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Council

Continued from page 1

ings were treated with fertilizer – which, the resident added, “would be impossible to police.”

Nancy Kolman Ventrone, president of the Jamestown Shores Association, said that Jamestown does not have the resources to police the lots, period.

“Government agencies can only enforce about 20 percent of their regulations,” she said, adding that “there isn’t any way that the lots could be effectively monitored” if they were sold. However, many questions were also raised about effectively monitoring the properties if they aren’t sold.

Town Council President Julio DiGiando said he would support “entering into a stewardship agreement” with a land preservation group. Kelly suggested granting easements to the Conservation Commission or the Conanicut Island Land Trust, warning that, without the participation of a watchdog group, “I’m afraid that we will start seeing couches and old mattresses on these lots.”

Council Vice President Michael White said he felt that “the groups opposing the sale of these lots would help us figure out a way to keep them clean.

The Council will formally debate the disposition of the foreclosed lots at its Sept. 21 meeting. During that session, one of the 88 lots – located on Stern Street – might be mentioned as a candidate for sale because the lot is not a wetland and it is already surrounded by houses.

However, Kelly, like others opposing the sale of any foreclosed lots, warned that selling a lot because it lacked a wetland would “open a can of worms by setting a precedent” that would inevitably invite other buyers to pressure the town to sell other lots.

Council to consider water, sewer hikes

By Phil Zahodiakin

The Town Council will debate, and possibly vote on, a significant increase in water and sewer rates at its Sept. 8 meeting. The town has already proposed a 15 percent increase in the sewer rate; during the Aug. 24 meeting of the council, a consultant recommended a 20 percent increase in the water rate.

The hikes are necessary to service the bond debt incurred for sewage and water system improvements. The council did not debate the proposed sewage rate-hike at last week’s meeting; however, the proposed water-rate hike has some council members looking for ways to distribute the increase among all island residents – even those who have drinking water wells.

“[Town] water is a value-added amenity and a [financial] burden on a specific group of ratepayers – even though the entire island benefits,” said Town Council member William Kelly. His view was shared by fellow council member Robert Sutton, who added that he would like to see these benefits quantified beyond the revenue analysis presented by consultant David Beeben.

One way to spread out the rate increase, said council member Barbara Szeptowski, would be raising the \$75,000 fee that the town pays for renting fire hydrants – a fee listed as fire protection charges in the operating budget – to \$150,000. There aren’t any hydrants beyond the village, but, because the rental fee is paid out of property tax revenue, an increase in the rental fee would be “shared” by all property owners.

Meanwhile, the town is proceeding with its efforts to sell the former town offices on Southwest Avenue. The adequacy of a 20 percent increase in the water rate assumes a \$400,000 sale price for the property in 2010; without that money, there would be a shortfall in the revenue projected by the water division.

Jamestown to host open water rowing race

Hundreds of the world’s best open water rowers and paddlers will descend on Mackerel Cove this Saturday, Aug. 29, to compete in a grueling self-propelled race around the island. The racers will complete a difficult 15.5-mile counter revolution around the island ending at Fort Getty.

This is a new event for Jamestown, but it promises to attract many big names in rowing as it will also be the site of this year’s prestigious North American Open Water Rowing Championship.

“Jamestown welcomed us with open arms. The course is incredible, one of the best in North America for what we need,” said Dan Gorriaran of the Narragansett Boat Club in Providence, one of the race organizers.

Spectators are invited, and can see the mass start at Mackerel Cove at 9 a.m., or view the race from Fort Wetherill or downtown Jamestown (East Ferry town beach). The best vantage point for the finish will be Ft. Getty.

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