

Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

Voters get their say at town FTM

On Monday evening at the Lawn Avenue School islanders will have an opportunity to participate in one of our more cherished New England traditions – the Financial Town Meeting.

Commonly called the FTM, the gathering is required by our town charter. Once a year the Town Council and the School Committee must submit their annual budgets to the town's registered voters. That means that you the voter will get the final say on how our town will spend the tax money it collects from us on the property that we own.

For the coming fiscal year the municipal budget is proposed at \$8,466,312. That figure represents a 3.9 percent increase over the previous budget.

The proposed school budget is \$12,264,907, an increase of 5.6 percent over the current year. If you've been following the news items and letters in the Jamestown Press this spring you know there has been some public frustration about rising school expenses as the student enrollment dwindles. We are paying more for less. Expect some debate over the proposed school budget.

It has been argued that the Financial Town Meeting has become an anachronism and is unnecessary. State law limits the town to a 5.25 percent property tax increase. If the tax increase is greater than that, the town must seek approval from the state legislature.

Islanders seem satisfied with the way their money is being spent. Only 70 people out of the 4,500 registered Jamestown voters attended last year's FTM. The meeting took 30 minutes. But it wasn't all that long ago – in the early 1990s – that about 700 people attended the FTM. People had quite a bit to say and the meeting lasted for two nights.

Why do we still need the FTM? We could easily abolish the FTM. In doing so we would lose that small connection to our colonial heritage. I think people want to believe they can still stand up and shout about their taxes if necessary.

The FTM brings out the Yankee in all of us. Maybe we should make the meeting a bit more social as it's a great time to visit with our neighbors. Perhaps next year we could hold a community potluck along with the FTM. Baked beans, anyone?

– Jeff McDonough



Jamestown Girl Scouts decorated a wagon for the Community Farm at the annual Memorial Day parade on Monday. Photo by Jeff McDonough

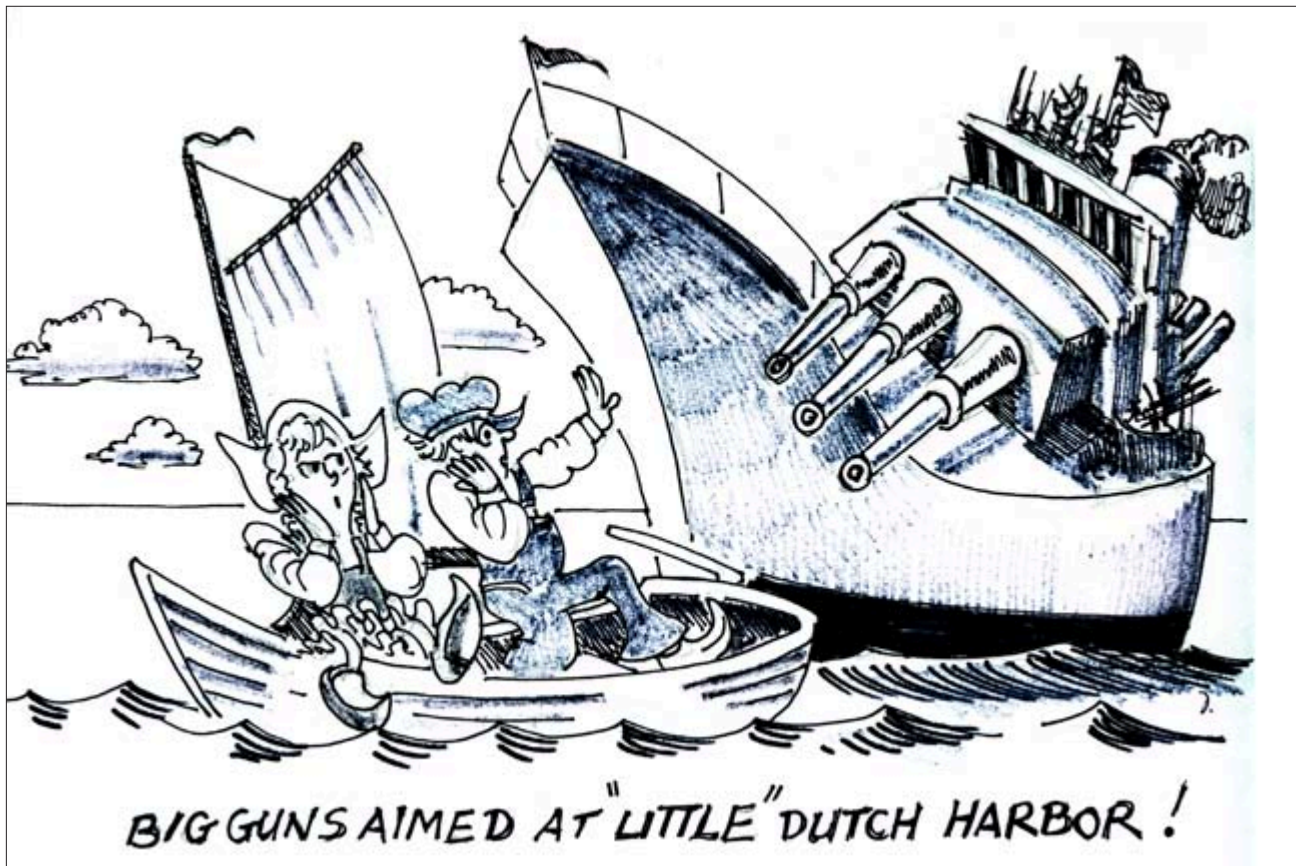
Green thumbs needed at the community farm

It's planting time at the Jamestown Community Farm and everyone is invited to help.

You'll find the community farm at the corner of El-dred Avenue and East Shore Road. Last year the farm produced about 85,000 pounds of fresh vegetables that was donated to food kitchens and shelters around the state, including groups in Jamestown.

The community farm is entirely staffed by volunteers. All that is required is a desire to enjoy the great outdoors and accomplish something worthwhile. Get your hands dirty in some island soil. What could be better than making things grow? You will feel good.

Work sessions happen Tuesday and Thursday evenings and Saturday mornings. No need to call ahead, just show up. Your help will be welcome.



Council should inform of concerns

We would like to thank Councilmen Kelly and Sutton for informing the residents of Jamestown about their concerns regarding the Jamestown Schools. For those of us without any direct connection to the schools this is a very important service.

Town Council members are elected to represent the interests of all Jamestown taxpayers. Ideally, they do this by attending meetings, questioning presenters, seeking additional information and advising the electorate of their con-

• LETTERS •

cerns.

While some issues have more impact and importance than others, no department is an autonomous entity and Jamestown property taxes fund all town services.

One commentator on this issue "hopes for a healthy relationship between town and school." We certainly applaud and support that hope. But unless the discussion is based on mutual respect and focused on issues, public

discussion may degenerate into the appalling behavior we have seen in recent years at North Kingstown School Committee meetings. And then we'll all be losers.

Carol Buglio
Susan Greene
Jamestown

Honored to represent mothers on Mother's Day

Time has flown by since

I was so singularly honored to represent all of the mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers on the island in the Mothers Day feature story. It was a lovely article, and I was so proud to see almost all of my family in the picture we call the "Generations." It has been my very good fortune to have been able to have come to Jamestown as a young woman, to meet and marry my husband and to raise our kids in such a great town. I want to also express my thanks to all of my family and friends who make every day a truly

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This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

Week of May 29

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, May 26, 1908

The ferry company is having its wharves put in condition for the resumption of summer travel. The hourly schedule goes into effect May 30, after which tickets will be collected as the passengers go aboard instead of as they pass off, as has been done during the winter and spring.

From the Newport Daily News, May 27, 1908

Rev. H. N. Jeter appeared before the (town) council asking for the free use of the town hall for religious meetings, permission being granted on the same condition as in previous years. ... An ordinance prohibiting the hitching of cattle in the highway was passed and the chief of police ordered to enforce the same. ... The petition of H. Audley Clarke for street signs was taken up and it was voted that Charles Sowle be a committee to have signs placed on the principal streets running from Narragansett avenue. ... Two bids for the lighting of street lamps at Conanicut Park were received Wilton S. Arnold, \$10 and John Rosa \$12 per month. Arnold was awarded the contract. (In the compact part of town the contract was awarded to G. W. Peckham, Jr. for \$130. Alton Head received the contract for watering the streets with cart, team and man for \$5 a day.)

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, May 26, 1933

(At the town council meeting it was) voted (that) Arthur B. Mitchell and Charles A. Westall be grant-

ed to sell fireworks from noon Saturday July 1 to 12 o'clock midnight Tuesday, July 4, subject to the following conditions: That no blank cartridges, no explosive firecrackers over three inches in length or firecrackers containing dynamite be sold.

From the Newport Daily News, May 31, 1933

A large number of townspeople and summer residents gathered at Shoreby Hill Memorial Day to witness the parade. ... After the three volleys by the firing squad and taps, the line marched to the Four Corners cemetery. Commander of the Jamestown Post, A. W. Bowser, presented to the town council, as a gift from the Jamestown Post American Legion, the gates of the cemetery, which have recently been placed there, and they were accepted on behalf of the council by Captain Shackford.

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, May 28, 1958

The prospective construction of the Commerce Oil refinery in Jamestown was cited today by the Navy as a factor which argues against further build-up in the torpedo testing program at the Underwater Ordinance Station at Newport.

The Jamestown School Committee adopted a \$200 a-year wage increase for all teachers at its meeting last night in the Jamestown Elementary School. This raises the minimum from \$3,400 to \$3,600 and the maximum from \$5,400 to \$5,600. An additional \$200 was granted four teachers holding masters' degrees.

From the Newport Daily News, May 31, 1958

Cmdr. Eugene Lamimam, USN of Jamestown was the principal speaker at the town's Memorial Day exercises yesterday. ... The exercises were held at the Four Corners Cemetery following the parade sponsored by the American Legion post. ... A short memorial service at the east waterfront preceded the parade. ... In the first division, Spanish-American War veterans were represented by William D. Eddy and Cmdr. C. Clay.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, May 31, 1983

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