

Narragansett Tribe seeks 'partnership' on school campus improvement plan

By Sam Bari

A representative of the Narragansett Tribe appeared at a special work session with the School Committee and the Town Council Monday evening to seek a partnership with the town on a proposed land project involving town-owned lands. The work session concerned the land use plan for the Jamestown schools and surrounding neighborhood.

After an overview of the plans sponsored by Rolling Agenda were presented by Gates Leighton and Associates, the landscape architects contracted to design the project, Doug Harris, a Tribal Historic Preservation officer, presented a lengthy letter to Town Council President Julio DiGiando.

Although the letter was not read, and the details were not revealed because of time considerations, Harris explained that the contents outlined the Narragansett Tribe's position on the proposed land and neighborhood project.

Harris said that the letter requested a partnership between the tribe and the town to assure that Native American interests, artifacts and burials would be protected to their satisfaction. He said the tribe wanted to be involved in the decision making process as the project progressed.

Harris reminded the council of the pain both sides experienced in completing the initial projects when the Melrose Avenue and Lawn Avenue schools were being built. He suggested that working

together as partners and clearly defining the requirements of the tribe would make the process easier for everyone involved.

DiGiando said he would make copies of the letter for the council members to consider before voting on approving the plans for the project. School Committee Chairwoman Kathy Kaiser made a motion for the School Committee to vote on the plans conditional to approval by the Town Council. The committee voted unanimously for approval.

Kaiser said that the committee was depending on a vote that evening because making the matter an agenda item for a School Committee meeting in the near future could prove difficult. With the vote of approval, the committee can proceed with making plans for the use of grant money and contributions that are available to begin work on the project.

Randall L. Collins, Jr., an executive vice president from Gates, Leighton & Associates, Inc., the Providence firm contracted to draft the plans and recommend a budget gave a comprehensive slide presentation of the complete project.

Julie Kallfelz, secretary of Rolling Agenda, the cycling group responsible for initiating the idea of the Neighborhood Improvement Plan, said earlier that the project would progress as funds were secured. Kallfelz said that grant money, donations and private funding would all be brought into play, and that she did not an-

ticipate any problems in raising adequate financing.

The council agreed. Several members mentioned that a great deal of the work could be performed by town workers and volunteers to reduce the \$3,356,619.10 proposed budget to a more workable figure.

Collins' PowerPoint presentation clearly defined neighborhood, campus and playing field improvements. Bike paths, measured mile walking trails, landscaping, sidewalk repairs and installations, crosswalks, and playing field and playground upgrades were all included in the presentation.

Collins assured all who were in attendance that the Narragansett Tribe was involved with the design from the very beginning. He said the tribe made it clear that their concerns were all about below ground impact. Collins emphasized that the plans were intentionally designed for above ground alterations and improvements to minimize impact on Native American remains that are in the area.

He said that accommodating the wishes of the Narragansett Tribe was their first priority.

Few questions were asked by Town Council and School Committee members about the comprehensive plan. Books of the plans were distributed to council and committee members so they could study them and bring any questions or concerns to the June 23 Town Council meeting.



What a mess

Mikayla Kramer had a big mess to clean up after manning the slime booth at the Penny Carnival. Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



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- Linda Warner, Life-long Jamestown resident

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