge most of us are looking towards the windmill, the farms and West Passage beyond.

Lot 47, touted as the north end alternative, has become less desirable due to several factors. We do not know that the state Department of Environmental Management will ever allow the town to build a facility there. Approval may be needed from the neighbors for the town to construct a road with the necessary drainage. It's doubtful the neighbors will sign off on the drainage.

Lot 47 is also adjacent to the former town landfill. If I owned property close by, I'm fairly certain that I would be concerned about the quality of my well water if the land were disturbed.

Lot 47 could cost a whole lot more money and take many more years before a facility is constructed — if ever. Lot 47 is not an acceptable alternative.

Yes, our public works employees do work in a facility that is less than desirable. The condition of the facility, however, is a management issue. The Town Council could have budgeted the money years ago to improve the place. Maybe we didn't spend the money because we always believed we'd build a new barn the next year.

If we don't approve the referendum next week, why continue wasting our tax dollars on the north end site? The solution is simple. Let's buy a chunk of land across the bay in North Kingstown. Build the highway facility there.

We should keep the highway barn here on our own island. Let's approve the referendum on Tuesday.

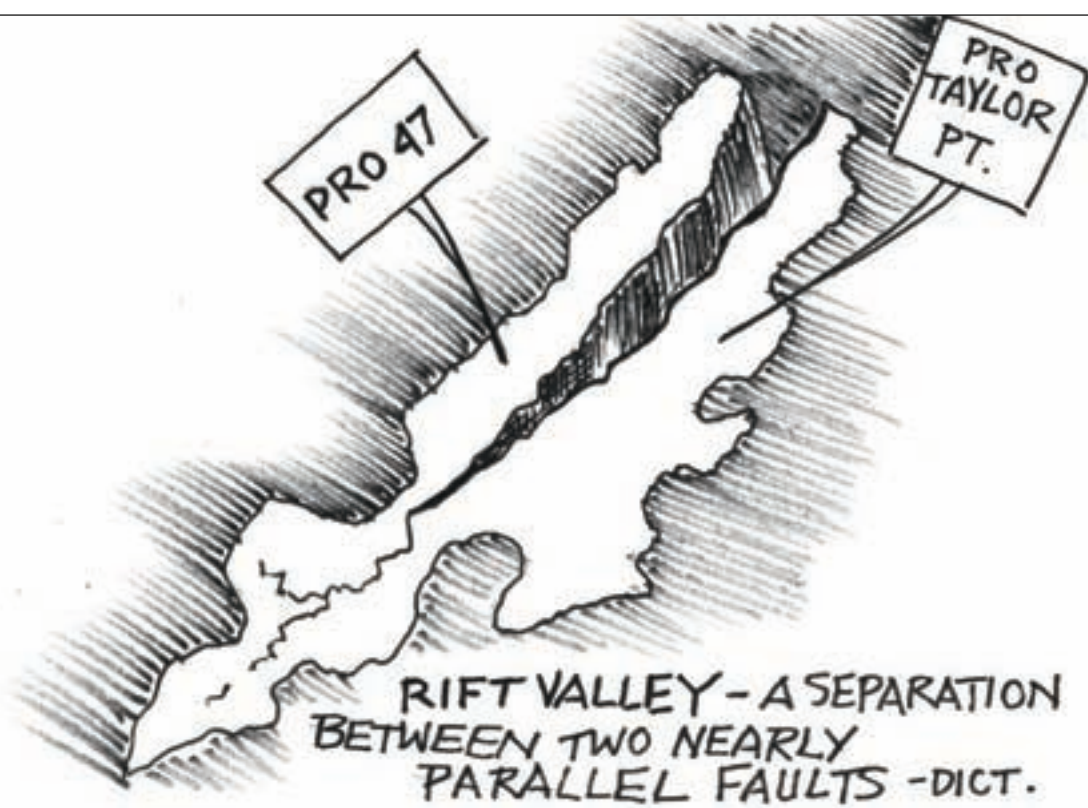
I'm sure we can find something else to argue about.

— Jeff McDonough

Write to us

LETTERS: Send your letters to: Editor, The Jamestown Press, 42 Narragansett Ave., Jamestown RI 02835. Our fax number is (401) 423-1661.

Our e-mail address is news@jamestownpress.com. Please include your name, address, and a daytime telephone number for verification. Anonymous letters will not be considered for publication. All letters must be limited to 700 words or less.



It's all about NIMBY

I try to find a little humor about the highway barn controversy that appears in the "Letters" section of the Press, but I rarely do.

What I did find in the past two issues of the Press, is that no matter how hard the pro and con writers try to convince readers to support one location or the other, they are defending their own NIMBY positions.

Between the letters to the Press and those that endorsed the paid ads (a few ads excepted), every writer, pro or con lives in the opposite district on the island of his or her stated position.

To me, arguments become very questionable where self-interests overwhelm their views.

• LETTERS •

Is there anyone out there who lives nearby Taylor Point or Lot 47 that welcomes the highway barn in their "backyard?"

Varoujan Karentz
Clarkes Village Lane

A simple choice

It seems like such a simple choice: Taylor Point—possibly spoil the view. Lot 47—possibly contaminate the water.

C'mon Jamestowners—in the late 1800s contamination of the water was responsible for totally impacting the future development of Jamestown. The ferry arrived at Park Dock, the Conanicut Hotel was full and Conanicut Park was

well on its way to becoming the "downtown" of Jamestown. Sickness and water contamination changed all that. Don't let it happen again. The future health of our citizens and children is more important than "the view."

Beth Weibust
East Shore Road

A neighbor's opinion

Having been in close proximity to the town highway barn for the last twenty-five years, I'd like to set a few things straight. They are:

1. The people who operate the highway department travel all over the island, so no one location is better

or nearer than any other. In fact, more work is usually done at the north end than at the south end of the island.

2. The highway barn has not polluted my groundwater, nor any of the neighbor's groundwater in the twenty-five years they've been at Ft. Wetherill.

3. Yes, there is a "rush-hour," about ten to seven when four or five cars go to the highway barn and about ten after seven when the town's three or four trucks (if they are already not elsewhere on the island) go up the street. Similarly at about half past three another "rush hour" occurs, that is if you can call a total of about ten vehicles and a backhoe a "rush hour."

4. The value of my property, nor my neighbors' property, has not decreased due the highway barn being

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The news of 10 and 15 years ago is from the Jamestown Press. The news of 100 years ago from the Newport Daily News came from the collection of the Newport Historical Society.



This week in Island history Compiled by Sue Maden Week of August 23

League championship series, defeating the Red Sox 10-9, in a wild and exciting free-for-all, at the Basin Tuesday evening.

The American Legion Carnival at Narragansett

square, resembled the great white way, with its many attractive booths, a large crowd being present.

From the Newport Daily News, August 25, 1932

(At the Town Council meeting it was voted that) J. Howard Ellis and Thomas F. Sheehan be appointed a committee to spend \$300 to repair that section of the North Main Road, known as Hull's swamp, and that the same committee be appointed to have a jiffy dump repaired.

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 20, 1957

The Jamestown School Committee last night voted to limit the amount of tuition for high school pupils attending school outside the limits of Newport County to the figure paid to Rogers High School which was raised this year to \$312 per pupil.

From the Newport Daily News, August 22, 1957

Four major oil construction firms have submitted bids for the building of the proposed Jamestown refinery at an estimated cost of \$48,000,000.

From the Newport Daily news, August 24, 1957

(Charles L.) Hull reported (at the Jamestown Bridge Commission meeting) that the gross revenue for August compared with the same period last year was down 3.7 percent due to the drop in rates but the increase during tercentenary week amounted to \$954. He also reported that painting of the bridge by Singelis Company of Worcester, Mass. is underway.

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 21, 1907

The Jamestown firemen, finding that extensive repairs were necessary to the fire station in the near future brought before the voters at the town meeting last April a proposition for an appropriation of \$5,000 for a new station of suitable size. The proposal was defeated by a small majority. ... The volunteer firemen, at their own expense, have now had plans for a new and handsome station prepared by Architect C. L. Bevins and propose to raise, by popular subscription and otherwise, funds sufficient for the erection.

From the Newport Daily News, August 23, 1907

The ferries are making many of their trips around the south end of Goat Island, to give their passengers a close view of the Swedish cruiser Fylgia.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, August 22, 1932

The Legion Carnival opened today and the affair will be in full swing. Tuesday promises to be one of the most interesting days, as in the afternoon the doll carriage parade, the boys' vehicle and the costume parade will take place, and competition is keen in each exhibit.

From the Newport Daily News, August 24, 1932

Jamestown won the second game in the Municipal