

Bus parking, teacher evaluation top School Committee meeting

By Erin Tiernan

Administrators at both the Lawn Avenue and Melrose schools reported a successful start to the school year during the School Committee meeting on Sept. 17, and discussed plans for growth and improvements in technology and curriculum that will take place throughout the academic year.

The new school year is marked by the appointment of a new state education commissioner, Deborah Gist, who will focus on improving educator quality and implementing more rigorous academic standards throughout the state.

A new model comprised of six different evaluative standards will be put on hearing by Commissioner Gist in December, said Superintendent Marcia Lukon, who reported on the Teacher Evaluation Committee meeting.

"We hope to come up with a more effective tool based on the new standards," said committee member B.J. Whitehouse. "I believe we'll be able to adapt and align with whatever the state is mandating."

Lawn School Principal Kathleen Almanzor and Melrose School Principal Carole Melucci announced that they will attend a series of six professional development workshops, along with teachers Nick Alfred and Jen Caswell. The workshops will focus on developing faculty and administrators' understanding of current grade-level and grade-span expectations in the sciences and math-

ematics.

During the meeting, Lukon also outlined the need for physical improvements to the schools.

She said Jamestown has previously allowed state-owned school buses to park on Lawn School's property, in cooperation with the statewide transportation system that services communities throughout Rhode Island.

"An issue that we're facing is that in the past, we've housed eight buses [in the Lawn School courtyard]," she said. "Over time, that courtyard is really in need of resurfacing because it was never done with the idea that that kind of weight [from school buses] would be on it."

She estimated resurfacing costs to be \$30,000 to \$40,000.

According to Lukon, the agreement to allow the bus company, First Student, to park on Jamestown School property was reached on the premise that Jamestown would save \$90,000 in transportation expenditures. Later, this was amended to be \$30,000 to \$40,000 in savings; however, the most recent figures don't show Jamestown saving any money at all – the only incentive offered to the school department is tax revenue. The schools received \$3,500 in tax dollars during 2009 and \$1,200 in 2008.

Lukon voiced her frustration with the state's expectation to continue parking buses on Jamestown School property with little compensation for the damages and inconveniences caused by the buses.

"What's in it for us?" she asked. "My feeling is that if we don't get something out of this, we shouldn't continue to house them here."

Lukon said she is willing to allow First Student buses to continue to park in the Lawn courtyard if the company agrees to a proposal to resurface the area of the courtyard destroyed by its buses.

"First student is claiming some districts are saving in the six figures under this system," Lukon said. "They can disburse their costs from the other districts that are saving so much so that there is something in this for us."

In other School Committee business:

- The High School Review Committee will complete its first round of tours this week, analyzing the North Kingstown and Narragansett high schools as possible options for Jamestown's high school students.

According to committee member Julia Held, the reviews occur regularly every five years to evaluate and compare curriculum, facilities and technology at various high schools in southern Rhode Island.

She explained that only Narragansett and North Kingstown were being evaluated during this review because they were the only two schools deemed suitable by the committee that expressed interest in housing Jamestown's secondary school students.

"I don't think there's any reason for change," Held said. "But, I think it makes sense, especially

since we're now entering negotiations for the [tuition] contract [with NKHS]. We just want to make [sure] we're doing the right thing for the students."

- Almanzor reported a high turnout for the Lawn Avenue School open house, which took place Sept. 16.

- The committee approved the appointment of Jessica Kalooski

as a teacher assistant.

- Lukon reported receiving the science NECAP test results, which administrators will analyze and present in detail at a workshop meeting with the School Committee on Oct. 1.

The next regular business meeting is scheduled for Oct. 15. All meetings are held at 7 p.m. in the Lawn Avenue School library.

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"Teddy"

Want to meet "Teddy" this weekend? Then stop by the Paws and Claws Yard Sale, this Saturday, from 8:30am to 10am, at the old "Jamestown Shores Meeting House", at the corner of Frigate and Beacon Avenue. Or call Paws and Claws at 354-9200, and speak with either Sarah, his Foster Mom; or Barbara to set-up a private "Meet and Greet". You won't be sorry.

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Hey, Hey, Hey.

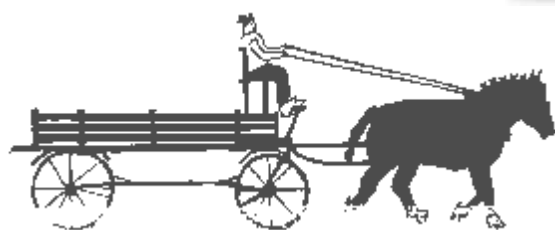
Heyday is Saturday at Godena Farm!

Celebrate open space and land conservation from 11 in the a.m., to 4 in the afternoon.

- old-time games,
- pumpkin painting,
- wagon rides,
- fresh food,
- live local music,
- silent auction
- exhibits

for everyone to enjoy.

All are welcome at the island's version of a county fair!



Heyday is the perfect time to explore the fields, nature and beauty of Godena Farm. The farm is on North Road, past Frigate Street and the crusher. Look for signs on the right (east) side of the road.

