

### Library to screen 'Waking Ned Devine'

The next film in the Friends of the Jamestown Library's winter foreign film series will be "Waking Ned Devine" on Thursday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m.

This 1998 British comedy, set in a tiny Irish village, is the tale of what happens when a member of the village is lucky enough to win the national lottery, but unlucky enough to die from the shock of it. Other villagers try to figure out a way to collect the prize and have the village get the benefit of the winnings.

On Thursday, Feb. 25, Le Violon Rouge (The Red Violin) will be shown at 6:45 p.m.

Refreshments will be served at 6:30 p.m.; the event is free. Call 423-7280 for more information.



### A local tune

Jamestown musician Ed McGuirl was one of the performers during last Saturday's coffee-house event at Central Baptist Church.

Photo by Andrea von Hohenleiten



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## Council

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in profits from two, 1.65-megawatt turbines financed almost entirely by a zero-interest federal loan – or \$6.4 million, if the town issued a 5% bond to finance most of a twin-turbine scenario.

Wind Energy Committee Chairman Don Wineberg submitted a chart comparing the profits from 10 scenarios, including single turbines with different power ratings at each of the two possible sites (Ft. Getty and Taylor Point). Although the profits for each were described as “net” profits after 20 years, it wasn't clear if the numbers included – or excluded – the amount of money necessary to “zero out” the town electricity bill.

“The numbers are impressive,” said Town Administrator Bruce Keiser. “But if we continue to pay our electricity bill, that's around \$6 million over 20 years. So, we need to see the formula. If the estimates don't include avoided costs, then our economic benefit is zero [if the town selected the least profitable scenario] – although there would be environmental benefits from the turbines.”

The reason why Wineberg and consultant Danny Mendelsohn couldn't definitively answer the question is that the original economic analysis – which assumed a wholesale price for the sale of excess electricity – was farmed out to an economist whose forecasting model is proprietary. Consequently, the updated numbers are based on estimates whose calculations are secret.

“Black box” models aren't unusual because they allow contractors to maintain their revenue streams; however, they frequently spark demands for greater transparency and that's just what happened at the council meeting.

“If you go with your original economist,” council member Bob Bowen told Wineberg, “I don't want the path to the answers hidden because it's proprietary.”

Pointing out that the committee had only 72 hours to update the estimates, Wineberg said, “I feel badly that we can't provide a high level of certainty at this moment, but it would be a mistake to miss a great opportunity” – meaning the

availability of \$750,000 in federal stimulus money, which must be formally requested by March 1.

The council decided to proceed with the application process; however, there were still two key questions left to answer: How many turbines, and where should they go? Council members Ellen Winsor and Mike White voted for two turbines, with one at Ft. Getty and one at Taylor Point; Bowen and council President Mike Schnack both voted for one turbine at Taylor Point.

“I'm in favor of building a turbine, but the Ft. Getty site bothers me,” Schnack said. “There are a lot of competing uses, and to jump in with a turbine this quickly would be a disservice to the work that the [Ft. Getty Master Plan Committee] has done.”

“The campers,” Schnack continued, “bring net revenues of \$300,000 to the general fund, and it would be a disservice to the campers to say, ‘Who cares if they leave?’ I also think the voters would be more resistant to a turbine at Ft. Getty.”

Council member Bill Murphy, who did not attend the meeting, has been outspoken in his support of Ft. Getty campers. He and the other councilors will have a second opportunity to vote on the turbine questions once they're provided with answers to their financial questions – if not at the council's Feb. 16 meeting, then at its special Feb. 24 meeting on Ft. Wetherill re-use.

Although the adoption of Ruggiero's LNG resolution didn't involve any initial discussion beyond the necessity for a few minor edits, a Somerset, Mass., selectman – Lorne Lawless – questioned the benefits of the resolution at this late stage of the federal permitting process. He also shared his views on the most effective way to fight the LNG facility proposed for Mt. Hope Bay.

In contrast to the LNG resolution drafted by the LNG Working Group – and unsuccessfully proposed for a vote by Winsor – Ruggiero's resolution focuses solely on the Coast Guard conclusion that LNG transits would not be unacceptably risky if the tankers didn't have to steam north of the Braga Bridge, where the Bay narrows dramatically.

Lawless, who said he used to work in the oil industry, predicted that Captain Raymond Perry – commander of the Coast Guard's Southeastern New England district – would probably ignore the Jamestown resolution because, among other reasons, it comes many months after the service released its conclusion. Bowen replied that “at least it shows that Jamestown is ‘standing up’” and asserting its opposition to the facility.

Lawless maintains, however, that the LNG facility can only be blocked if the congressional delegations of Rhode Island and Massachusetts apply heavy pressure on the Obama administration because, in his view, the permitting process amounts to window dressing for the permit that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission will almost surely grant.

The previous Coast Guard commander, Lawless noted, had said, “There's no way you're bringing LNG 18 miles up the Bay,” so he was shipped off and Perry was brought in.”

The diverse points raised by the LNG Working Group resolution may yet be resurrected, however, during a March “LNG summit meeting” hosted by the Livable Newport Alliance. Winsor said she had hoped that Jamestown would emerge as a “leader” of the summit meeting by adopting the Working Group resolution.

Schnack said, “We will have led by bringing that resolution to the meeting.”

Another meeting opportunity for the council comes on Monday, Feb. 8, when the Taxpayer's Association will present an analysis of the town's union contracts by labor negotiator Dan Kinder. Association member Jerry Scott invited the council members to attend, and strongly urged them to consider hiring a professional negotiator for the upcoming contract talks.

“We don't want our recommendation to reflect negatively on Bruce,” Scott said, referring to the town administrator. “We just feel that the town would be best served if Bruce brought a pit bull – a pit bull on a leash – to the negotiations.”

The association will hold its Feb. 8 meeting at 7 p.m. at the Jamestown Philomenian Library.