

# Island Opinion

## • EDITORIAL •

### Possible amendments to the town charter

Every 10 years or so we are required to review our Town Charter. A committee has been appointed to determine if anything in our charter needs to be changed. That committee will soon make its recommendations to the Town Council.

Here are a couple of small charter amendments offered for consideration:

- Four-year Town Council terms. We presently hold council elections every two years. All five positions are open to election at the same time.

Our Town Council must deal with a wide range of issues. Given that it takes a new council member about one year to figure out how the town operates, it would seem that the council would be able to accomplish more if we had four-year terms instead of two.

We should also consider staggering the elections, so that three council positions are decided in one election, then the other two in an election held two years later. Cycling the council elections would help provide continuity.

Four-year council terms make sense, especially when you consider that our board and commission appointees serve three years. Voters would retain the ability of recall if a council member turned rogue.

- Town Water & Sewer Commission. We ask a lot of our Town Council. In addition to their other duties, the council members serve on the Board of Water & Sewer Commissioners which meets monthly.

It has been suggested that a separate water commission might be more effective.

Such a water commission could operate in a fashion similar to the Harbor Commission. A panel of five to seven members could be appointed and should include representatives selected from residential and commercial water users. There should also be a council liaison.

It could be argued that as with the Harbor Commission, an appointed Water & Sewer Commission would have more time to devote to the issues at hand.

Of course, the Town Council would provide the ultimate oversight of the Water & Sewer Commission, including approval of its budget and capital spending.

— Jeff McDonough



### Spanish teacher goes extra mile

I would like to express my gratitude to Miss Michaela Onosko for providing the after-school Spanish class to my third-grade child. Speaking for my child, he had an amazing time and was thrilled to learn about another culture. I am thankful that our school system provides our students with an opportunity to learn Spanish at a young age.

I am a big proponent for learning about other cultures, having spent my last two years of high school in Singapore where Mandarin and English are the national language. Having been immersed into that culture made me realize how important it is for my children to learn more about the Spanish culture / language since it is becoming more predominant in our country.

There are many statistics

## • LETTERS •

that show that learning Spanish is the most sensible option when it comes to choosing a language to learn. Once you begin learning Spanish you will be amazed at just how much can be spoken with a limited vocabulary and that many of these words are very similar to their English counterparts, which makes learning them that much easier.

It is even more compelling when you realize that about half of the population in the Western Hemisphere and Europe speaks Spanish, making it the primary language for as many people as English in this region of the world.

Providing elementary students with the opportunity to learn a foreign language allows for a longer sequence of instruction and could also increase the chances that a child

could achieve proficiency in a language. We need to ensure whatever language options are provided in our school are also an option at North Kingstown High School (which is where I hope our school of record will *always* stay!) in order for our children to further develop their language skills.

Miss Onosko has been providing students at the Jamestown schools an amazing opportunity to learn a language that will give them practical use – it can expand horizons, stimulate the mind, feed curiosity, provide opportunities for employment, travel and entertainment, enhance cooperation among neighbors and build tolerance among peoples. I just wanted to recognize her and thank her for doing such an amaz-

ing job!

Penny Bush  
Jamestown

### Going green

I am a student at North Kingstown High School and in my current issues class we have been discussing the various ways that our school can make many “green” choices.

We have come up with ideas such as environmentally friendly sugar-cane lunch trays, solar panels to reduce the energy bill and saving energy by turning off unnecessary lights that are currently left on 24/7. These issues are very important and changes can help reduce harm to the environment and save the school a significant amount of money.

My current issues class has also greatly emphasized the importance of using wind energy. Because of the efforts

See “Letters” on page 13

#### 100 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, April 8, 1909

The town meeting for the election of town officers Wednesday was one of the quietest ever held on the island. There being no opposition to the Republican nominees, only 38 voters took the trouble to visit the polls.

Several large flocks of wild geese bound northward, passed over the island yesterday. One man counted eight flocks during the day, all of the, numbering 50 or more birds.

##### From the Newport Daily News, April 12, 1909

A force of men have arrived to equip Dr. W. L. Bates’s sanitarium with steam heat in preparation for keeping the place open year round.

#### 75 years ago

##### From the Newport Daily News, April 7, 1934

An invitation ping pong tournament will be held at St. Matthew’s parish house next Tuesday. ... The tournament will be under the rules of the American Ping Pong Association. These require that the ball be hit back of the table in making the serves.

Jamestown’s tax rate will remain at \$20, according to the budget adopted Saturday afternoon at the annual financial town meeting. A budget totaling \$95,925.26 was approved, and all other efforts to increase it by special appropriations were defeated with the exception of \$750 out of \$2,000 asked for public health nursing services. (Defeated were \$300 for Jamestown Navy Day and \$500 for the purchase of an athletic field. ... By the close vote of 105 to 98, the meeting rejected a proposal to have biennial town elections, starting in 1935.)

#### 50 years ago



## This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

### Week of April 9

*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.*

#### From the Newport Daily News, April 7, 1959

(Robert M.) Clarke said that after checking with industrial leaders in Rhode Island, and with officials of the Raytheon Manufacturing Co, of Waltham, Mass., his committee was informed that Jamestown definitely is not being considered as a possible site for a Raytheon plant. Jamestown, Clarke said he was told, was the least logical of any site in the state.

#### 25 years ago

#### From the Newport Daily News, April 10, 1984

Concerned residents packed the Town Hall chambers Monday night and let the Town Council know they desire a limited access connector road between the island’s two bridges.

The Town Council Monday night denied the renewal application for the ferry boat liquor license.

The Town Council Monday night awarded a Providence firm the contract to design the new solid waster transfer station.

#### From the Newport Daily News, April 12, 1984

Despite unusually bad weather, more people used

the Newport Bridge last month than during March, 1983. (In March 1983, 309,382 vehicles crossed the Newport Bridge compared to 293,225 during the previous March.)

#### 15 years ago

#### From the Jamestown Press, April 7, 1994

The five Russian ship’s officers grimaced, then laughed as they watched quahogger Gerry Cavahlo swallow a freshly shucked raw clam right off the half shell. It was a quintessential Rhode Island moment, the kind of thing tourists come here hoping to find and would be sure to relate to their friends back home.

Two Jamestown teams took first lace Saturday in the Odyssey of the Mind state competition. ... OM is designed to help students develop self confidence and learn to work together through problem-solving.

Due to painting on the Newport Bridge, traffic will be down to one lane on the access road from the bridge to Jamestown for the first few weeks of April.

#### 10 years ago

#### From the Jamestown Press, April 8, 1999

The youngest stars burn brightest in the new Jamestown Community Theatre production of Roald Dahl’s “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory,” a fantastic adventure into the amazing world of Willy Wonka – genius inventor, chocolatier and philanthropist.

The Naval Station in Newport is looking for a Jamestown resident to sit on the Restoration Advisory Board, a community-based group initiated by the Navy to oversee its cleanup of sites contaminated by previous military activity. The northern end of Gould Island is among 12 now slated to be evaluated and “restored” by the Navy under the Environmental Protection Agency’s superfund program.