

Keiser

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tion process may have led some to wonder if Keiser was not the first choice, or that Jamestown was his second choice, but that is not how his appointment here came about.

First or second best

Being first or second best not withstanding, many of his interview responses Friday reflected general perspectives about the island, but a few were surprises.

Seemingly quite outstanding was his observation "that sometimes half a loaf is enough" or if that cliché does not apply, then "second best" might be a more applicable term.

Townspersons know that Jamestown is a community where excellence is a common thread among inhabitants and where enough residents are seen as being able to afford the best, even if some neighbors are not able to pull a full load.

Keiser was mulling over a few island situations as they might pertain to "second best," but he was mostly thinking about the need for a public works garage.

He said not being able to resolve the location for a new highway barn has been the most frustrating issue of his first year here, "which should come as no surprise."

Keiser said, "I thought re-use of the landfill for the garage facility was a good option with proper siting and architecture and buffering features that could work very well, without adding traffic. It was a valid proposal that previous committees had extensively researched."

So many projects

He had made a list of topics he wanted to review as if he might overlook something. There are so many projects underway: the construction of a new water treatment plant, the complete makeover of the wastewater treatment plant, the ambitious and well-received work of the Fort Getty Master Plan Committee, which is looking into making the park more accessible to residents and not just off-island campers, and the preservation of farmland still in negotiations.

Keiser's list began simply with 'garage.'

Then he spoke without notes: "Southwest Avenue (the Town Offices) has too many negatives for the garage. It is so near wetlands. Its size is only 1.5 acres and at least two acres are needed, and it is expected to bring extra, appropriately vigilant monitoring and extra archeological costs.

"Everyone recognizes the urgent need to replace the Fort Wetherill public works building that is appalling by anyone's estimation as a work environment."

There is vacant land on the island that could be used. "As town administrator, I have to look at the overriding community interest and ultimately prepare to recommend a location without causing undue burden on any particular neighborhood. I have to look at the island as a whole.

"Everyone has been looking for that one best solution that meets and satisfies everybody. I realize that the next best solution may have to be accepted, given the constraints of each around town. We will have to take a second best. There is no first best." And that was what he was mulling over when he referred to "half a loaf."

Keiser has been reviewing all the possible options brought up by previous committees and all of his

own observations made this past year. He expects to submit his recommendation for a new town highway barn location to the Town Council in about four to six weeks.



Bruce Keiser

It will then be up to the councilors to decide whether to present it to voters at a financial town meeting.

When he was appointed a year ago, Keiser said, "The role of a town administrator is to provide factual information for elected policy makers to make rational and informed decisions. It is incumbent on the administrator to present the most accurate information."

Something funny

Ironically, Keiser had something 'funny' on his list as it relates to the town landfill, a very painful topic for many if not all residents who must bear the cost, regardless of final decisions.

Keiser recalled one of his early self-guided tours of the island. He went to the former landfill that now is the trash transfer station. He drove his car to inspect the intended location for the town garage, drove to the top to see Lot 47 — a previous garage consideration. Then he got out of his car to walk around the grounds. Finally, he was ready to leave. "I was not familiar with the hours of the transfer station. I was locked in," he said. He had to use his cell phone to summon help.

"I blamed NECC, Keiser joked, relying on his "people person" powers to dare any humor in reference to the North End Concerned Citizens a group that is unhappy about plans for the landfill and for a possible town garage there. NECC may not be happy about the town's actions in general, but some NECC leaders praised Keiser early in his term for his open-mindedness and willingness to explore all of their concerns.

Not all work

The town administrator has had other fun-filled, adventures as a newbie to Jamestown. A recreational biker, he took part in his first competitive race here last summer. "I didn't come in last, and I felt the burn (of overworked leg muscles)" was all he would admit.

He also learned to sail this summer, under the tutelage of Council Vice President Julio DiGiando. "I crewed for him and he said I caused the team to lose wind and lose the race," Keiser recalled.

Next, he is looking forward to completion of the proposed bike trails that will allow him to bike from his home over the Jamestown Bridge down North Main Road to his offices, and other town work sites.

"I have begun to discover what Jamestown has and to truly appreciate the unique environment that the island offers. It helps me to do my job with a greater sense of excitement," he said with a flourish befitting a publicist.

Excitement

Asked to pick the best action of the first year town administrator Keiser named not the groundbreaking for a new town hall in October, but the vote at the June financial town meeting to authorize the start of the new town hall. "It was very, very exciting and gratifying," he said.

The new town hall complex, Keiser noted, "will be a wonderful signature building on Narragansett Avenue and will create a lot to reinforce the community identity and provide a central seat of government that the town has lacked for perhaps as long as 70 years. With its meeting spaces, it will

become a center of public activity, not just a center for administrative offices where we can work more efficiently."

Budgeting

Keiser listed his second-best accomplishment as the already much-ballyhooed fiscal plan. He pointed out bonding to councilors and townspeople to use for the town to acquire many new pieces of long overdue major public works equipment. The councilors leaped on the idea of bonds for lease-purchase contracts and have since expressed high praise for the plan. Keiser said the response that pleases him most is the rebooted job pride and work morale of the public works employees.

The town administrator plans to duplicate that fiscal plan concept to try to work miracles on at least 10 percent of the island's roads. Poor road condition was the topic of more complaints than anything else townspeople spoke to him about. Some repairs have been postponed for decades, leaving many with pavements too crushed to be fixed with simple oiling.

The town for decades has been budgeting just enough money — \$70,000 currently — to repave one mile of road each year. Keiser is working on calculations that might enable at least 10 percent of the town's 170 miles of roads to be paved within a few years. Engineering staff is working on an inventory of all town roads and their conditions in preparation for choosing which roads will be upgraded and how soon.

Shining surprise

After separating out groundwater protection for a special report (see separate story), the town administrator chose as his third favorite accomplishment by the town as the "bright shining new fence at the ball field" at the Lawn Avenue School. "The fence has done a wonderful job to brighten the neighborhood. The town had not been a good neighbor there," Keiser said.

"It was a simple, quick fix, and the beginning of improvements to the playing surfaces that will take two seasons to establish," he noted. The town is awaiting state approval to extend the piping system that currently pumps treated effluent from the wastewater treatment plant to the town-owned golf course to irrigate the school ball fields.

Keiser pointed out that the golf course irrigation system, approved 10 years ago as a pioneering effort, has since become a technique adopted nationally. He said the makeover of the town's wastewater treatment plant will include a new filtration system for the golf course and ball-field watering, so it will be further improved.

Teens

After more than three years of efforts by teens themselves, with some help from adults, the youths have secured a firm hold to re-establish use of the town Community Center for a teen program. The town administrator acknowledged the ups and downs of those efforts, and suggested the debate was "appropriate to identify the unmet needs and goals for the youth, and to target ways to provide those needs that can't be filled elsewhere and that are not duplicated."

Keiser also pointed out that "a small island is a different environment than the mainland. The most obvious is that the island does not have alternative facilities such as a YMCA. As a result, it is essential that the Community Center be used specifically for teen oriented action and programs and that is

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