

LNG tanker threat continues

By Sam Bari

Representative Bruce Long (R- Jamestown, Middletown) told the Jamestown Town Council that the Weavers Cove LNG proposal is back on the drawing board in a slightly different form.

The new proposal made at the April 30 meeting recommended constructing a Mount Hope Bay water facility on the Rhode Island/Massachusetts line. From there, the LNG would be piped up the Taunton River for the remaining four miles to waiting tanks in Fall River, Long said.

The proposal would still allow LNG tankers to enter Narragansett Bay and pass between Jamestown and Aquidneck Island on the way to Mount Hope Bay where the tankers would connect to the water facility to unload their cargo.

"I will continue to oppose this project in any form where we are exposed to the extreme risks of the LNG tankers and the disruption to our economy and environment," Long said.

2008 supplemental budget

In his open forum report, Long announced that the RI House voted April 25 on the 2008 supplemental budget. After a five-hour debate, Long said he voted against the budget because \$22,000 was cut from state aid to Jamestown with two months left in the fiscal year.

The cut causes services to be reduced and/or property taxes increased, Long said. "It is merely a transfer of tax liability from the state to the taxpayers of Jamestown," Long added. "The budget also severely restricts commercial traffic over the Sakonnet River Bridge where fines will amount to as much as \$600,000."

Truck traffic will be regulated by the number of axles rather than by weight as in the past. He said the change was about raising revenue more than making a safety enhancement.

"State agencies and municipalities will no longer be required to post notices in the newspaper for regulatory and ordinance changes," Long said. "Internet postings will now satisfy public notification. I fear that many local and state residents will be unaware of proposed changes in regulations."

Long said he opposed gambling legislation introduced by the House leadership that will allow Newport Grand and Twin River to operate 24-hours on weekends

and holidays and remain open until 3 a.m. on weekdays. After explaining that the additional gambling monies were needed to balance the budget, a finance committee amendment was introduced to direct over \$1 million dollars to Newport and Lincoln.

"I also voted against this amendment," Long said. "When an amendment was offered to raise the gambling age from 18 to 21 as in Connecticut and Nevada casinos, it was voted down, stating that it would cost the state \$15 million in revenue."

"What a message from state leaders," Long said. "The revenues are more important than the safety and well being of our young adults. These 18 to 20 year olds are at a very vulnerable age to gambling addiction. The social and financial costs are too high. But that didn't seem to make much difference," he said. Long voted to increase the gambling age to 21.

Town Administrator's report

In other business, Town Administrator Bruce Keiser reported that the town has received five responses from the short-listed group of contractors who had submitted proposals for the highway barn and salt storage shed design/build bid solicitation.

All bids for the highway barn construction are above the \$1.5 million bonding limit approved by voters in August 2007, Keiser said. Public Works Director Steve Goslee and Town Engineer Michael Gray joined him in evaluating the proposals for conformance with bid specifications, Keiser said.

Recommendations for award of the bid would be on the next Town Council agenda, Keiser

added.

A presentation on landfill closure remediation design, cost, and schedule will be provided at the May 12 Town Council meeting. Due to prior commitments, GZA Geo Environmental, Inc., of Providence, the firm contracted to handle the closure was delayed in developing updated cost estimates.

Keiser said the finance director, school superintendent and business manager met with him and a representative of the non-profit health insurance group formed by the East Bay communities to jointly purchase health care. "We are exploring the financial benefits to Jamestown that may accrue from participation in this collaborative," Keiser said. He will provide an update to the Town Council when the financial analysis is completed, he added.

Budget changes made

Due to escalating fuel costs, Keiser said that the town fuel line item would be increased from \$24,000 to \$44,000 in the 2008-2009 budget. Additionally, \$2,500 would be deducted from the budget for repairs of the police patrol boat that would not be put into service this year.

A further change to the spending plan includes a \$168,000 transfer of funds from the school budget, which would be used for the Rolling Agenda, school grounds and bike trail program, Keiser said.

Keiser suggested including a \$40,000 request to improve the transfer station entrance in the capitol budget. The request would add two cents to the proposed tax rate for a total of \$8.11 per thousand.



Getting a lift

Molly Tiexiera gave a horse ride to Kirstin Barrett during the annual Kentucky Derby race at Jamestown school on Monday. Physical Education teacher Joe Ucci puts on the race each year in honor of the famous May Run for the Roses.

Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



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