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Volume 22, Issue 9

A weekly newspaper serving Conanicut Island

Thursday, June 25, 2009

## Planning Commission chair declines re-election

By Tyler Will

After 12 years of serving on the commission that grants variances, special-use permits and makes other crucial decisions that affect Jamestown's future, Planning Commission Chairman Gary Girard announced last week that he will not run for re-election.

He has been nominated to serve as vice chair for the remaining six months of his term, which expires this coming December.

Girard was chair of the Planning Commission for about six years. If he had opted for another term, he would have remained on the commission until December 2012, and would have likely served as its chairman.

"I have put in a lot of time and effort on the Planning Commission," Girard said after the meeting. "There is always a time to go on to something new."

Girard said he will spend the rest of his term as vice chair. Meanwhile, Michael Swistak, the current vice chairman of the Planning Commission, has been unanimously nominated to assume the role of chairman. Girard will spend the next six months helping Swistak learn the ins and outs of being chairman to ensure a smooth transition.

At the conclusion of Wednesday's Planning Commission meeting, Girard read a statement.

"It's been an honor and a privilege for me to serve the town of Jamestown as both the vice chair and chair of the Planning Commission for the past 12 years," he said. "I do not intend to accept another term on the Planning Commission."

"Therefore, I believe it is in the best interests of the Commission as we elect new officers for the term of July 2009 to June 2010 for me not to run as chair. I intend to spend my remaining amount of time on the commission assisting the chair, the new chair. I thank you all for your past and continued support," he said.

Girard said two other commissioners also have terms that will expire this December, and he does not expect either of them to opt for another term on the commission. Town Planning Assistant Cinthia "Cindy" Reppe said the other two are Commissioners Richard Ventrone and Jean Brown, who with Girard are the senior members of the group. "There might be a lot of new faces," Reppe said.

When the exact number of vacant spots is known, the town will conduct interviews and go through a selection process, Reppe said.



### The big heave-ho

Will Schott, from left, Connor Barry, Jake Froberg and Rock Deresky compete in the 1st and 2nd grade tug-of-war event during Melrose School field day.

Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten

## Town Council discusses sale of Ft. Wetherill property

By Tyler Will

The Jamestown Town Council discussed selling or leasing 3.6 acres of highly coveted shorefront, town-owned land at Ft. Wetherill during a special preliminary meeting at Town Hall on Monday night.

"We are not in a position to make any decision, this is a workshop only," Council President Julio DiGiando said at the beginning of the meeting.

The property in question is the location of the old highway garage, which was built in the early 1900s. Since a new garage is being built, the town no longer needs the

land and is willing to look at selling it, Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said.

The council is considering three proposals: one from the state Department of Environmental Management, one from Conanicut Marine Services and one from the Jamestown Aquaculture Group.

The town could divide the land in two ways. The town may subdivide the lot into a vacant lot and a waterfront property with the old highway garage on it; another division could be one parcel of land, which includes the vacant lot and the waterfront property.

Offers are for \$2.7 million for

the entire piece of land, \$1.5 million for the waterfront and garage portion and \$1.1 million for the vacant lot alone. The DEM has offered to swap land at Beavertail, where the town is thinking about installing a wind turbine to generate electricity.

"I think the town has an interesting choice here," Keiser said after the meeting. "I think potentially it could be a grand slam."

Each of the plans from the bidders provides benefits to the town and region, Keiser said.

JAM wants to promote shell fishing, which the state has wanted to do for some years, the DEM

wants to build a research lab and consolidate several operations throughout South County and CMS wants to build a public deep-water ramp, which would offer valuable marine services for the region, the council said. In addition, the town will reap financial benefits.

When taking proposals, the town considered the impact on the nearby quiet neighborhood, water-dependent use, wastewater disposal, financial return and several other criteria. The town wanted to avoid excessive commercial use and, consequently, a wedding and

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## State mandates, NECAP scores top School Committee concerns

By Samantha Emrich

Members of the Jamestown School Committee raised their voices in a farewell ballad for retiring administrator Dr. Robert Fricklas before taking their seats in the Lawn Avenue library last Thursday for the School Committee meeting. The lyrics instructed him to 'Be rested and tranquil and acronym-free' as he steps down from his position as director of student services.

After the melodious start, the committee got down to business, with major topics of discussion revolving around a new statewide busing mandate, North Kings-town High School NECAP test scores and food services.

Dr. Marcia Lukon said in the superintendent's report that the legislature has mandated a transportation system for special education, parochial, private and charter schools. According to

Lukon, seven districts will participate this summer, followed by eight more districts in September, including Jamestown.

TransPar is the management company that will be mapping the routes and calculating efficiency, relieving the districts of those responsibilities and saving money, Lukon said. "It (the mandate) was initially passed because it promised big savings with the state covering costs for districts," Lu-

kon said. "Savings projections are estimated to be 10 to 15 percent."

However, Dr. Fricklas mentioned that the start-up of the new busing system could initially be more costly than the current system. "The first or second years might cost more, but over the long term there could be substantial savings," Fricklas said.

"We'll see where it goes," said

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