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Properties' future tops council concerns

By Phil Zahodiakin

The future of environmentally sensitive properties acquired by the town through tax-default proceedings was explored during a Town Council workshop on Monday night. All but seven of the 88 town-owned lots include wetlands, and almost all of them are located in the middle of Jamestown Shores.

One of the lots is south of Rt. 138, but all the rest are in "the wettest part of the island," said Town Administrator Bruce Keiser. "The owners stopped paying taxes because they concluded that their lots could never be developed." Several abutters have approached the town about purchasing lots to expand their existing properties for aesthetic or recreational purposes.

But the town does not have any intention of selling lots which encompass, or overlap, wetlands, Keiser said, adding that Jamestown "has spent \$150,000 and several years to acquire these properties, and having done so to protect the environment, we would not reverse our course."

According to a power point presentation, there are 36 lots with existing homes whose property lines abut foreclosed properties. Although a member of the public said the town would benefit financially from the sale of foreclosed lots, there wasn't any council support for selling the properties – particularly those with wetlands. Some council members urged the adoption of restrictions that would preclude their sale and development in perpetuity.

Town Council member William Kelly said he wants to "slam the door" on any possibility that a future council sees the lots as a way to erase a deficit.

Christopher Powell, chairman of the Jamestown Conservation Commission, told the council that "there isn't any guarantee that regulations won't change" in such a way that people who bought foreclosed lots would eventually be allowed to build structures or replacement septic systems if they used the latest technologies to protect groundwater.

Simply using the lots for lawns or gardens, a Shores resident warned, would increase the already "high" level of nitrogen in the groundwater if the plant-

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A brush with Bill

Hardy islanders headed out to Beavertail last Sunday morning to catch a glimpse of high surf created by Hurricane Bill. Though the hurricane bypassed New England, its effects were seen at beaches throughout the area.

Photo courtesy of Tom Weaver

Twelve candidates file for local offices

By Stacy Jones

The filing deadline for local elections has come and gone and 12 locals, a mix of new and familiar faces, have filed as candidates for positions on the Town Council, School Committee and as Town Moderator.

The diversity of the candidates is wide – the candidate pool includes teachers, financial professionals, military veterans, corporate managers and entrepreneurs.

Four candidates will vie for the three open seats on the School Committee, including two incumbents and two newcomers. The term for this particular election cycle will be three years

as the town moves to get in line with the state election cycle through an upcoming town charter amendment.

In the town council race, seven candidates will vie for five open seats, while the town moderator position will go uncontested as only incumbent candidate James A. Donnelly filed to run.

But filing declaration of candidacy papers is only the first step in the election process. Candidates now have to file nominating papers by Sept. 1 to qualify to have their names on the November election ballot – a process that requires candidates to get a minimum of 50 sig-

natures on their nominating papers.

This year's election will be held on Nov. 3.

The following is a quick look at candidates who have filed:

Town Moderator

Name: James A. Donnelly

Age: 59

Affiliation: Democrat

Career: Did not respond

Political experience: Currently town mod-

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School Committee opposed to bill that would extend expired contracts

By Eileen M. Daly

On Wednesday, Aug. 19, the Jamestown School Committee voiced its opposition to S0713, a bill that allows for the extension of teacher's contracts after they have expired until a new agreement can be reached, during a discussion of pending legislation. The bill passed 32-2 in the R.I. Senate and is currently waiting for a House vote.

State Representative Deb Ruggiero joined the school committee at its regular monthly meeting, along with Town Administrator Bruce Keiser and Town Council members Bill Kelly and Mike White. Senator Teresa Paiva-Weed was scheduled to attend, but cancelled due to

a family illness.

Chairperson Cathy Kaiser, the school committee's legislative liaison, began the discussion by questioning what the legislature hopes to "solve" with S0713 and other educational bills being considered this fall.

"The proponents of binding arbitration are saying that the process will save school districts money and eliminate work to rule. But there are a lot of fees with binding arbitration. There have been three to five cases of binding arbitration in Newport. With two solicitors billing 200 to 500 hours at \$200 an hour, that is a lot of attorneys' fees. Jamestown doesn't have the luxury of having an attorney on staff. Small

communities will be hurt by binding arbitration," she said.

Kaiser went on to refute the effect binding arbitration would purportedly have on the work-to-rule process (work to rule is an action teachers sometimes take when negotiations are stalled, calling for strict adherence to the contract while refusing all other duties such as coaching or extracurricular activities.).

"Binding arbitration does not preclude work to rule," she said.

She also refuted the idea that these bills would prevent teacher strikes, something

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