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The first order of business at Monday's meeting of the Town Council was the swearing-in of all newly elected town officials. In the top picture are, from left, Town Council members Ellen Winsor, Mike Schnack, Bob Bowen, Bill Murphy and Mike White. Right photo, the Honorable Justice Francis J. Darigan of R.I. Superior Court, a Jamestown resident, was on hand to conduct the swearing-in. At bottom left are School Committee members Cathy Kaiser and Julia Held. Dana Long was absent. At bottom right, Town Moderator Jim Donnelly takes the oath of office.

Photos by Jeff McDonough



Mike Schnack takes the helm of new council

By Phil Zahodiakin

In the first official act of their inaugural meeting, the new Town Council members elected Michael Schnack as their president. After his Nov. 16 acceptance of the gavel from Town Clerk Arlene Petit, Schnack directed the councilors to nominate and vote on a vice president, and the unanimous winner – and only nominee – was Robert Bowen.

Before the first vote, Ellen Winsor had nominated returning council member Michael White to serve as president. Schnack, who was nomi-

nated by Bowen, also had a vote from council member William Murphy. The two votes for White – his own and Winsor's – were one short of the three-vote total for Schnack.

Despite the festive atmosphere in the packed house, Schnack immediately turned to business. He requested procedural votes on the schedules for council, and sewer and water commission meetings – both of which were adopted as they stand. He also requested procedural votes on the

See "Council" on page 5

Concerns raised over caucus by new council members

By Jeff McDonough

Questions are being asked about whether a Sunday, Nov. 15, meeting attended by four members of the newly elected Town Council violated the spirit of the state Open Meetings Act.

Labeled as a "caucus" of the Democratic Town Committee, the meeting was attended by new council members Mike Schnack, Mike White, Bob Bowen and Bill Murphy. State Rep. Deb Ruggiero, who chairs the Democratic Town Committee, also attended the meeting.

Clarke Westall, a native islander who is retired after serving 32 years with the Jamestown Police Department, said he and his wife were having dinner with another couple on Sunday evening at the Portuguese American Citizens Club. That's when he saw the four council members and the state representative gathered in a side room.

"They were meeting in the room with the pool table. I didn't think that was right, so I went in and sat down," Westall said. "They started yelling at me, telling me I had to leave the room."

Westall said the shouting continued and when it was clear that he wasn't going to leave the room, the group left the PAC Club. Westall said he believes that all town business should be discussed publicly and in the open, not behind closed doors.

According to the Attorney General's "Guide to Open Government in Rhode Island," a caucus session to elect party leaders is not a "public body," provided the caucus does not address city or town council business.

So was council business discussed?

See "Meeting" on page 9

'It could happen to you'

Island's needy often hesitant to ask for help

By Dara Chadwick

Lovely homes, ocean views and thriving community connections: This is the reality of island life for many Jamestown residents. But scratch a little deeper, beneath the surface, and you'll find another, less talked-about side of Jamestown: Need.

The young family that lives next door may be facing foreclosure on their home. Rising healthcare and insurance costs might mean that the elderly lady you pass in town each day has to skip her medication. And the young father facing a devastating illness may be losing sleep each night, worrying about how his family will survive if the worst should happen.

These are the faces of need in Jamestown. But they're faces that are often hidden.

"There are families in Jamestown who don't have the financial resources we assume people in Jamestown have," said Rev. Kathryn Palen, pastor of Central Baptist Church. "And in a small town, there is often shame attached to asking for help."

Palen said she has seen an increasing level of need lately, thanks to rising taxes, decreasing pensions — particularly among elderly residents who lost money this year in the stock market, and ballooning costs that affect residents on a fixed income.

"Healthcare is also a huge issue," she said. "And it's becoming a larger issue."

Complicating the increasing level of need is the fact that Jamestown is so small and that it is isolated from more urban areas, where assistance tends to be more readily available, Palen said.

See "Needy" on page 12

Thanksgiving Newspaper Deadlines

The Jamestown Press will be published one day early during the week of Thanksgiving. Look for your copy of the Press on Wednesday, Nov. 25.

Here are the deadlines for the Thanksgiving Issue:
Display advertising: 5 p.m. on Friday, Nov. 20
Classified advertising: Noon on Monday, Nov. 23
News items: Noon on Monday, Nov. 23