

Harbor

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was not in receivership.

After Paterson's report, Council President Julio DiGiando said, "We have to discuss what we are going to do with the property if your efforts are not successful."

"Other entities got in the middle and delayed my quest for financing," Paterson said. "That's why it has taken so long."

Despite Paterson's optimism about getting financing and her declaration that the marina is not going to be sold, an inch-thick, 15-part, bound document dated May 7 from the law firm of Ferrucci Russo P.C. of Providence says differently. The document is addressed to "All parties interested in bidding on the business, operations, and assets of DHBV LLC."

According to the document, Joseph P. Ferrucci has been appointed by the Providence County Superior Court as Special Master of Dutch Harbor. The document says specifically, "The Court has appointed me as Special Master in order to sell Dutch Harbor's business, assets and real estate for the benefit of its creditors."

The document also includes a May 6 offer to purchase the marina for \$1.8 million from Conanicut Marine Services. The offer was signed and accepted by the Special Master on May 7. According to the document, a deposit of \$90,000 was given to the Special Master with the balance due upon court approval.

The offer, however, is subject to higher and better offers that could be received before the June 2 bid cutoff date. The court is scheduled to make a decision on the winning bid on June 4.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said that should the marina be sold, he would like the council to entertain the idea of purchasing the business and turning the marina into a public sailing center similar to Sail Newport.

Keiser said that the public auction was advertised in a display ad in the Providence Journal two weeks ago. "The phones have been busy in the zoning department all week long," Keiser said. He asked if the council had any interest in the property. The council discussed the matter briefly before Councilwoman Barbara Szeptowski said that she didn't want to put the message out to the public that the council was in fa-

vor of or taking for granted that the property was definitely being sold. She said that Paterson should be given the chance to exhaust all possibilities to obtain financing.

"We don't want to see you lose the business," Szeptowski said to Paterson. "We sincerely hope you can arrange financing and get through this."

DiGiando cautioned the council about waiting too long without a backup plan. "I think we have to discuss our position in case things don't work out," he said.

Szeptowski asked if the council would consider posting the possibility of a meeting to further discuss the matter as a contingency plan.

Councilman Robert Sutton made a motion to put the matter on the next council agenda to "clarify the town's position on the use of the Dutch Harbor property should it be sold," he said. He also suggested that the use of the property other than a marina should at least be discussed. "Maybe there might be something we could do with that property that is more beneficial to the town," he said. "I think all possibilities should be considered."

Zero fund

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ing and vehemently opposed the bill. "This legislation is totally outrageous and unconscionable," said Long. Jamestown already receives the third lowest school aid in the state, he said.

Rep. Edith Ajello, of Providence, and Rep. J. Russell Jackson, of Newport questioned the bill's sponsor and argued the funds appropriated should be proportionate to the "wealth" of the community, and Long agreed. For example, in the 1970s a special education law was passed requiring every school system in the state to develop programs for special needs children, an individual education program, or IEP. "If Jamestown loses all funding and theoretically speaking, coincidentally has an inordinate amount of special needs children, where's the money going to come from?" Long asked.

"We receive \$531,908, that's it, that's the total amount of education aid, and if you have say two, three, or four children with special needs the remaining amount must be made up entirely by the Jamestown tax payers," Long said, adding, "This legislation amounts to a state imposed property tax increase on Jamestown, because that's exactly where those dollars will be made up in our local budget."

The bill is based on a proposed formula developed by a joint legislative commission, which argues the formula has worked in the past; factoring in the number of students in the system, and the assessed value of community property. But Long countered, "You can develop any for-

mula you want. Before 1995 the amount of money each community got was based on a function of how much money they spent; the more money you put in, the more money you received."

The loss of funds would also hit the school budget hard since many families send their children off the island for schooling, and the state is required to pay for transportation to the schools that fall into their regions. The burden would again be placed on the Jamestown taxpayer, Long said.

In a written statement, Jamestown School Committee Chairwoman Catherine Kaiser said, "While the bill sets goals for state funding of extraordinary education costs, such as out-of-state district busing or special education costs in excess of \$32,000, it does not guarantee the funding. In other words, for Jamestown and eight other districts, the only predictable aspect of the formula proposed, is that we will receive no state aid, no guarantee of state funding for expenses and no relief from the statutory (property) tax cap."

Long agreed. "The legislation says we're going to try to fund it, we'll do our best to come up with the money but there's no guarantees, the best we can guarantee is your aid from the state will be zero. They want a predictable formula that will be fair, and the money is just not there, like I said the only thing that is predictable is zero funding," he said.

"The net budgetary result of this legislation will be that twelve school districts will benefit at the expense of twenty-two districts. Every school district deserves a predictable funding formula that is fair and equitable," Long said.



Rub-a-dub dub

State workers used the hull of a boat attached to a crane to work on new pilings being added at Ft. Wetherill.

Photo by Dwight Smith

Zoo aflutter for holiday weekend

Roger Williams Park Zoo is ushering in summer with a "flutter" of activity this Memorial Day weekend.

In honor of its new "Flutterby: Butterflies in Bloom" exhibit, opening May 24, the Zoo is renaming this holiday weekend "Flutterby Weekend" and is hosting a variety of butterfly-themed activities on Saturday and Sunday, May 24 and 25.

Activities run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. and are free with regular Zoo admission.

For a complete schedule of activities, including special performance times, visit www.rogerwilliamsparkzoo.org or call 785-3510.

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