

Golf

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that there was no master plan for improvements on the course, nor was there a procedure for resident input.

During the public forum, several additional residents spoke on the matter. Shawn Mayers of Whittier Road said it was "more than just views," that concerned her. She said the town-owned property was "a valuable asset," and that the people of Jamestown "need some input from time to time."

Corrine Colarusso of Calvert Place said that making the issue about private views "trivializes our concerns." She said when she had concerns last year, she had been directed to speak to Town Planner Lisa Bryer, who, she said did not respond to her.

Bill Munger, who owns property behind the police station across the street from the golf course, said that he supported a golf course advisory committee to "protect the views we enjoy so much." He called the views across the course, looking from Conanicus Avenue, "Fabulous!"

Joe Mistowski was in the audience and asked to address the council about the residents' concerns. He described a time some 20 years ago when North Main Road was visible from the course. "It was a liability nightmare," Mistowski said, adding, "we lost about two windshields a week," before some strategic planting of trees was done.

Mistowski described the Jamestown Golf Course as flat

and somewhat boring without the trees. Over the past few years, Mistowski said he has cut down some 125 trees and has replanted many new ones in the same places. "In 22 years, we haven't had many problems," Mistowski said, "until we get into the tree business." He reiterated that trees he's recently planted are in the original places, where trees were removed, or were put there "to deal with liability issues."

Mistowski said that his liability insurance premiums have increased from \$6,000 to \$40,000 per year since he's run the golf course. There were some trees planted to preserve the only dog-leg hole on the course, Mistowski noted.

"Three cedar trees, that's all this is about," Mistowski said about the drive to create an oversight committee.

The council was in general agreement that creating another committee would not solve the problem of communication between the town, the residents and the lease holders. They tasked Town Administrator Bruce Keiser with being the liaison between the abutters and the golf course managers.

Keiser said he had met with residents several times and cited the lease document as being the "master plan" that details capital improvements. The document, Keiser said, identifies "general locations" for the planting of new trees, and outlines capital improvements for the life of the lease. Keiser called the neighborhood problems a matter of "playability versus liability," and said that in a competitive business, the

managers have to make decisions that allow them to stay competitive.

Councilwoman Barbara Szeptowski asked Town Solicitor Peter Ruggiero if the town could change anything in the already-negotiated lease with 18 years left. Ruggiero said that any changes would have to be by agreement and could not be decided unilaterally.

In other business, the Town Council:

- Voted to approve vendor permits for the St. Mark Church Summer Festival on Aug. 23 and the Jamestown Yacht Club's Fools Rules' Regatta, also on Aug. 23. The regatta application included a request for two portable restrooms, which were also approved. Councilman Mike White requested that one of the two portable restrooms be handicap accessible.

- Approved one day peddler licenses for Longade LLC to sell frozen lemonade at the Aug. 8 Skatefest event, with the proceeds going to the Teen Center. Longade LLC also received a license to sell lemonade at the Fools' Rules Regatta, with the proceeds going to the Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force. A third application, for Kingstown Pizza to sell pizza during the Aug. 8 Skatefest, was denied because council members felt that giving the license to an out-of-town for profit business would be in conflict with supporting local establishments.

- A Ft. Getty one-day entertainment license was approved for the Jamestown Chamber of Commerce, who asked to have a band perform at the Aug. 15 "Gettywood" event.

Wind

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icantly, Auten adds, the new law allows Jamestown, and any other community or private renewable project that is eligible under net metering, to generate as much power as they can and use that power throughout the year to off-set their own bills. The excess power generated can also be used to offset all other utility bills owned by the municipality, not just the bill for the closest municipal building.

Because of the net-metering policy, savings for communities is significant, running into hundreds of thousands of dollars. The project in Portsmouth, for example, cost about \$3.5 million. "The biggest barrier for cities and towns is, what's our economic payback?" Auten says. "This could knock a couple of years off the payback period, it's a huge change. It will encourage communities like Jamestown. As a direct result of this law, we're going to see wind turbines go up. That's a great thing."

Yet, Jamestown Wind Committee Chairman Don Wineberg urges the island to look beyond net metering. Wineberg believes the clean energy bill that was vetoed may have more implications for Jamestown than the net metering bill that passed. The net metering bill was designed for small-scale projects that would allow turbines to be anywhere and take advantage of behind the meter use. All of the town's municipal load behind the meter would be put out by one turbine.

Wineberg points out that excess energy produced would have no buyer. If a project qualifies for net metering, the most it can do is reduce the electricity bill to zero. Then, any excess is transferred to the Rhode Island Renewable Energy Low-Income Fund. Even if Jamestown built just one, the town would still generate more energy than it would be worth to make use of the net metering bill. "We would reduce our electricity bill to zero, but we would have to give rest of the energy away."

Since the vetoed energy bill is geared toward commercial proj-

ects, windy Jamestown would benefit from the legislation if it were over-ridden. On a commercial scale, a key question Wineberg asks, "At what price will we be able to sell back to the grid?"

Wineberg talks about the wind committee and the feasibility study. As the panel considers recommendations to the Town Council, considering one turbine as a net metering turbine and then others for commercial may make economic sense. "It might make a lot of sense to pursue a smaller one that would meet the town's energy needs. If we can put turbines together and sell energy and make money off of it, let's do it."

The cost of getting turbines built is huge, Wineberg stresses. It would make no sense to do one small turbine dedicated to net metering, and then larger commercial turbines later on. "The cost of construction, the mobilization costs are very expensive."

The Economic Development Corporation will set up a fund of \$1 million a year, a competitive grant program to help municipal projects, Austen says. Municipalities will be able to get up to half a million dollars for their projects. "The whole reason is to provide incremental funding for cities and towns that have wind resources."

The key to setting renewable energy facilities is the financial support, Auten emphasizes. State government has taken two major steps to make renewables very attractive to cities and towns. "We probably didn't get everything perfect, but the General Assembly took important steps to support communities, undoubtedly, with economic returns."

Sen. Teresa Paiva Weed, a strong and long-time proponent for the state's sustainable energy goals, praises the commitment of the senate toward clean energy. "In the past five years, the state senate has led the way in passage of comprehensive renewable energy legislation," she says. "While the Governor's recent veto of one such law is disheartening, we will continue to champion efficient and environmentally sound energy policy for the state."

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