

Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

Better government with our new Town Hall?

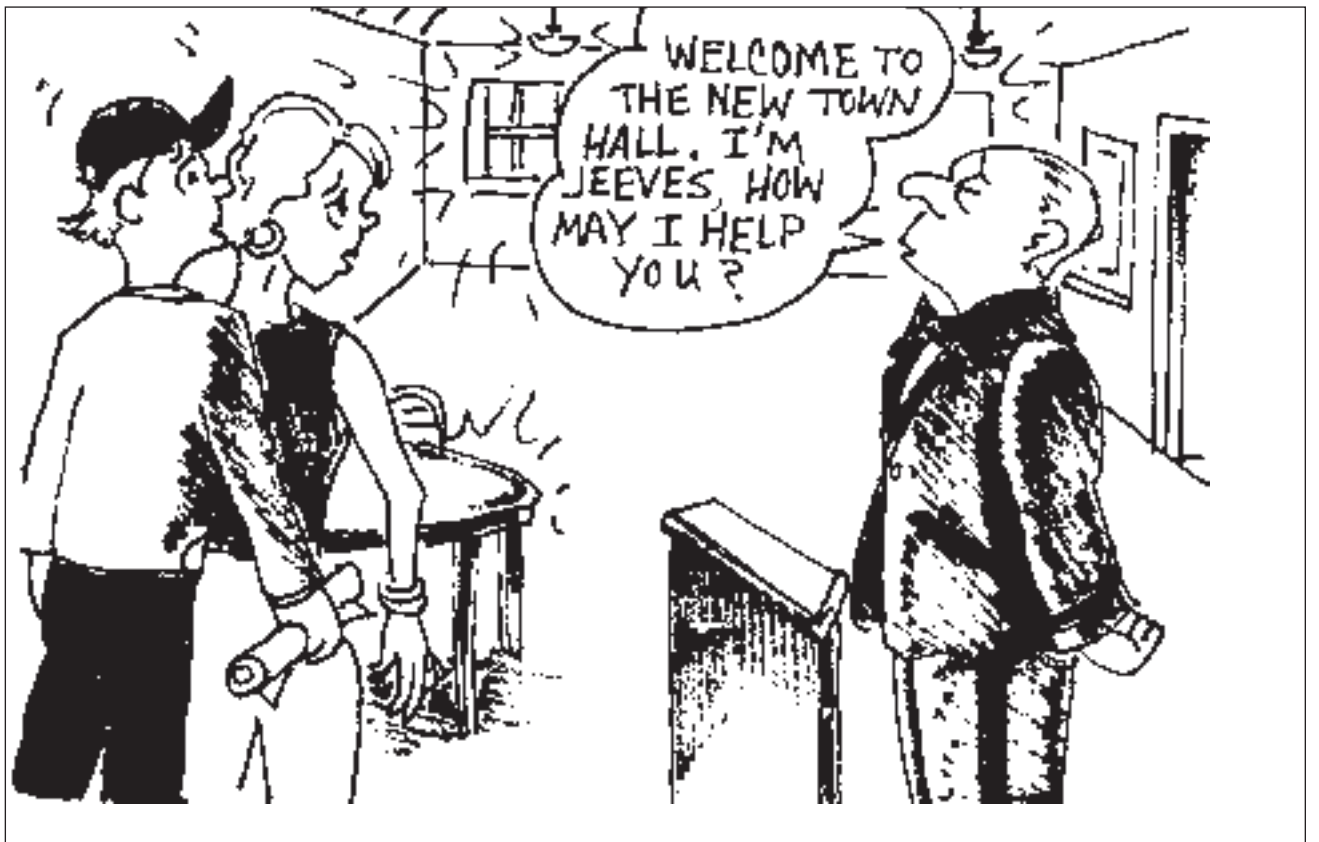
Jamestown's new Town Hall on Narragansett Avenue officially opens for business today. The Town Hall has been a beehive of activity this week as construction crews complete the building project and the town's employees move into their new offices and get themselves organized.

We'd like to note the following about the new facility:

- The new Town Hall is attractive. Designed by island architect Bill Burgin, the Town Hall looks like it belongs in Jamestown. It should be the cornerstone of the "Jamestown Vision" project now underway.
- The new Town Council chambers ought to improve the weekly meetings for everyone involved. Council members will sit on a raised platform and will be more easily seen by those in attendance. In turn, the councilors will be able to better see the members of the audience — their constituents. Voices will be amplified, so everyone can hear what's said.
- Most of the town's offices will now be in one place. You'll recall that the town offices were previously split between Southwest Avenue, Narragansett Avenue and West Street. The new setup means there should be improved communications between the various town departments.
- The design of the new Town Hall will also give islanders better access to the various departments. No longer will folks go to the Town Hall only to learn that the person they need to see has an office at the Southwest Avenue location.

The new Town Hall is impressive — especially when you compare it to what we used to have. The new facility is a tool that, used properly, will make our town government more efficient and accessible to all. If you haven't been inside the Town Hall, stop by soon for a tour.

— Jeff McDonough



Don't give up on the lighthouse

The article written by Tom Shevlin about Beavertail Lighthouse ownership in the Sept. 27 edition of the Jamestown Press needs some clarification. The "final agreement over the management of the light" as stated does not rest with the US Coast Guard. Only the present renewable license arrangement is applicable. When the Coast Guard is ready to relinquish the site, a different set of government agencies enter into the process.

The Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association (BLMA) has, over the past few years, been working with both the Town of Jamestown and RI State DEM in planning the future of the light station in preparation of the US Coast Guard declaring the property as "excess." For a number of reasons that decision has been delayed, but mainly

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because an environmental policy applicable to all land-based lighthouses owned by the Coast Guard is not yet in place.

When the light station becomes available for transfer, a clear and structured procedure for the transfer will take place under the "National Lighthouse Preservation Act of 2000." The Coast Guard will declare the property as "excess" and turn it over to the General Services Administration (GSA) who will call for letters of ownership interest. Those who qualify will be turned over to the National Park Service (NPS), who in turn will invite competitive applications from those qualified state, city or town municipalities and non-profit organizations who wish to take ownership.

Since the beginning of our early planning, it had

been understood that the State of Rhode Island would become the property owner and include a consortium of the Town of Jamestown as a partner and the BLMA as the site's operation manager. This concept has previously been acknowledged by RIDEM, the town council and the Planning Commission. The BLMA has been preparing the detailed criteria to make application to NPS on behalf of the state and town when invited to respond.

The Town Administrator's recent recommendation to have the town forfeit any claim to the property does help resolve and reinforce the understanding of future ownership, but the BLMA strongly advocates that the town remain a partner with BLMA and DEM.

Beavertail Point, its lighthouse, and its significance is embedded as part

of the island history. More importantly, every islander takes a degree of pride that Beavertail light is an icon belonging to each of them. In the same vein, the Town of Jamestown should never relinquish its involvement in the light station's future.

Varoujan Karentz
Chairman
Site Acquisition Committee
Beavertail Lighthouse
Museum Association

Plan should have energy component

Last Thursday's meeting had two to three times as many people as were expected, but it was a low attendance considering the town is asking us for our input. It was well run and covered a lot of areas of interest. The other noticeable part was that the vast majority of people attending were over 50. Where are the young people whose future town is being planned?

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Write to us

LETTERS: Send your letters to: Editor, The Jamestown Press, 42 Narragansett Ave., Jamestown RI 02835. Our fax number is (401) 423-1661.

Our e-mail address is news@jamestownpress.com. Please include your name, address, and a daytime telephone number for verification. Anonymous letters will not be considered for publication. All letters must be limited to 700 words or less.

The news of 10 and 15 years ago is from the Jamestown Press. The news of 100 years ago came from the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, October 2, 1907

Linesmen are at work cutting out the central office of the telephone company for the winter. As soon as the changes are made it will be necessary to call the Newport central to get connections.

The markets on the island are closed for the day to give the men an opportunity to visit the Brockton Fair with the Butchers' Excursion.

From the Newport Daily News, October 7, 1907

The number of people who spent the day yesterday at Beavertail and the Dumplings was unusually large, nearly 100 coming from Newport to fish.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, October 1, 1932

(A request was granted by the School Committee) that the Jamestown Garden Club plant a George Washington memorial tree on the ground of the Thomas H. Clarke school.

It was voted to hold the Americanization school again this winter.

The Palace Theatre has closed for the season, also the White Nook, on Conanicut avenue, and the American Railway express made its last trip to Jamestown Friday.

From the Newport Daily News, October 5, 1932

Miss Claire Weicker, teacher of the sixth grade at the Thomas H. Clarke school, entertained her pupils at a beach party at Mackerel Cove Thursday afternoon.



This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden
Week of October 4

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, October 3, 1957

Conanicut Grange observed 4-H Achievement and Agriculture night last night at the Grange Hall on West Street, preceded by a family chicken dinner under the auspices of the home economics committee.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, October 1, 1982

An increased enrollment at the Jamestown Elementary School has the School Committee looking for future solutions to accommodate the growing student body. Enrollment jumped to 507 students this fall from 467 students last year for kindergarten through Grade 8. ... The Committee attributes some of the enrollment increase to the population increase in Jamestown since the construction of the Newport Bridge. The Committee said another influx can probably be expected with the construction of a new Jamestown Bridge.

From the Newport Daily News, October 5, 1982

A temporary solution to traffic tie ups at Routes 1A and 138 in North Kingstown was outlined to councilmen from Jamestown, North Kingstown and Newport Tuesday night.

15 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, October 1, 1992

Postmaster Thomas DiTomasso and senior Postal Clerk William "Andy" Anderson are retiring tomorrow from their jobs at the Jamestown Post office. DiTomasso has worked for the postal service for 27 years, and Anderson for 24.

The controversial plan to build playing fields at the intersection of East Shore and Eldred Avenue will again be open to debate during a Town Council work session next Monday at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.

Despite partially overcast skies, more than 600 people turned out Sunday for the annual Heyday held at Fox Hill Farm by the Conanicut Island Land Trust.

10 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, October 2, 1997

The Town Council Monday authorized spending \$4,000 to hire a professional to design and cost out an addition to the town ambulance barn on Knowles Court.

The state Department of Transportation Monday agreed to eliminate the east sidewalk from its plan to upgrade Southwest Avenue and to pave the west sidewalk with porous bluestone aggregate.

The quarterly water pumping report shows that water usage jumped significantly during the early summer months, but Steve Goslee, Director of Public Works, said the North reservoir never got to critically low levels this summer despite the fact "we were pumping everything we could produce."