

# Resignation of NK superintendent may affect long term goals

By Michaela Kennedy

North Kingstown School Superintendent Priscilla Feir announced her resignation June 19, a mere eight months after securing the position.

Jamestown School Committee members spoke out to assure residents that the shuffling North Kingstown administration would have little effect on the high school's performance, at least in the short term.

At their meeting Tuesday night, The NK school panel appointed assistant superintendent Philip Thornton to serve as interim superintendent.

Committee members expressed confidence in the education residents receive from North Kingstown High School. School committee member William "Bucky" Brennan dismissed worries that Jamestown students might be affected by top administrator turn-overs. "In the short term, everyone is going to get a great education at N.K.," he said.

School committee chairwoman Cathy Kaiser expressed disappointment to see Feir leave, especially since she and the Jamestown schools superintendent had established a close working relationship. Nevertheless, she was quick

to support the high school. "I am confident that the high school administration and teachers will continue to provide our students with a stable learning environment during district-level transition," Kaiser said.

The impact of high school budget cuts remains Kaiser's biggest worry. She voiced concern that student performance might erode as a result of budget constraints. "As a 'sending' community, we need to monitor that very closely," Kaiser added.

Brennan was quick to criticize the politics of the North Kingstown School Committee, however, and called for close examination of the committee's structure. "People in Jamestown need to look at long term leadership in North Kingstown," he added. "Unless they (North Kingstown residents) do something about the school committee dynamics and the changing budget, they will continue to have a changing administration."

Nothing short of a charter change could make a difference in the school system, according to Brennan. The current seven-member board disrupts the decision-making process and weakens the quality of candidates the district can attract. A basic solu-

tion to the eroding administration would be to revise the committee's structure and go to a five-member board. "With seven people, decision-making becomes stagnant on any committee," he said. "Why do they have more people on the school committee than on the town council?"

Brennan stressed that every community in the state is under pressure because of reduced expenditures and a struggling economy. He mentioned the property tax relief law, set in place last year, which imposes much stricter limits on local tax levies. He gave the elimination of the district's technology director position as an example. "Budget pressures and lack of leadership should have everyone concerned down the road," Brennan said.

Typically, not too many Jamestown parents show up to school committee meetings in North Kingstown. Anytime there are issues relating to high school, islanders should take notice, Brennan and Kaiser agreed. "I think Jamestown people need to get more involved and voice their opinions," Brennan said, adding, "High school is one of the most important times of a kid's education."



Members of the Quononoquott Garden Club and town personnel gathered at the newly-landscaped Town Hall to celebrate their efforts. The club gave \$4,000 to the town for the planting.

## Garden club treats residents to Town Hall landscaping effort

Something new has been added to Town Hall on Narragansett Avenue. Over the weekend the property was landscaped due to a gift of \$4,000 from the Quononoquott Garden Club. Club President Jill Meyer said that members voted to budget the funds to help with this civic beautification project.

Gloria Westlake chairs a committee that has been meeting since April to plan the installation of landscape architect Michael Wermay's plans. The committee consists of Carolyn Armington, Jill Meyer, Joyce Allphin and Anna Bernath. Bernath is a landscape designer and Armington is a member of the Landscape Design Council.

Several meetings have been held with Town Planner Lisa Breyer and Town Administrator Bruce Keiser, as well as Mike Gray of the Department of Public Works, who had employees of the town prepare the area by removing sod and amending the soil. "It has truly been a community effort," said Westlake.

Funding for the project has come from several sources including the garden club's yearly plant sale fund-raiser.

In addition to the club's budgeting \$4,000 for the project, Westlake wrote and obtained a grant for \$798 from the Jamestown Community Fund, part of the Rhode Island Foundation which funds projects that benefit the town.

Phase one of landscaping the Town Hall consists of completing the Narragansett Avenue, or north side of the building, as well as the east and most of the south side of the building.

Phase two will be the completion of the west side of the building.

Mike Saracino and Michael Penn of "Landscapes" completed the landscaping on Saturday. The plant material includes Cunningham white rhododendron, red rhododendron, blue prince and princess ilex, dwarf English boxwood, Mother's Day azaleas, Miss Kim lilacs, spirea and leucothoe.

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