

# Island Opinion

## • EDITORIAL •

### Tomorrow is a rare day for our calendar

Tomorrow is Friday, Feb. 29, 2008. You may remember that February usually has 28 days. This year is different because every few years we add an extra day to the month of February for astronomical bookkeeping reasons.

Feb. 29 is necessary because our calendar is not entirely accurate. We have to adjust our calendar to keep it in alignment with the cosmos. Just a tweak to keep things running smoothly.

Tomorrow is that rare day — which happens every four years or so. It is called Leap Day. It would probably make more sense to call it Alignment Day but for some reason Leap Day was chosen. This year is known as Leap Year.

According to our calendar, one year equals 365 days. However, it really takes the earth 365.2422 days to complete its full orbit around the sun.

If we didn't throw in the Leap Day every few years it wouldn't take long for the calendar to get out of whack. In the short span of 100 years, the calendar would be 24 days ahead of the seasons. Then we would all be confused.

Why do we keep using an inaccurate calendar?

Well, it turns out that the workings of our solar system and the universe are a bit difficult to pack into a simple calendar. There have been many different calendars developed throughout the years and they all have the same problem. Some calendars add a leap month every few years. There are no perfect calendars.

So we keep using our present calendar. We know how to fix it when it needs fixing.

Like the Blue Moon, when there is an extra full moon during a calendar year, the Leap Day is another of our astronomical oddities.

— Jeff McDonough



The Providence Journal is publishing a series of articles on municipal and school budgets to inform readers about the size and cost of their local governments. I applaud the Journal for its commitment to gather and report on local finances. In any year, taxpayers deserve to know where their hard-earned tax dollars are going and why.

Having read the Journal stories, several residents have expressed surprise and concern that Jamestown "employs" a reported work force of 371 people. By failing to define the status of these "employees," the report unintentionally leaves the impression that there are nearly 400 full-time jobs in town government and the schools in Jamestown. This is grossly misleading.



From the  
Town  
Administrator

By Bruce Keiser

Let me set the record straight. In Jamestown, there are 62 full-time municipal positions and four part-time at 20 or more hours per week. These town jobs include: 22 in public safety (police, dispatch, harbor); 20 in highway maintenance, water, and sewer; 5 recreation and parks; and 3 at the library. The remaining 16 full and half-time positions work at Town Hall in building and zoning (2), finance (3), planning (2), public works (3), tax assessor (1), town administrator (2), and town

clerk (3).

The school department employs 56 teachers (regular and special education) and 34 non-teaching staff (administration, clerical, maintenance, and teaching assistants). The total town and school full and half-time workforce is 152.

Where are the other 219 jobs? The Journal's count includes seasonal or temporary help as summer lifeguards, parks maintenance personnel, playground staff, recreation aides, poll workers, as well as substitute teachers. To be counted as an "employee," a person need only to have received a pay check for one or more days of "employment."

Municipal and school budgets are serious business with significant financial impacts on property

owners and on the services the community receives in return. Any journalistic analysis intended to portray what taxpayers are receiving for their public investments is welcome. However, communities are not plain vanilla. They all have different needs and make taxing and spending choices based on these very varied local conditions. For example, our island community of Jamestown cannot neatly be compared to a rural, undeveloped Exeter which has no local schools, no police force, and no water or sewer service, etc.

We will begin our budget workshops to review the FY2008-09 proposed fiscal plan on March 4. I encourage all to come, listen, and ask questions to help shape next year's Town Budget.

### Got something to say?

Write to us. 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. 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, February 27, 1908

Yesterday and last night's rain accompanied by the thaw has made the dirt roads on the island almost impassable.

A number of robins and several small flocks of black-birds have been reported on the island.

##### From the Newport Daily News, March 3, 1908

The rain last evening affected the attendance at the roller skating at the Gardner House, only a few having the hardihood to go out in bad weather.

The local trawl fishermen are making better catches of cod than at any time during the winter.

#### 75 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 25, 1933

Two strokes of the fire alarm at midnight Friday night called the apparatus to a grass fire near the oil wells on the west shore at Conanicut Park. After a half hour's work, the return trip was made and another alarm was sent in, as the fire had broken out again, and at 1:30 A. M. the apparatus returned home.

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 27, 1933

Establishing a standard and precedent that will surely exact repetition the Jamestown Choral society, which was organized in October, and conducted by Carroll W. J. Ball of Newport, with Miss Alice Louise Power of Newport, pianist, gave a concert Sunday afternoon in the Grange hall, before a good-sized audience, which numbered many from



## This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

### Week of February 28

Newport.

#### 50 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 25, 1958

Jamestown, the only community in the state still holding annual town elections, last night moved to join its sister communities in holding biennial elections.

Governor Dennis J. Roberts, in a letter to the Council, expressed the hope "with the Town Council, that unwarranted delay of construction of the oil refinery on the island will not continue." Roberts said in his letter, "As unemployment increases throughout the nation I am more impressed than ever in the need for basic industry in Rhode Island which will provide steady jobs for our people, which are urgently needed."

The U.S. Army Engineers will hold a public hearing on March 18 at the Jamestown Community Center on navigation improvements at Dutch Island Harbor, Jamestown. The hearing is designed to hear arguments on navigation needs at the site.

#### 25 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, February 28, 1983

The social committee of Jamestown's Youth Fellow-

ship has planned activities for March and April. ... The first event is a record hop at St. Mark's Church, this Friday from 8 to 11 p.m.

The Solid Waste Committee of Jamestown Thursday night reviewed the plans of the South Kingstown solid waster transfer station. ... The town's sanitary landfill site is fast filling up with refuse, and the town must either purchase additional land or use off-island means to dispose of its trash.

#### 15 years ago

##### From the Jamestown Press, February 25, 1993

This year, for what may well be the first time in Jamestown's history, department heads will enter into contracts or "employment agreements" with the town.

Voters next Monday night will have the final say on a combined town and school budget of around \$7.3 million for 1993-93.

#### 10 years ago

##### From the Jamestown Press, February 26, 1998

The Town Council Monday authorized parents calling themselves Friends of Jamestown Skaters to go before the Zoning Board of review to seek whatever relief they need to create a skate park next to the school ball fields.

Threatening weather the beginning of the week has delayed yet again repair work on East Ferry's steel pier, making this week four of work-stoppage.

After four years, the Town Council turned some \$82,000 over to the Ambulance Association to renovate their Knowles Court barn and told them not to come back for more money.