

Budget

Continued from page 1

some future date, districts will be required to make up the 'missed' contributions. In other words, we see the current situation as a deferral of payments, not a savings," Kaiser said.

'Bridge to nowhere'

Kaiser questioned the use of stimulus money as a budget "bridge" during this crisis.

"I see this as the proverbial 'bridge to nowhere,' since the general assembly failed to pass any of the governor's proposed reforms to help cities and towns balance their budgets," Kaiser said.

North Kingstown School Committee member Doug Roth acknowledged similar budgetary concerns for the North Kingstown School Department.

"We received a net zero increase in state aid and less local money than last year to put us at about the \$58 million mark for 2009-2010," Roth said. He qualified his statement by saying that while the budget has stayed the same, contractual costs continue to rise.

"We are in the last year of a generous teacher's contract that gives a 3 percent pay raise and moves the teachers to a 13 percent co-share of a family health plan worth approximately \$14,000 each. The current budget also assumes a 2 percent increase and an 8 percent health care co-share for the support union — paraprofessionals/custodial etc. — on a flat budget," Roth said.

Roth also cited the loss of professional development funds as a cause of grave concern within the North Kingstown district.

"We used to allocate funds for teacher professional development," he said. "As recently as 2006, we allocated upwards of one million in combined local and state dollars to the continued professional development and training of teachers. That money has been zeroed out."

Roth said there were spending cuts made in technology, as well.

"We have basically reduced technology to life support," Roth said, citing the loss of the IT (information technology) director and two technicians. "The IT department lost its director — the only area to lose a lead administrator — and two dedicated tech instructors," he said.

Roth also said that the current replacement plan for computer hardware is problematic. "We have deferred hardware purchasing too much," he said. "We risk an 'at once' hardware failure down the road as all of the district PCs begin to hit their life expectancy limits."

Roth summed up his perception of the technology cuts this way: "The student of 2006 will receive a much better technological offering than the student of 2012."

North Kingstown School Committee Chairman Larry Cerisi characterized the cuts in technology a bit differently. Citing the 2010

budget reduction summary, Cerisi said current cuts to the technology department include only one technology educator and one clerk. In terms of the director's position, Cerisi confirmed that the position was cut, but said that happened two years ago and maintained that the technology department is still being overseen; however, it is now done through the administration.

"The technology director's position has been absorbed into the job title of the assistant superintendent," Cerisi said.

In terms of hardware replacement, "We haven't cut any money from this year's budget for equipment," Cerisi said.

Cerisi did acknowledge, however, that cutting almost \$6 million from the budget over two years has been difficult. "None of this is enjoyable," Cerisi said.

'Not sitting back'

Kaiser said there are difficult concerns currently facing education as a whole, but is optimistic in her approach to the challenges facing Jamestown during this fiscal crisis.

"In Jamestown, we are not going to sit back to see what happens in two years when the stimulus money dries up," she said. "We recognize the need to use this time to achieve increased efficiencies within our schools, working with our unions, and in state and regional collaborations in order to position ourselves to emerge from the recession in a stronger position — both financially and academically."

Jamestown School Committee member Bucky Brennan said that he agreed with Kaiser's assessment and added that he is worried over so-called "unfunded mandates."

"The state and federal govern-

ment pass lots of legislation that turns into 'unfunded mandates'... Unfunded mandates were going to be reduced or done away with. None of that has happened. As a matter of fact, additional legislation continues to come forward that adds to school department costs," Brennan said.

He also spoke to the rising costs of special education.

"Until special education costs get managed more effectively, general education budgets will continue to get chopped," he said.

North Kingstown School Committee member April Brunelle said that she was uncertain about whether it was appropriate to comment on the current budget status while Jamestown was in the process of evaluating North Kingstown High School. She did say, however, that North Kingstown and Jamestown are currently facing the same financial stressors as the rest of the country's educational systems.

Kaiser, Brennan and Roth all mentioned parental involvement in the educational process as a method of helping and supporting schools during difficult times. Kaiser, however, said the legislative arena is an additional area where concerned citizens can make a difference.

"Right now, the most important thing Jamestowners can do to support the schools (and education in Rhode Island) is to contact our legislators to express opposition to bills before the House of Representatives that would automatically extend contracts in the event of a bargaining impasse or mandate binding arbitration. Both scenarios would further tie the hands of management and increase the financial burden on property taxpayers," Kaiser said.



Championship game

Bob Cournoyer and Ray Harrison, both of Jamestown and representing Valley Country Club in Warwick, recently won the 16th Ed Perry Senior Four-Ball Net Championship in a sudden death play-off at Agawam Hunt in a two-day tournament featuring 110 teams. Cournoyer and Harrison halved the first hole with a five (net four), but won the sudden death play-off with a three (net two) on hole number two.

Photo courtesy of Bob Cournoyer

PATIO CLEARANCE SALE

SAVE 40 -70%

NOW THROUGH AUGUST 16TH



free delivery guaranteed lowest prices

Save on Indoor and Outdoor Wicker, Teak, Wrought Iron, Aluminum, Envirowood, Accessories and more. All in-stock merchandise is reduced and ready for delivery.

Enjoy exceptional bargains on great names like Tropitone, Brown-Jordan, Laneventure, Kettler, Kingsley-Bate, Telescope, Woodard and more.



We Sell The Furniture You Keep.

Tues. & Thurs. 9-8, Wed., Fri., Sat., 9-5:30, Sun. 12-4, Closed Mon. 754 Ten Rod Road North Kingstown, RI 401-295-1915

Gardner's Wharf Seafood

Open Year Round
Live Lobster ~ Fresh Fish ~ Shell Fish
170 Main St., Wickford, (next to town Dock)
401-295-4600

Jamestown's Only Complete Automotive Service

Art's Complete One Automotive Service

Body Shop & Mechanical Garage
34 Southwest Ave. 423-1897
Jamestown, RI 02835

RI BODY SHOP LICENSE #525

Long Term Care. How will you pay for it?

Call us for a review of
your insurance options.

An OceanPoint Financial Partner

5 Ferry Wharf • Jamestown, RI 02835 • 423-1111

