

# Conservationists consider several island projects

By Dotti Farrington

Conservation Commission members reviewed, at their Sept. 20 meeting, several town matters, including the newly approved Taylor Point location for a town barn and the relatively new talks about zoning changes to promote more development and wind energy. Commissioners indicated they need more information before taking positions.

They also heard about proposals for farm development at Beavertail; for additions to the commission's osprey viewing area; for Hull Cove trail improvement as an Eagle Scout project; and for distribution for the commission's new island trail guide. They postponed until their next meeting, on Oct. 9, further discussion about their review of the Fort Getty park development plans; a new project on invasive plants; and study of the proliferation of docks.

On the town barn plans, Town Administrator Bruce Keiser briefed the commission on options for drainage, the primary concern

of the commission on the site. Commission Chairman Christopher Powell noted the commission opposed previous plans for a different section of Taylor Point because of plans then to run drainage into Potters Cove where it would lower the quality of bay water and would impact one or more endangered plant species.

Keiser told commissioners the town is still studying options for drainage that will need special permits geared to protect the bay. He said detailed engineering was started only in mid-September on the drainage possibilities.

Keiser also reviewed aesthetic considerations, also of special concern to the conservationists. He said the barn roof would be a green color, and commissioners asked about use of the technique to create a plant roof as a "green" environmental option. Powell said he knew of federal grants for such projects. Keiser assured they would be explored. He said the town will conduct a cost benefit study about type of shingles to be used on the

barn structure. He also emphasized that the town would enforce strict policies about indoor storage at the new barn of all equipment now scattered outdoors because of insufficient storage options.

## Beavertail farm

Both Keiser and former town administration Robert Sutton spoke about the efforts to restore 23 acres of Jim Procaccianti's Beavertail property for agricultural uses, possibly a vineyard. An early effort included mowing and caused a violation on coastal land, because of a misunderstanding, according to Sutton, and the area is being restored to pre-violation condition.

The violation drew a strong rebuke from the town, and Procaccianti is trying to regain credibility, according to Sutton. Sutton is a strong supporter of agricultural

efforts and he said he wants to promote the Beavertail venture if it is done properly.

He detailed the history of the land, including its original use as a farm and as a golf course in the 1920s. He said the golf use included a system of dams, which may be restored, along a stream. Commissioners said they were concerned about the "loose" rules for wetland protection under agricultural regulations and would want assurances about the owner's intent before they would give any encouragement to the farm effort.

## Zoning

Abby Anthony, on behalf of the Wind Energy Committee, asked conservationists for support of a proposal to amend zoning on open space areas to allow wind turbines. Powell said he hoped town col-

leagues for planning and zoning would consult the Conservation Commission, which has been a major force in establishing open space zoning. Commissioners indicated they would prefer decisions on a case-by-case basis rather than change the zoning in general to accommodate windmills. Discussion at future meetings was expected.

Commissioners also reviewed preliminary information becoming available via consultants for the town's work on a revised comprehensive plan of development. The conservationists indicated they are leery of the goals indicated in early talks with town officials. Consultants were talking about concepts of urban development, increasing density and using such long-established ideas as cluster housing.

## Learn to help out stranded marine mammals at aquarium presentation

The Friends of the Jamestown Library present "Mystic Aquarium's First Responders for Stranded Animals," on Thursday, Nov. 8, at 7 p.m.

For anyone who has ever wondered what they should do if they found a sea animal stranded on the beach, this informative program provided by staff members of the Mystic Aquarium will give some answers. Some attendees may even decide to become a volunteer for the aquarium and get certified as a first responder for stranded beach animals.

First Responders, who must be 18 years of age, are members of the general public, who live along the Connecticut, Rhode Island, or Fisher's Island, NY, coastline and are willing to drive to respond to calls in their area. They must also attend one of the aquarium's workshops that will train them to respond to initial stranded marine animal calls. First Responders never touch the animals and are trained through this course to visually



This Harbor Seal is only taking a break.

identify common species and signs of physical and stress-related health issues. They contact the aquarium with all the information they have so the aquarium staff can decide the proper response. Since these responders are familiar with their coastline area, the idea is that they will be able to quickly respond to calls about stranded marine animals and because of their training, be able to accurately gauge the health of the marine mammal or sea turtle they find. While at the scene, they can hand out species identification brochures, which they receive as part of their training. They can talk to the public about the species on the coastline and educate them about what they can do to help. The key to the responders is their ability to cut the response time to a few hours, allowing for a sick/injured seal to be brought in or a healthy seal to simply rest on the beach while the public is educated about why the seal is there.

tions, general information about stranding programs, specifics about Mystic Aquarium's stranding program, and the definition of a stranded animal, the process the Aquarium goes through to use its first responders and their response to stranding calls. It will also cover the limitations of stranding programs, key identifying characteristics of select marine mammals and sea turtles, detailed descriptions of pinniped species and how to identify them as well as signs of physical and mental stress on pinnipeds. The talk also covers safety and the duties of first responders along with an explanation of what our first responder program does.

The talk is generally about an hour and a half long. Members of the general public, as well as people interested in the First Responder program at Mystic Aquarium are welcome. Sign up is requested to ensure sufficient participation. For more information, call the library at 423-7280.

The talk covers federal regula-



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