

# Farms

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eral sources.

Keiser said that the council hopes islanders who made contributions to the land trust to save the farms will ask the land trust to re-direct those donations to the town for the development rights purchase.

"That way people will still receive the benefit of the tax deduction," he said.

Keiser also said that people may make donations directly to the town to save the farms. The money would be used to offset the bond issue and would be an IRS-qualified tax deduction for the individual donor, he said.

Conanicut Island Land Trust President Quentin Anthony said his group decided late last week to withdraw from the purchase the development rights to the Dutra and Neale farms because of significant changes to the agreement. "The deal with the Dextras had changed in such a material way that we thought it would be a breach in our trust to spend the money on a deal that people did not recognize," he said.

The original agreement only allowed buildings on the 15 acres where the house and barns are currently located, he said, adding that the revised agreement would allow buildings on up to 2 percent of the preserved farm land. The revised agreement did not reflect representations that were made by the land trust in its public presentations and advertising campaign, he said.

Anthony stressed that any monies donated to the land trust to purchase the farms' development rights would be returned to the donors.

Town Council member Robert W. Sutton Jr. said the agreement to purchase the development rights to the Dutra farm was based on similar contracts used to preserve some 60 other farms in Rhode Island.

Sutton said federal and state monies were being used to purchase the development rights of the two Jamestown working farms. The programs were designed to preserve agriculture. "The viewshed is secondary to the farming interest," he said.

"What the public is buying is the right to subdivide and develop the land," Sutton said. "They are not buying the right to say what kind of farm or agriculture is on the land. This is a farm land protection program."

Both Sutton and Keiser stressed that there were protections in place under the new agreement to control the construction of future farm buildings. Approval of proposed structures must be granted by both the Town Council and the state Agriculture Land Preservation Commission. Any structure must also meet historic New England architecture guidelines.

The disagreement over farm buildings arose, Jesse Dutra said, because they wanted to reserve the right to build a farm stand along North Main Road. According to her e-mail records, she said, this was not a new issue because they had discussed it more than one year

ago. She said they had not decided to build the farm stand, but that they wanted to keep their options open.

"We appreciate everything everybody has done on this — including the land trust," Dutra said.

Under their farm management plan, "we are always taking the viewshed into consideration," Dutra said. "We have a heritage and a history with the town, but we have to keep the farm sustainable."

Dutra said she would always remember the Financial Town Meeting where so many people came and voted to protect the island farms.

Her husband, Joe, agreed. "You've got to look into the future and we've to have provisions for that," he said. "Our agreement with the town has gone further than most farms in the state. We have given more than most."

Dutra said that the farm was a business that needed to remain flexible in order to continue its operation as conditions change. The last several years have been particularly difficult, he said.

"What we're concerned about is the farm 50 or 100 years from now," Dutra said.

The Dextras have agreed to donate to the town an easement for a public trail along North Main Road.

The town closed the agreement on Dec. 24 with the Neales to purchase the development rights to their farm.

The town and the Dextras were expected to close on their agreement yesterday.



Joseph DiStefano, right, here with Rev. Thomas Tobin, Bishop of the Diocese of Providence, recently accepted an award from St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island.

## Islander honored for philanthropy

Jamestown resident Joseph R. DiStefano was recently honored by St. Joseph Health Services of Rhode Island (SJHSRI) as its 2008 Partner in Philanthropy.

A partner with the law firm Adler, Pollock & Sheehan, DiStefano has been a member of the St. Joseph Health Services board of trustees since 1985. During that time, he has been actively involved in helping to guide the Catholic health system into a comprehensive community hospital provider.

According to SJHSRI, DiStefano has chaired multiple board committees and has served on numerous ad hoc and special task forces, including a board helping to establish the hospital's development function and its annual fundraising gala, the Bishop's Ball. In addition, he has co-chaired capital campaigns, spearheaded special

fundraising events and directed annual drives. Most recently, he was involved in the recent conversion of the fundraising program at the hospital to formal foundation status.

The award recognizes the significant personal and professional contributions he has made to the hospital during his more than 30 years of association with the organization. The award was presented as part of a statewide ceremony marking national philanthropy day.

"Joe has been the consummate trustee," said Bishop Thomas Tobin, chairman of the hospital's board. "He has served with honor and distinction and has volunteered immeasurable hours of his time, talent, expertise and resources to the St. Joseph organization for which it will be forever grateful."

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