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Proposed bike path will connect islanders

By Erin Tiernan

It might get a little easier to enjoy Jamestown's natural beauty in the future. The Bike Path Design Committee presented a preliminary plan Monday night to the Town Council for construction of a public pathway that would connect the north end of the island with the commercial downtown.

The proposed 10-foot wide paved bike path would allow easier travel for north end residents into town, connecting them to restaurants, the library and retail shops, as well as offer residents an opportunity to embrace the island's environment.

Councilman and member of the Bike Path Design Committee Robert Sutton said the proposed area for the bike path is the center of the island where most conservation efforts have been focused to protect the land, farms and natural resources.

"The bike way is an important element of how people will get back the enjoyment of that environment," said Sutton. "The path

can easily become a part of that without impacting it negatively."

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation recognized the need for a safe bike path in 2008 and has money available. Two separate routes have been identified so construction can be completed in phases as funding becomes possible.

The proposed east island route begins by North Pond, the town's reservoir, along an existing maintenance road and heads toward Eldred Avenue and the soccer fields. The route will connect to East Shore Road and end at Taylor Point where parking is available.

The north route, heading into town, is proposed to head south along the east side of North Main Road. At the water plant, the path will cross to the western side of the road and a raised boardwalk will allow the path to cross over the creek. Continuing along North Main Road, the path will connect to the ball fields and schools from

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Proposed house plan, driveway makes commissioner wary

By Tyler Will

Planning Commission member Richard Ventrone said he feels "slippery" about plans for a proposed house on Howland Avenue, which call for a 200-foot long private road that he says is really a driveway.

"The reason why we are calling it a private road is because we have a law that says you need 80 feet of frontage," Ventrone said at last week's Planning Com-

mission meeting. It was a public meeting to discuss preliminary plans, according to Town Planner Lisa Bryer, and a complete public hearing will be held on Tuesday, May 5.

The plans for 35 Howland Ave. call for dividing the plot and constructing a single-family dwelling on the new one, according to the proposal. The old lot

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Filling the dumpster

Nick DiGiando tosses a board into the garbage dumpster parked at East Ferry on Saturday morning. DiGiando brought his Atlantic Landscaping work crew to help with the Island Shoreline Cleanup. The old lumber came from the trail at Hull Cove where the rotting boards were removed to make way for a new boardwalk that will be built through the wetlands. Coffee and muffins were donated for the volunteers by Slice of Heaven. The dumpster was donated by Island Rubbish. Some 70 cleanup volunteers gathered 3.99 tons of trash, almost twice as much as last year. See more pictures on page 6.

Photo by Jeff McDonough

Senator Paiva Weed leads lawmakers in economic reforms

By Steven Stycos

As Rhode Island's state budget situation worsens, Jamestown state Senator Teresa Paiva Weed does not regret past tax cuts, although she says some tax increases may be necessary to balance next year's budget. The newly-elected state Senate president also says a controversial new law she sponsored to limit local property taxes is working.

Paiva Weed, now in her ninth term, opposes an across the board increase in the state sales or income taxes, but says she wants to review the automobile excise tax, the income tax's flat tax option, the capital gains tax and special tax breaks. She also supports a hike in the gasoline tax. She



Teresa Paiva Weed

stresses, however, that tax changes must not discourage businesses from bringing jobs to the state. "It's important Rhode Island stay competitive on the national level," she says.

Rhode Island, Paiva Weed notes, consistently ranks among the states with the highest taxes. A 2009 study by the conservative Tax Foundation reported that Rhode Island's "business tax climate index" ranked 46th nationally, while Connecticut and Massachusetts ranked 37th and 32nd respectively. A 2005 study by the United States Census Bureau determined that Rhode Island ranked 12th in per capita state taxes. Both fourth-ranked Connecticut and seventh-ranked Massachusetts had higher taxes.

During the 1990s, the legislature cut the state income and car taxes reducing revenue that today would help reduce state budget deficits. In 1997, the legislature

reduced the income tax rate by 10 percent and the next year it decreased the property tax on automobiles while reimbursing cities and towns for the lost revenue. "I have not thought it was a mistake to reduce the income tax," said Paiva Weed without hesitation, but she is less certain whether the state can continue to reimburse local government for the reduced car tax.

As Senate president, Paiva Weed is a key player in budget negotiations with Governor Donald Carcieri and leaders of the state House of Representatives. When questioned about controversial issues like tax increases, she is cautious not to state firm policy positions. For example, she says the

car tax should be "reexamined," as should the capital gains tax.

Paiva Weed is clear that she opposes an across the board increase in either the sales or income taxes. One aspect of the income tax, however, the flat tax option, should be reexamined, she says. Jamestown's other state legislator, freshman state Representative Deborah Ruggiero, calls the flat tax a boom for the wealthy and voted to repeal it. Now at 6.5 percent, the flat tax option is scheduled to drop to 5.5 percent over the next two years. About half the savings will be pocketed by approximately 2,000 Rhode Island millionaires, according to a Rhode Island Di-

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