

Budget

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cent increase in median assessed household value to \$476,000. Had the town not conducted a re-evaluation, the year-to-year increase would have been set at \$9.82 per \$1,000 of assessed value – or about 3.5 percent higher.

In real dollar terms, that means a homeowner will pay about \$33 more for every \$100,000 of assessed value or approximately \$160 more for a \$500,000 property \$240 for a \$750,000 property, and \$320 more for a \$1 million property.

This year's total budget combines town and school spending for a gross total of \$19,846,185 with \$11,698,616, or 58.9 percent allotted for education and 41.1 percent, or \$8,147,569 going towards

general government expenses. The current fiscal year budget is \$18,987,026, with \$10,417,523 for education and \$7,029,833 going towards general government.

School Committee Chairwoman Catherine Kaiser reported that the school committee unanimously supported the budget while also stressing the challenges faced by school officials to maintaining the island's high-performing schools in light of the descending tax cap passed last year by the General Assembly.

"The cost of sustaining high-performing schools remains the greatest challenge facing the school committee" Kaiser said. "We have entered new waters and are a bit like sailors who must be ready to move together to the new windward side to balance the boat."

According to Kaiser, the budget includes allocations for two new strategic half-time positions, a literacy coach and a math coach, while reducing staff in response to lower enrollment, including the elimination of the full-time position the dean of students. Kaiser also welcomed new superintendent Robert Power to his first Financial Town Meeting in signaling another cost-saving move undertaken by the school committee: the adoption of a new administrative structure of a part-time superintendent and on-site school management which has "required all members of the administrative team to assume responsibilities beyond their traditional job descriptions."

In addition, Kaiser reported that the school committee recently finalized an agreement to lease space at the Lawn Avenue School

to Pathways, a teaching center that will open a satellite classroom for up to six autistic students, in order to generate additional revenue for the district.

In the only citizen motion of the night, Sav Rebecchi moved to amend the annual computer improvements allotment of \$50,000 by a maximum allowed decrease of \$9,999.99, saying that it was "an excessive amount to spend" on computer equipment or upgrades. Keiser acknowledged that the \$50,000 line item was \$30,000 more than in past years. He attributed the additional expense to the administration's move to the new town hall.

In a phone interview on Tuesday, Councilman William Kelly noted that he had raised the same concern as Rebecchi in one of the town work sessions, but felt Keiser

"had given a reasonable response," and it was decided to include the one time expense in the general budget rather than including it as a bond item.

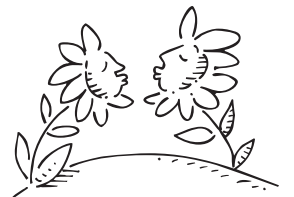
The town's budget is composed of three main categories including operating expenses totaling \$6,627,603, or an increase of \$262,493; capital expenditures of \$694,348, representing a decrease of \$221,112; and debt service of \$825,618 up \$341,020 some of which will help pay for the new town hall project.

The school budget meanwhile consists of operating expenses totaling \$11,101,000, or an increase of \$454,589; a \$56,000 increase in capital spending to \$176,000; and a decrease in debt service of \$3,384 to \$421,616.

Guides needed for island tours

The Jamestown Chamber of Commerce is looking for volunteers to serve as tour guides for summer trolley tours of the island. The Chamber is working with Conanicut Marina and Viking Tours for a "By Land & Sea" tour that will be done each Tuesday in July and August. A tour guide will be needed for each Tuesday, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., to narrate the tour as it drives around to historic points such as Beavertail, the Windmill, Jamestown Museum, and Fort Wetherill. The Chamber is looking for multiple volunteers so that each person would have a choice of which week to volunteer.

The Chamber and the Jamestown Historical Society will provide training and a script so tour guides can narrate and answer questions. Anyone interested in volunteering should contact the Jamestown Chamber at 423-3650 or info@jamestownRIchamber.com.



Water

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ing to state laws.

The state staff and committee noted the report requirements are provided to towns in a complete list of data sought. The report deadline, as extended, was November 2006. There are no options, other than a non-compliance rating, for towns that do not meet the report deadline, the staff said.

The Town Council gave a \$16,000 contract in mid-2006 to Pare Engineering to do the report, a five-year update about the water system and how it will be maintained. Pare did the original five year report and the required 30-month update.

In February of this year, Pare asked for more time and proposed that the board could give a less severe rating, called a notice of first deficiency. The staff said regulations clearly provide

the deficiency rating for a report that is substantially complete and needing relatively few and minor details. Committee members, by consensus, decided to tell the full board that it backs the staff position for non-compliance because so much information is missing.

The staff presented a packet of 16 pages, detailing 11 specific concerns about Jamestown's water, other agency evaluations and generic reference materials. In discussion, Beverly O'Keefe, the board's supervising planner, cited the town's growth of customers and water demands as examples of the need for a fully updated plan.

O'Keefe said Pare's 30-month report listed a population increase of 3,168 people and a water connection increase of 868 customers since December 1999, but it "does not state how this increased demand for more water will be managed without a new source of water supply or an ad-

ditional demand implementation strategy."

Keiser said the numbers are completely wrong. The town has no need to develop a second source of water.

The state is aware that Jamestown is trying to get its new water treatment plant built. But state officials said that factor was not included in the data Pare provided, and it needs to be, with an explanation how that will meet the increased water demand. Keiser agreed Monday that it was hard to understand how the new water treatment plant plans were omitted.

O'Keefe commented, "We may intuitively know what is being done, but we need the plan in writing. The public needs to know and the state needs to know."

The Pare representative at the meeting, Brendan Ennis, said "I don't refute the deficiencies," but he attempted to dismiss O'Keefe's citation about growth, saying the numbers "have to be taken with a grain of salt." O'Keefe and committee members faulted his response as a "poor choice of words." They suggested that even if a Pare methodology now uses a different set of figures, the bottom line is the same: more customers and needs. They also called attention

to other shortcomings of the submitted data.

O'Keefe's written report included "the increasing poor water quality in Jamestown Shores (that) may soon require" town water. She suggested the five year update needs to acknowledge that situation and include plans for response to needs of that area.

Keiser said O'Keefe's statement reflects build-out concerns about Jamestown Shores. He said there are no reports, internal or external, about existing poor water quality. He said the town is acting to prevent build-out problems, via the relatively new high ground water ordinances. He said he realizes such data needs to be added to the report to the state.

Keiser also said he questioned other data that O'Keefe represented as factual and needing attention. O'Keefe said the Jamestown submission had too many significant deficiencies.

Committee members suggested a few other water suppliers are slow to meet regulations. A February 2007 board report lists 30 of the state's 32 major suppliers on schedule, some with time extensions; and only two in non-compliance. Jamestown was on the extension list at the time of that report.



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