

Council waiting for report about the impact of Federal aquifer designation

By Dotti Farrington

Town officials are waiting for a report by Town Solicitor Peter Ruggiero on possible impacts to the town by a federal aquifer designation that is being requested by some residents of the island, Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said last week.

Keiser said he had concerns the designation could affect any projects that might receive federal funding, even though some reports have already dismissed that probability. He told the Town Council he discussed his concerns with Ruggiero, who said he would give a report on whatever findings he makes.

The designation of the island as a sole source aquifer by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is being sought by Concerned Conanicus Citizens, led by Ellen Winsor, as a follow up to their concerns about impacts on their wells and town water sources in general. The concerns are an outgrowth of some CCC work about impacts of activities at the former landfill on North Main Road, including its required closure as well as proposals to site a highway barn at the landfill or on land abutting it.

Winsor has asked at least three times to give a presentation to the council about the aquifer designation. The first time she made the request several months ago, she was

told the council does not accept computer-generated presentations, as she proposed. Councilors later said they wanted a recommendation from their Water Resource Protection Committee. The Water Resource Protection Committee hosted the EPA regional official Douglas Heath for his explanation of the aquifer designation. The committee subsequently endorsed a revised designation request. Then some councilors complained they have received no data about the designation.

Copies of the formal request for the designation have been available for months, including recently at the town library. Winsor has also tried to have it made available through the town's Web Site.

Town Councilors agreed April 9 to hear more details about the aquifer petition and to host a presentation at a future meeting. The council directed Winsor to submit a written request to give a presentation. She did so for the April 23 meeting, when Council Vice President Julio DiGiando indicated reluctance to schedule a presentation because he said it was not requested appropriately and because concerns were being raised.

In another matter councilors said no citizen can ask directly to put an item on a council agenda, but must have a council member ask to put it on an agenda.

Protect water

Winsor said CCC is planning a drive to gather resident signatures to show support for the designation. CCC sees it as one of many "important steps to protect the island's water, regardless of the EPA role."

Any individual or group may petition for the designation, but a community needs to provide certain data for EPA to act on the petition. Keiser said the costs and time to gather the required data are nominal.

During Heath's presentation to the water resource board, he said the designation was not likely to impact many or any projects in Jamestown. He said the state Department of Environmental Management (DEM) would handle most or all oversight of any project that might be impacted, and the EPA would not duplicate or interfere with DEM work.

Heath said the net effect of the structure of Jamestown's geology is that it represents a sole source aquifer, with no separate watersheds for each section of the island. He emphasized the main benefit of the designation is a new array of opportunities to educate residents about safeguarding the aquifer as the main source of water for all residents.

The DEM said several months ago it supports the Jamestown petition. The DEM specified the designation would have no impact on activities at the town landfill.



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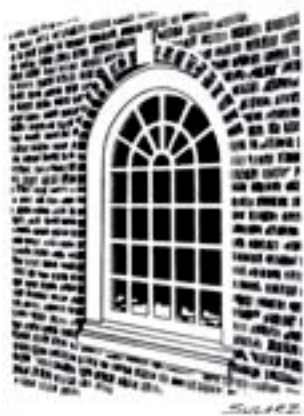
(starting Friday, May 11)

423-9866

32 Narragansett Ave



Remember to send news of your upcoming events to The Press at least two weeks in advance!



The Friends of the Jamestown Library would like to thank the following for making Cinco de Mayo a success!

Thanks to:

- Dwight Smith for designing the invitations
- Flint Audio-Video for donating the sound system for the evening
- Our Emcees: Charlie Normand and Paul McDermott
- Ken Newman for decorations and music

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Jamestown Golf Course
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"We have to acknowledge and apologize to all who attended for the problems we had with the dinner portion of this event. The difficulty was with our catering service and was beyond our control and occurred despite our very best efforts."