

Island Opinion

• EDITORIAL •

State budget crisis washes ashore in Jamestown

Governor Carcieri's plan announced this week to make up the state budget shortfall by saving \$71.4 million in state expenses may hit Jamestown in the pocketbook.

In addition to shutting down state government for 12 days, the governor said he wants to cancel promised reimbursement to cities and towns.

Town Administrator Bruce Keiser said Wednesday that Jamestown could lose \$105,536 if the state withholds the final quarter payment of the motor vehicle tax reimbursement. That amount is in addition to \$130,000 in state funding that has already been trimmed from the current town budget.

What can Jamestown do to make up for the latest expected budget shortfall?

Keiser said that question will have to be debated by the Town Council. He believes the town has the following choices, among others:

- Hold a financial town meeting and ask the voters to approve a supplemental tax bill. Keiser estimates the cost to the taxpayer would be \$12 for each vehicle that is registered in Jamestown.
- Trim \$105,536 from the current town budget. Keiser said that savings could be achieved through a reduction in town employees or a furlough of town employees.

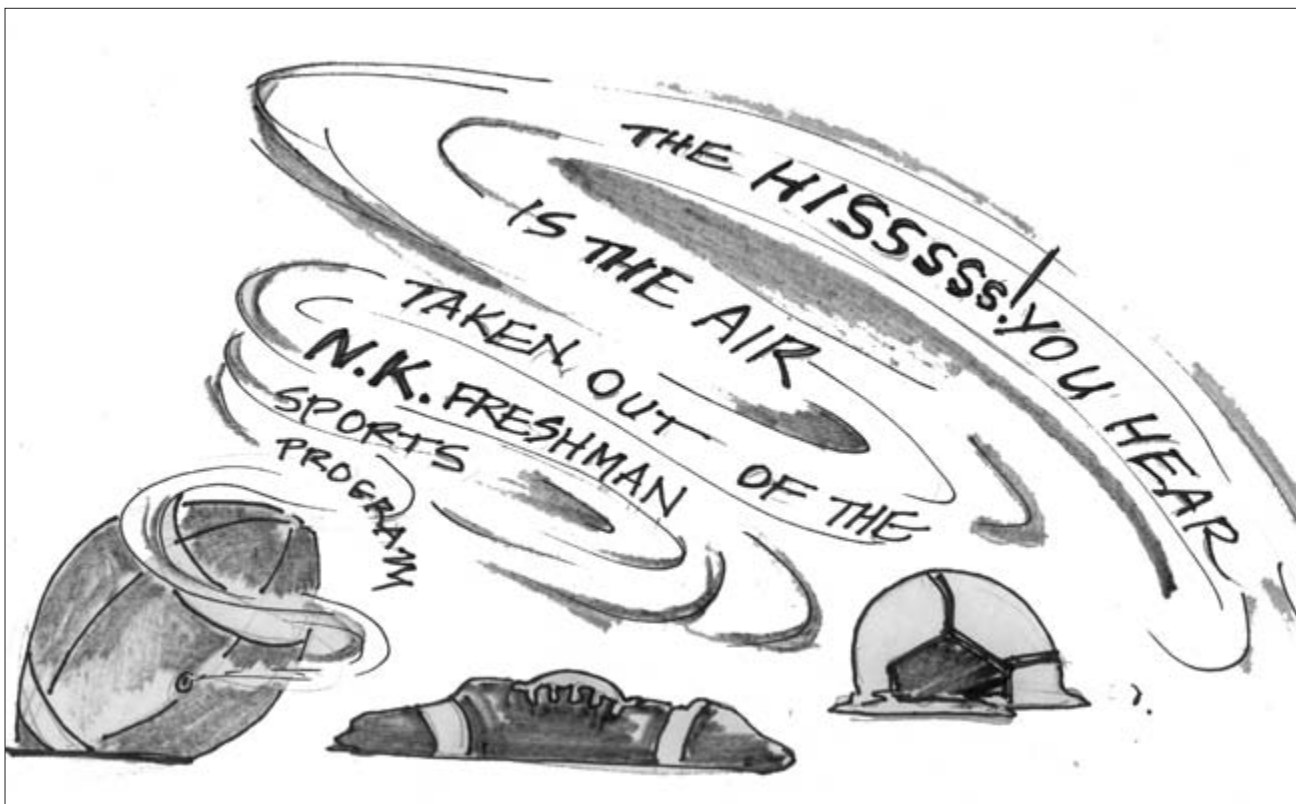
Of course, the easiest thing to do is to have everyone in Jamestown who owns a vehicle pay an additional \$12 to the town.

The General Assembly used federal stimulus money as a bandage for the current state budget. That money won't be available again in another year. One also has to realize that in the next budget cycle the state may cut out all motor vehicle reimbursement to Jamestown. Then, it will cost each vehicle owner an additional \$48 per year.

Trimming the town budget now could be the best alternative as the state may again renege on its payments to the town in 2010-2011.

Jamestown has some tough choices ahead.

— Jeff McDonough



Time to upgrade Ft. Getty

Jamestown should at long last realize the tremendous potential of one of its finest natural assets. Ft. Getty has gorgeous views of the bay, steady breezes and a protected waterfront on Dutch Harbor. Ft. Getty has also suffered decades of neglect from the town. The pavilion has become shabby, and the water, electric and bathroom infrastructure of the campground is crumbling.

Nevertheless, due to the amenity of the site, the park remains a beehive in the summer. Indeed, the revenues from the park keep on growing. Between 1995 and 2004, Ft. Getty contributed almost \$2.7 million to the Jamestown general fund. In the same time frame, the general fund has spent about \$23,000 on Ft. Getty – less

• LETTERS •

than one percent of the revenue generated.

During 2004, Ft. Getty revenues were \$334,000 and expenses were \$103,000. More recent numbers are even more skewed as camping rates since 2004 have jumped 16 percent to \$3,700 per seasonal site.

Ft. Getty could offer a first-class three-season pavilion hosting a steady stream of lucrative local and non-local events and celebrations. The site is so attractive that the pavilion is currently quite busy despite the decay.

The other compelling reason for a Ft. Getty overhaul is to resurrect the image of Jamestown. Presently, campers and pavilion

guests are offered restroom facilities that are disgusting. The port-a-johns provided for some events represent a significant upgrade to the facilities offered by the town.

The message to the paying guests at Ft. Getty seems to be that we will take your money and let you enjoy the view, but we truly don't have respect for you or your group. A shabby image indeed.

The long fallow 2004 Ft. Getty Master Plan needs to be overhauled in a "green" fashion and implemented. The campers deserve a water view and the pavilion guests deserve a class facility and respect for their organizations.

A private design group

with experience in recreational facilities could rapidly develop a plan. The past and future increased revenues will fund the overhaul and preserve a continuing surplus.

The golf course is a success. The same management model should be applied to the Ft. Getty facility – professional and knowledgeable.

The park should stay intact. The FAST sailing school lease would provide no income and would be granted 20-year waterfront access. The building proposed is too large and not needed by the town. Maintenance, utilities and staffing would drain revenue from more beneficial projects. If desired, a great town sailing program could operate out of a modest pavilion-style

See "Letters" on page 16

100 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 26, 1909

A dance to raise funds for the maintenance of the reading room and gymnasium of the Boys' club was given Wednesday evening in the Gardner House.

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 30, 1909

A heavy shower, Sunday afternoon, turned the layer of fine dust on Narragansett Avenue into a coating of slippery mud over the macadam, and that no accident happened to the many automobiles crossing the island, is fortunate. Those that had chains made out all right but others, not so equipped, did all kinds of stunts.

75 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 27, 1934

A Dutch treat clambake was held Sunday evening on the rocks at Beavertail by a large number of the members of the summer colony. An orchestra was in attendance and the bake was prepared by Andrew Lodkey.

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 30, 1934

Previous to the meeting of the (school) committee, the committee was taken on a ride to Beavertail by Stephen J. Zweir in the new Wayne school bus recently purchased. This bus has a seating capacity of 38, as rated by the State Board of Public Roads, but more can be comfortably accommodated. Under the new State regulations, the bus has shatter-proof glass throughout and is further protected by wire window guards, emergency door in rear and fuel tank outside of the body. On the front and rear of the bus are the words "School Bus" and on the sides "Jamestown Schools."

50 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 25, 1959

The Jamestown Town Council last night, on recommendation of the Planning Board, refused the request of three Jamestown citizens to buy 24 acres of town-owned land in the Potter's Cove area to build a private marina. ...The



This week in Island history

Compiled by Sue Maden

Week of August 27

The news of 10 and 15 years ago is from the Jamestown Press. The news of 100 years ago came from the collection of the Newport Historical Society.

Planning Board said this is the same land site proposed for a state marina. The land involved is on the easterly side of East Shore Road. About half of it is farm land and half is marsh land.

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 28, 1959

The president of Gulf Oil Corp., one of the world's largest, said in Providence last night that Commerce Oil Corp. has not abandoned its attempt to build a \$50,000,000 refinery in Jamestown.

Rules governing acceptable attire for classroom wear (were) contained in a letter addressed to parents of Jamestown school children this week. ... The rules prohibit dungarees, leotards or hoop-type skirts, cleats on shoes, any "distracting" clothing, also the use of lipstick, and "fad" style haircuts for boys.

25 years ago

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 28, 1984

Construction crews scheduled to put a new concrete deck on the Jamestown Bridge will be working around the clock to speed up the operation.

From the Newport Daily News, Aug. 31, 1984

If everything goes "smoothly" Jamestown may have ca-

ble television in six months. "I think it will be done fairly quickly," Bruce Stevenson, a spokesman for the R.I. Division of Public Utilities, said today. The DPU regulates cable television in the state. Barring snags in the process, residents could begin tuning into MTV, ESPN or HBO in six months. (Rollins Cablevision was to be the provider.)

15 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, Aug. 25, 1994

Although the town owns 115 separate parcels of land, only slightly more than a handful could be sold, to raise revenue for the town. "Most of the large lots have a legitimate government function," Town Planner George Meservey told the Town Council Monday.

Town officials are asking for proposals for the private management of the town-owned campground at Ft. Getty. Originally the Ft. Getty Committee recommended that the town continue to run the campground because members believed they would not be able to find a private operator willing to take on the task. The campground earns the town a profit of over \$200,000 a year, enough to cover the parks and recreation department annual budget. But since then, the committee has learned of at least one resident who is interested in operating the campground, and wants to find out if there are others willing to submit proposals before deciding whether or not to stick with town management or make the operation private.

10 years ago

From the Jamestown Press, Aug. 26, 1999

As always, a new school year brings with it new names to memorize, new processes to try, new teachers to please and new standards to achieve. This year is no different as teachers and staff make last minute preparations to welcome 668 new and returning students to the Jamestown School on Wednesday. Six new teachers will make their mark on Jamestown students this year.