Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

Schoolyard politics in North Kingstown

North Kingstown School Committee Chairman Douglas Roth has offered Jamestown an olive branch. In a letter to the editor, which appears in this issue of the Press, Roth has invited Jamestown School Committee member Bucky Brennan to return to the N.K. school committee table as the island's liaison.

Brennan voluntarily walked out of a recent North Kingstown School Committee meeting after two of the school board's members attempted to have the Jamestown liaison position eliminated. It was simple politics. The two school board members, who want to have the N.K. school superintendent fired, did not like Brennan's contradicting opinions on the matter.

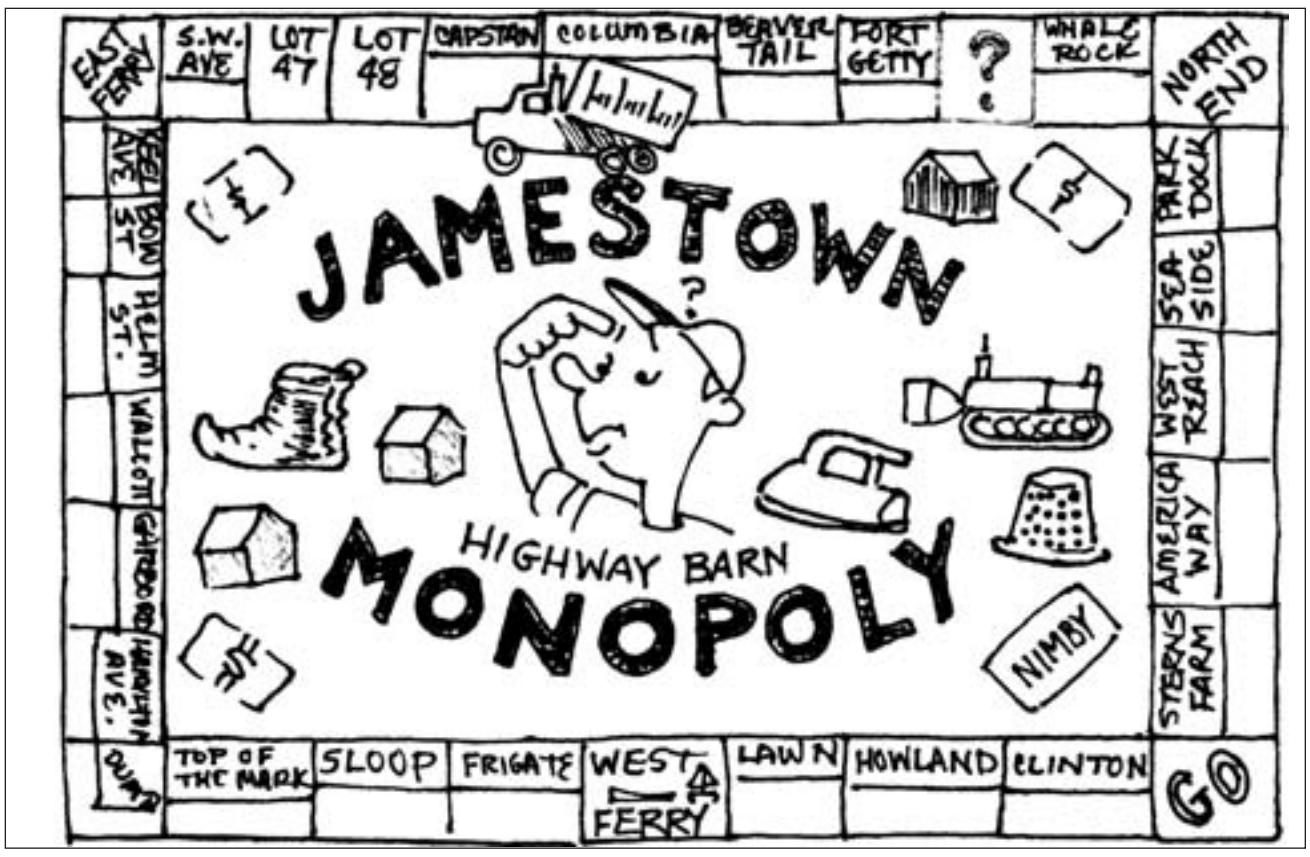
The liaison post, however, is outlined in a policy. Jamestown sends 213 students to North Kingstown High School as the island's high school of record. The tuition bill this school year is $2,056,000, nearly $9,700 per student. Jamestown's deal with North Kingstown includes a school committee liaison who is allowed to participate in discussions before the board. The Jamestown liaison has also been allowed a non-binding vote for the record.

Jamestown's tuition bill may be a drop in the bucket in the overall N.K. school budget. But islanders consider the liaison position important because it maintains an open channel of communications between the two school committees. After all, we are dealing with the education of our children.

If you have been following the news across the bay, you know the North Kingstown schools and its finances are divisive, heated issues. We have to agree with Brennan's assessment of the N.K. school committee as "dysfunctional." Petty bickering, rather than respectful debate over the quality of education, has dominated the N.K. meetings of late.

Hopefully, the N.K. school committee will narrow its focus on education, which affects 213 students from Jamestown.

— Jeff McDonough



• LETTERS •

Council should locate the barn

The intent of my statement during Open Forum at the Jamestown Town Council meeting on April 9, 2007 and reported in the Jamestown Press on April 12, 2007 was misunderstood by the reporter.

The substance of my comments in the Town Council meeting regarding the possibility that this Town Council would vote to have the location of a highway barn placed on a public referendum is as follows:

I have sat in many Town Council meetings with this Town Council and the previous Town Council. I have seen councilors listen to state and town officials, consultants, attorneys and sometimes throngs of citizens that have come to air their points of view on community issues that concerned them. Many of these issues were very contentious. The councilors would listen to the professionals and the citizens, then discuss the issues and make a decision. I have never seen a Town Council abrogate their responsibility by allowing the public to vote on an issue simply because it is contentious. Placing the location of a highway barn on the ballot is irresponsible because this is such a complicated issue. There are a myriad of issues to consider including; environmental, zoning, legal, permitting, length of time to complete the project, and neighborhood issues that this council has had months to discuss. Many of these discussions have been conducted in executive sessions where the public has and will never have knowledge of the information and advice councilors are receiving.

A decision on the location of a highway barn should not be a popularity contest. These are serious issues with serious ramifications for our community. The council needs to assume the responsibility and make a decision on the location. Then, I believe it is the voters right to vote on whether they support funding that project by having the bond issue on a public referendum. Bond issues should not be decided by 100 people who attend the financial town meeting each year.

Susan R. Little
Jamestown

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This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

Week of April 26

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.

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 23, 1907

Messrs. Harrison Littlefield and Ralph Wright left Sunday on their motorcycles for a week's trip to East Hampton, Mass., and vicinity.

From the Newport Daily News, April 25, 1907

The Lake submarine boat attracts much attention along the water front daily as she is being tried out just off the east shore. Yesterday, in the high wind, she gave a great exhibition … the heavy sea apparently not diminishing her speed although it drove the crew to the highest parts of her deck houses when the craft was running on the surface.

From the Newport Daily News, April 29, 1907

In the awarding of the ferry contract recently by the government to Captain Stillman Saunders of the Narragansett Bay Transportation Company, that portion of it which related to a ferry service across the east bay was eliminated, which means that the island will have only the usual single communication with Newport during the winter months. The west bay ferry service which was included in the contract, will keep that service open the year round instead of only four months, as hitherto. This will not only be a great convenience to those wishing to visit Narragansett from here and Newport, but it should also encourage the farmers on the mainland to carry their produce to the Newport markets.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 22, 1932

(At a special meeting of the town council, it was determined that) compensation for labor on roads, $4 per day for man and $4.50 per day for man and a single team.

Owing to the epidemic of measles and whooping cough, now quite prevalent on the island, the Sunday school of the Central Baptist Church will be closed until further notice.

From the Newport Daily News, April 26, 1932

A deadlock exists in the election of a chief of police for Jamestown. The newly elected town council which is controlled by the Democrats by a three-two margin, held another meeting Friday evening, and for the second time failed to reach a choice.

From the Newport Daily News, April 27, 1932

Work was started today on the firemen's lot, east of the engine house, where a small park will be made, and will be attractive with shrubs and flowers. This will be under the supervision of the Board of Trade and the firemen.

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 23, 1957

The Jamestown Town Council last night adopted a pared-down budget of $355,444.79 and resolutions totaling $6,700 for submission to the taxpayers at the town financial meeting May 4. The Council trimmed $3,600 from the budget.

From the Newport Daily News, April 24, 1957

The Navy has informed the state of its opposition to the plan that oil tankers circle the north end of Gould Island after they discharge their cargoes at a pier proposed for the $45,000,000 oil refinery on Jamestown.

Jamestown and Middletown residents scored top honors in recent civil service examinations for various jobs with the Jamestown Ferry Authority … (The positions were for purser, paying $1.34 an hour; quartermaster, paying $1.28 an hour; marine fireman, paying $1.40 an hour; and deckhand, paying $1.21 an hour; and turnstile operator, paying 89 cents an hour.)

From the Newport Daily News, April 25, 1957

The Jamestown Town Council last night meeting as a budget committee, approved appropriations for the town's supplemental budget totaling $8,966.84. Its purpose is to meet department deficits contracted during 1956.

From the Newport Daily News, April 29, 1957

The Commerce Oil Refining Corp. made known today it is changing the location of its proposed main refinery building from the easterly side to the northwesterly side of Jamestown.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, April 27, 1982

A survey is being conducted by the Jamestown Recreation Commission to determine the recreational needs of the people on the island in various age categories.

From the Newport Daily News, April 28, 1982

(The town) is trying to sell the Winthrop Wilson property next to the Town Hall on West Street. The town bought the property from Saint Matthew's Church in March. The town will pay for the property in three annual installments of $11,200, $10,000 and $10,000. … It was thought that it would cost about $2,000 to move the house.) … The town plans to enlarge this building (the town hall) and consolidate all town functions in one place.

15 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, April 23, 1992

A large turnout of volunteers is anticipated for the third annual island-wide Earth Day cleanup set for this Saturday. The event is sponsored by the Jamestown Conservation Commission and the Conanicut Island Land Trust.

The Town Council, sitting as the Board of Water and Sewer Commissioners, voted 4-0 Monday to raise the sewer rate by 50 cents for each 1,000 gallons.

The Senior Center Commission has decided not to build a senior center on a lot leased to the town by the Holy Ghost Society.

10 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, April 24, 1997

The world-famous gang from the comic strip "Peanuts" will be on the Community Center stage this weekend in the Jamestown Community Theatre's production of "You're a Good Man Charlie Brown."

The annual Shoreline Cleanup last Saturday was postponed (until April 26) due to a nor'easter.