

# Town administrator ready for latest challenge

By Sam Bari

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser loves his job and he says he considers himself "one of the luckiest town administrators around."

He attributes much of his success to a "very capable staff as well as a supportive Town Council and the enthusiastic residents who volunteer their time and talents. They are all extremely helpful," Keiser said. "And timing is always an important factor."

Keiser came to Jamestown at a time when a number of local projects were at loose ends. "My 30-years of experience has enabled me to understand the requirements of local government and inspired me to foster comprehensive discussions. It is important that everyone understands that their input is not only heard, but it is considered," he said.

After listening to all of the input, responsible decisions can be made, Keiser said. By listening, putting priorities in order, and involving everybody in the process, Keiser said he has been able to generate support for his decisions and bring to fruition a number of projects that have beleaguered the town for a long time.

"If I were to leave tomorrow, for whatever reason, I would be most proud of getting majority support on the highway barn location after the project had been subjected to so many years of debate," Keiser said. "We will see a tangible result from that decision in the next few months."

The town administrator would like to be remembered for building community consensus on divisive issues. That is important to him, he said.

Keiser feels that he was fortunate



Town Administrator Bruce Keiser takes a break from his office at Town Hall and relaxes in his backyard with his wife, Mary Ellen.

Photo by Sam Bari

nate to come into office when the "Save the Farms" initiative was getting off the ground after years of planning by the town, the property owners, the land trust and the Department of Environmental Management (DEM).

"That took the combined effort of a vast number of civic-minded people dedicated to preserving the unique quality of Jamestown," he said.

"Even when there are differences, the people in this town realize that their goals are still the same. That is just one of the things that makes this town so special," Keiser said.

Besides making a priority of completing projects that he inherited, the town administrator has a vision for the direction the town must take in several areas

to continue to enjoy success.

"All areas are of equal importance," Keiser said. "We'll start with finance."

Keiser sees maintaining the town's stable financial condition and high bond rating as a must. He also believes minimizing tax rate increases, and looking for opportunities to increase efficiency and reduce costs as important issues.

He said, "Exploring the development of wind energy, encouraging town and school cooperation and consolidation, and containing health care and retirement costs are just as important."

Maintaining and upgrading community infrastructure such as roads, sidewalks, town buildings, is of interest to the entire

community, Keiser said.

"When those issues are in order we can then concentrate on developing community assets," the town administrator said. "We are doing that now with the downtown village improvements, the Fort Getty Plan, and the North Road bike trail as well as the walking trails connected to Great Creek. And we will soon decide on the re-use or disposition of the Fort Wetherill highway barn," Keiser said.

He and Mary Ellen, his wife of 38 years, live in South Kingstown, near the URI campus. They have three daughters who have grown and left the nest, but they return often to visit their parents.

Keiser, 58, grew up in Potts-

ville, Pa. He met his wife while at Boston University where he earned a degree in political science. The Keisers married in 1971, and after graduating from BU, they moved to Virginia where Bruce was awarded a public service fellowship from the U.S. Department of Education. There, he studied public administration in the graduate school program.

In 1978, Keiser got his first job with the Thomas Jefferson area United Fund in Virginia as the director of public relations. Two years later, he moved to South Kingstown with his growing family to work part time for the Bureau of Government Research at the University of Rhode Island.

Keiser worked for the City of Pawtucket, in the Office of Community Affairs and was later promoted to assistant to the mayor, a position he held for two years.

In 1988, he moved on to take the job as director of government services for the RI Public Expenditure Council. He conducted research and policy studies of state and local government tax programs. The Town of South Kingstown hired Keiser as the director of administration in 1990, and he held that post for 16 years.

In 2006, Keiser took the job with Jamestown as town administrator.

Keiser is an avid cyclist and kayaker. He also enjoys yoga and has a strong interest in holistic medicine. He plays golf, skis, and surfs. Recently, he and Mary Ellen have taken a keen interest in sailing, and have participated in the program at Sail Newport.



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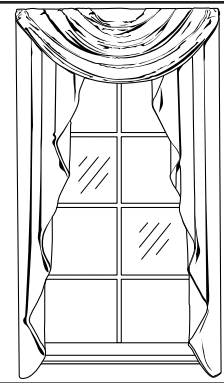
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