

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Monday, February 5, 2024
5:30 P.M.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher to move into Executive Session with a second by Councilor M. White. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

I. EXECUTIVE SESSION

The Town Council may seek to enter into Executive Session for review, discussion, and/or potential action and/or vote on the following:

- A) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote in Executive Session and/or open session pursuant to RIGL § 42-46-5(a) Subsection (5) Acquisition or lease of real property.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher to seal the minutes and adjourn from Executive Session with a second by Councilor M. White. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

It was announced that one vote was taken.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor Brine to enable Town staff and the Town Solicitor to take the necessary actions needed to accept the donation of 6 West Street. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

II. ROLL CALL

A regular meeting of the Jamestown Town Council was held on February 5, 2024. Town Council Members present were as follows: Nancy A. Beye, Mary Meagher, Michael G. White, Randy White, and Erik Brine.

Also, in attendance: Town Administrator Edward A. Mello, Solicitor Peter Ruggiero, Chief Jamie Campbell, Town Planner Lisa Bryer, and Town Clerk Roberta Fagan.

III. CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Town Council President Beye called the meeting of the Jamestown Town Council to order at 6:05 p.m. in the Jamestown Town Hall Rosamond A. Tefft Council Chambers at 93 Narragansett Avenue and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

IV. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESENTATIONS, RESOLUTIONS, AND PROCLAMATIONS

- A) Presentations:
 - 1) Senator Dawn Euer and Representative Alex Finkelman: 2024 General Assembly Legislative Priorities.

Senator Euer and Representative Finkelman reviewed their 2024 General Assembly Legislative priorities and specific impacts and initiatives relative to the Town of Jamestown. Topics discussed

ranged from nursing home transparency, lead paint prevention, regulating short-term rentals, water supply legislation, infrastructure needs related to climate change; and municipal resiliency.

Bob Plain, Calvert Place, a member of the Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee, stated the AHC has discussed the possibility of new impact fees on high-end development(s). Senator Euer commented a Community Impact fee legislation has been introduced. The fee would be assessed to the Short-Term Rental market and could support Affordable Housing initiatives.

Stuart Ross, 1026 E. Shore Road, commented appointments to the CRMC should be a priority. The Great Creek proposed bridge could qualify for funding through the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

- 2) Jamestown Community Farm letter, report, and presentation on the Jamestown Community Farm Financial Terms for Purchase of the Ceppi Property.

Bob Sutton, chair of the Jamestown Community Farm made a presentation to the Town Council (attached). An agreement was signed in December between the Jamestown Community Farm and Peter Ceppi, for the purchase of 15 of the 17 acres, which will span 15 years. The details of the agreement were reviewed. The parties have agreed to also file a Memorandum of Understanding in Jamestown Land Evidence memorializing the purchase and sale of the property.

- B) Resolutions and Proclamations: Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote:
 - 1) Resolution 2024-05, A Resolution in Support of Amendments to Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns 2024 Legislative Priorities

Councilor M. White read the Resolution 2024-05.

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with a second by Vice President Meagher to approve Resolution 2024-05 in Support of Amendments to Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns 2024 Legislative Priorities. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

Councilor M. White read the Resolution 2024-06.

- 2) Resolution 2024-06: Formation of the Jamestown 250th Commission.

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with a second by Vice President Meagher to approve Resolution 2024-06: Formation of the Jamestown 250th Commission. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

V. OPEN FORUM

- A) Scheduled request to address: None.
- B) Non-scheduled request to address.

VI. PUBLIC HEARINGS, LICENSES, AND PERMITS

The Town Council will review each license application and vote on it individually. All approvals for licenses and permits are subject to the resolution of debts, taxes, and appropriate signatures as well as, when applicable, proof of insurance.

- A) No items at this time.

VII. COUNCIL, ADMINISTRATOR, SOLICITOR, COMMISSION/COMMITTEE COMMENTS & REPORTS

Please Note the Following Items are Status Reports and Matters of Interest to the Council and are for Informational Purposes unless Indicated Otherwise:

A) Town Administrator's Report: Edward A. Mello

1) Library reopening update.

The temporary library location at the golf course has closed. Library staff continue to work to prepare for the opening of the facility on North Road. Sub-contractor delays related to internet access, heating, and fire suppression have contributed to the postponement of the library reopening. A mid to late February opening is anticipated.

Once the golf course function room has been cleaned and painted, the recreation department will manage the use of the space, according to the approved use policy.

2) Municipal Resilience Grant Program application for South Pond Dam.

Town Planner Bryer and Public Works Director Gray submitted a \$1 million grant application through the RI Infrastructure Bank to fund the remainder of the work to be completed at the South Pond dam. Unfortunately, the grant was not awarded. Staff will assess other funding options and possible reapplication to complete the project.

3) Tax Abatement (Credits) Proposed Ordinance Amendment and Public Hearing (new business).

A request for the Town Council to consider a revised ordinance to support the increase of the tax abatements currently offered to members of the fire department. This would also include a transition plan. Subject to Council approval, an enabling Resolution and public hearing will be prepared. A memorandum and draft ordinance have been included in the packet. (new business)

4) Broadband Project update.

As previously approved by the Town Council, the Town of Jamestown has engaged Mission Broadband in partnership with the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce to analyze broadband services available to Jamestown residents and businesses. The report will enable the Town and developers to explore additional funding opportunities. A plan for public participation is in development.

5) Ft. Getty Seasonal Camper Renewal February 1st deadline.

The seasonal camper site renewal deadline was February 1. There are a limited number of sites that have not renewed. An update will be presented at the February 20th Town Council meeting.

6) Hazard Mitigation Plan update and report.

The Hazard Mitigation Plan Update contract has been executed with consultants Weston and Sampson. The update will include public input allowing residents to share concerns regarding Mackerel Cove, Zeeks Creek, and any other areas. Once the updated plan is approved and potential mitigation funding, this should enable the Town to develop any future engineering plans.

Additionally, Town Administrator Mello has met with Senator Reed to discuss the impacts of the recent storms and the need for funding related to recovery and future mitigation projects. This would require that the event(s) be declared by FEMA, which has not yet happened. Town Administrator Mello met with FEMA to discuss recovery efforts and potential funding. The process requires (1) FEMA to determine if the event(s) will be declared; and (2) if the event(s) are declared, two funding streams are likely. The first for recovery. The second for mitigation planning

and projects.

Town Administrator Mello also contacted the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to begin a conversation about the concerns specific to Mackerel Cove. Once the Hazard Mitigation Plan process has been completed and approved, the Town can then request that ACOE consider mitigation projects.

7) PBS- "Our Town" featuring the Town of Jamestown.

PBS has selected Jamestown to be the next community to be featured in their program "Our Town" They have been in contact with Lisa Sheley who will take the lead in the Town participation. Residents can join a virtual informational Town Meeting on Thursday, February 15, at 5:30 p.m. Residents should visit RIPBS.org to register for the meeting and learn more about the program.

8) Equipment purchase for the Harbor Division (consent agenda).

Harbor Division Executive Director Steven Bois and the Harbor Commission (JHC) have submitted a request for authorization to purchase a new vessel, declaring an existing vessel as surplus and offering it for sale by a public bid process. The net cost of the purchase is estimated at \$50,000 and would be funded through the Jamestown Harbor Capital Reserve Fund. The JHC has reviewed the request and recommended approval by the Town Council. Executive Director Steven Bois' memo is enclosed (consent agenda)

9) Water Tower Lease: additional cell phone provider.

Town staff are negotiating a lease with an additional cell phone provider for space on the water tower. A lease is expected to be presented for Town Council consideration in March. In the meantime, the application is going through the zoning approval process. Negotiations are ongoing with additional potential service providers for the use of shared equipment on the towers. These negotiations will be presented to the Water and Sewer Commission in the coming months.

10) CRMC plans to brief the Town Council and Harbor Commission in March regarding Aqua Farms.

CRMC is the only agency that permits the lease of state waters for the purpose of aqua farms. The Town has requested CRMC to develop a plan that would guide farmers, residents, and Town staff regarding the likely locations for these farms to reside. Town staff recently met with CRMC staff and DEM about the draft plan. CRMC plans to brief both the Town Council and the Harbor Commission on the proposed plan in March.

VIII. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: Review and/or Discussion of the Jamestown Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee report and implementation recommendations:

1) Town of Jamestown Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee Report to the Town Council.

See the attached report presented by Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee members Robert Raymond and Michelle Estaphan Owen.

A lengthy discussion ensued. Vice President Meagher pointed out that a flat amount credit versus a percentage may be seen as not equitable.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to review current exemptions will be reviewed at the February 20th Town Council meeting; and to schedule workshop(s) for further discussion and/or development of new concepts as presented. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

- B) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: Review and/or Discussion of the Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee (JAH) recommendations:
 - 1) At the request and recommendation of the Jamestown Affordable Housing Committee, Town Council support of the Jamestown Affordable Housing Preservation Program and permission to develop an enabling ordinance by the Town staff with final review by the Town Solicitor.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to approve the request to support the Jamestown Affordable Housing Preservation Program rules as presented and permission to develop an enabling ordinance by the Town staff with final review by the Town Solicitor.

Discussion ensued. Councilor R. White had questions regarding some of the plan particulars. Specifically, when an eligible applicant sells their land to the Town and then leaves the property to an heir who may not qualify according to the plan guidelines. How does the program prevent the property from being occupied by an individual who may not qualify for affordable housing?

Affordable Housing member Bob Plain made clarifying statements. The program intends to ensure the property would need to be occupied by an eligible affordable housing applicant. The property would be deeded affordable in perpetuity. Either the qualifying eligible property owner or an eligible tenant would occupy the property.

Vice President Meagher rescinded the prior motion and amended it as follows. A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to continue the agenda item to the February 20th Town Council meeting. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

- C) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: Vice President Meagher and the Jamestown Charter Review Committee recommended amendments, additions, and/or deletions for Charter revisions:
 - 1) At the request and recommendation of the Jamestown Charter Review Committee permission to develop an enabling ordinance by the Town staff with final review by the Town Solicitor for proposed Amendments to the Jamestown Charter.

Solicitor Peter Ruggiero reviewed the next steps. The Town Council would have a public hearing to review the recommended amendments, additions, and/or deletions for Charter revisions. Any approved amendments to the Charter would then be prepared as questions on the General Election ballot in November 2024 or at a Special Referendum.

Charter Review Committee members Sav Rebecchi, 13 Sail Street, and Jim Rugh, America Way, addressed the Town Council. To clarify, the Committee is recommending a non-partisan ballot, not a non-partisan election. Several Rhode Island municipalities have non-partisan ballots. Mr. Rugh suggested rearranging the order of the recommendations at the Public Hearing for the sake of ease.

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with a second by Councilor R. White to schedule a Public Hearing on March 4th to review the recommended amendments, additions, and/or deletions for Charter revisions. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

IX. NEW BUSINESS

A) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: At the request of Vice President Meagher a recommendation to members of the various Jamestown Boards, Commissions, and Committees to review the Open Meetings Act (OMA) compliance requirements and review of the ACLU report regarding public comment at public body meetings:

1) When the OMA applies whenever a quorum of a public body convenes for a meeting. The OMA applies when the three elements are present:

- a public body: means any department, agency, commission, committee, board, council, bureau, or authority, or any subdivision thereof, of state or municipal government or the board of directors of any library that funded at least twenty-five percent (25%) of its operational budget in the prior budget year with public funds, and shall include all authorities defined in § 42-35-1. For purposes of this section, any political party, organization, or unit thereof meeting or convening is not and should not be considered to be a public body; provided, however, that no such meeting shall be used to circumvent the requirements of this chapter.
- a meeting: means the convening of a public body to discuss and/or act upon a matter over which the public body has supervision, control, jurisdiction, or advisory power. As used herein, the term “meeting” expressly includes, without limiting the generality of the foregoing, so-called “workshop,” “working,” or “work” sessions.
- A quorum: unless otherwise defined by applicable law, means a simple majority of the membership of a public body (RIGL § 42-46-2).

2) Notice Requirements: Annual notice (RIGL § 42-46-6(a)) and Supplemental Notice/Agenda of meetings (RIGL § 42-46-6(b)) includes the date the notice was published; the date(s), time(s), and locations(s) of the meetings; and a statement specifying the nature of the business for each matter to be discussed

3) Open Meetings: All meetings must be open to the public unless closed in

accordance with the OMA. RIGL§ 42-46-3).

- 4) ACLU report findings on public comment at town meetings

The Town Council received the ACLU report findings. Vice President Meagher expressed the need to remind members of the various Jamestown Boards, Committees, and Commissions the requirements of the Open Meetings Act, the importance of transparency, public notice requirements, and the definition of rolling quorums.

Solicitor Peter Ruggiero stated training will be offered in the near future by Solicitor David Petrarca.

- B) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: At the request of Town Administrator Mello Discussion and Possible Action to Order to Advertise in the Jamestown Press; Notice of a Public Hearing to take place on March 4, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. for Proposed Amendments to the Code of Ordinances regarding Chapter 66 – Taxation and Finance.

No action was taken. The proposed amendments to the Code of Ordinances regarding Chapter 66- Taxation and Finance will be reviewed with Town staff, and placed on a future agenda.

- C) Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote: At the request of the Town Council information regarding short-term rental (STR) serviced by onsite wastewater treatment systems (OWTS):
 - 1) Memorandum from Town Engineer Jean Lambert re: information request for Short-Term Rentals with Onsite Wastewater Systems

Discussion ensued. The Town Council agrees amendments to the Short-Term Rental Ordinance are necessary, and may require showing proof of an OWTS and/or updated OWTS at the time of property transfer.

No action was taken.

X. ORDINANCES, APPOINTMENTS, VACANCIES, AND EXPIRING TERMS

- A) Appointments, Vacancies, and Expiring Terms; Review, Discussion, and/or Action and/or Vote:
 - 1) Elections Training and Advisory Ad hoc Committee, One (1) Jamestown Board of Canvassers Member; Four to Six (4-6) Jamestown Citizen-at-Large Members; and One (1) Jamestown Town Council Ex-Officio Member with a term not to exceed 6 months, duly advertised in the December 14th, 21st, January 11th and 18th editions of the Jamestown Press:
 - a) Interested Citizens-at-Large Applicants:
 - i) Daphne G. Meredith
 - Application received December 19, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024.
 - ii) Laura Goldstein
 - Application received December 26, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024.

- iii) Linda Jamison
 - Application received December 28, 2023
- iv) Marlene B. Murphy
 - Application received January 31, 2024.
 - Interview to be scheduled if the Town Council considers it necessary.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to appoint Daphne G. Meredith, Laura Goldstein, Linda Jamison, and Marlene Murphy to the Elections Training and Advisory Ad hoc Committee with a term not to exceed 6 months. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

- b) Board of Canvasser Applicants:
 - i) Kenneth Newman
 - Email expressing interest received December 28, 2023
 - ii) Carol Nelson-Lee
 - Rescinded application (see Board of Canvassers January 19, 2024 draft minutes)

A motion was made by Councilor M. White with a second by Councilor R. White to appoint Jamestown Board of Canvasser member Ken Newman to the Elections Training and Advisory Ad Hoc Committee with a term not to exceed 6 months. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

- 2) Library Board of Trustees, One (1) member vacancy, with a three-year term ending December 31, 2026, duly advertised in the December 14th and 21st editions of the Jamestown Press:
 - a) Interested Applicant(s):
 - i) Gordon Rapkin
 - Application received November 6, 2023
 - Interview on December 4, 2023
 - i) Janet Schachtel Baker
 - Application received December 4, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024
 - ii) Jean Burditt
 - Application received December 22, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to appoint Jean Burditt Library Board of Trustees, with a three-year term ending December 31, 2026, Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

- 3) Tick Task Force Ad hoc Committee, Five to Seven (5-7) member vacancy, for an unspecified term, duly advertised in the December 14th, 21st, January 11th, and 18th editions of the Jamestown Press:
 - a) Interested Applicant(s):
 - i) Taryn Breneman
 - Application received December 22, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024
 - ii) Wayne C. Breneman
 - Application received December 22, 2023
 - Interviewed on January 16, 2024
 - iii) Cynthia Leonard
 - Application received January 2, 2024
 - Interview to be scheduled
 - b) Request to Order to re-advertise the vacancy(s)

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor R. White to appoint Taryn Breneman and Wanye Breneman to the Tick Task Force Ad Hoc Committee; to order to re-advertise the Tick Task Force Ad Hoc Committee vacancy(s) and to schedule an interview with Cynthia Leonard. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA

An item on the Consent Agenda need not be removed for simple clarification or correction of typographical errors. Approval of the Consent Agenda shall be equivalent to the approval of each item as if it had been acted upon separately for review, discussion, and/or potential action and/or vote. A Consent Agenda item or items may be removed by the Town Council for review, discussion, and/or potential action and or vote.

- A) Town Council Minutes
 - 1) January 16, 2024
- B) Minutes of Boards/Commissions/Committees
 - 1) Board of Canvassers (November 7, 2023)
 - 2) Board of Canvassers (November 8, 2023)
 - 3) Harbor Management Commission (December 13, 2023)
 - 4) Planning Commission (January 3, 2024)
 - 5) Police Pension Plan Committee (October 18, 2023)
 - 6) Tree Preservation and Protection (October 18, 2023)
 - 7) Tree Preservation and Protection (November 15, 2023)
 - 8) Tree Preservation and Protection (December 20, 2023)
 - 9) Tree Preservation and Protection 2023 Attendance Log
 - 10) Tax Assessment Board of Review- 2023/2024 Attendance Log
 - 11) Tax Assessment Board of Review (January 23, 2024)

- C) At the recommendation of the Harbor Division Executive Director and the Harbor Management Commission grant approval of the sale of the Harbor Division 21' Freedom vessel, trailer, and motor via the municipal surplus equipment resale process; and authorization to purchase a new 21.5' Ribcraft vessel, trailer and motor from Ribcraft Corp., Marblehead MA for an amount not to exceed \$116,431.

- D) Tax Assessor's Abatements and Addenda of Taxes

ADDENDA TO THE TAX ROLL			
ACCT	TAX YEAR	ACCOUNT INFORMATION	AMOUNT
01-0002-28	2023	TOWN SOLD-NOW TAXABLE	\$ 2,215.45
01-0002-28	2023	SW/ISDS CHANGE	\$ 20.00
TOTAL ABATEMENTS TO TAX ROLL			-\$ 0.00
TOTAL ADDENDA TO TAX ROLL			\$ 2,235.45
GRAND TOTAL TO THE TAX ROLL			\$ 2,235.45

- E) Ratification of the Administratively approved Short-Term Rental application for the period of January 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024:
- 1) Norma Walsh, STR-97, 33 Hawthorne Road
 - 2) Mary Ann Smith-Janias, STR-105, 8 Clinton Avenue
 - 3) David Crompton, STR-41, 18 Neptune Street
 - 4) Leopold Martini, STR-13, 11 Nun Avenue
 - 5) Cheryl Levesque, STR-107, 6 Coronado Street
 - 6) Pamela Storey, STR-64, 32 Pemberton Avenue
 - 7) Justine Maciel, STR-49, 144 Narragansett Avenue
 - 8) Adam Wright, STR-28, 46 Carr Lane
- F) Trash Collector License 2024 Renewal Application(s):
- 1) Island Rubbish Service, Inc. dba: Island Rubbish, 8 Swinburne Street, Jamestown, RI 02835
 - 2) Allied Waste Services, LLC. dba: Republic Services, Airport Road, Fall River, MA 02720
- G) One-Day Event/Entertainment License Applications: All One-Day Event/Entertainment license application approvals are subject to any COVID-19 protocols in effect at the time of the event:
- 1) Applicant: Conanicut Island Sailing Foundation (CISF)
 Event: Bay Day
 Date: June 9, 2024
 Location: Ft. Getty/CISF area

Discussion ensued.

Vice President Meagher asked for clarification on item C. There has been some discussion about having two safety boats on the east and west sides of the island. Town Administrator Mello stated Town staff (police, fire, and harbor) are coordinating logistics and protocol on the availability of response vessels.

Vice President Meagher read aloud each Short-Term Rental host application name and address, asking those in attendance for any objections or comments to be known.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to approve the Short-Term Rental applications for licensing as listed on the Consent Agenda. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor R. White, Aye; and Councilor M. White, Aye.

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor M. White to accept the Consent Agenda. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; Councilor R. White, Aye; and Councilor Brine, Aye.

Communications were acknowledged.

XII. COMMUNICATIONS, PETITIONS, AND PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS FROM OTHER RHODE ISLAND CITIES AND TOWNS

The Council may acknowledge any of the listed Communications and Proclamations and Resolutions. Should any member wish to have a conversation on any of the matters, the item will be placed on a future agenda for review, discussion, and/or potential action and/or vote.

A) Communications Received:

- 1) Copy of report to: Town Council
From: Bram Gallagher/AIRDNA
Dated: January 2024
Re: US and Rhode Island STR Markets,
- 2) Copy of memo to Town Council, Jamestown Zoning Board, Jamestown Town Planner, Lisa Bryer
From: Jamestown Conservation Commission (JCC)
Dated: January 22, 2024
Re: JCC Advisory Review and Objection to Proposed Ordinance Section 82-12-6- Communication Towers and Open Space
- 3) Copy of email to: Town Council
From: Frank Meyer
Dated: January 14, 2024
Re: Mackerel Cove and the storms
- 4) Copy of email to: Town Council
From: Marian Falla
Dated: January 16, 2024
Re: Easton Beach Storms/JT beach impacted by storm
- 5) Copy of letter to: Town Council
From: Alma Davenport
Dated: January 26, 2024
Re: Proposed zoning ordinance Section 82-1207. Keeping of Chicken Hens

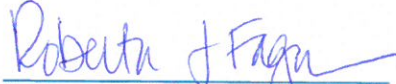
6) Copy of letter to: Town Council
From: United Way
Dated: January 2024
Re: 2024 Legislative Agenda

- B) Proclamations and Resolutions from Other Rhode Island Cities and Towns:
- 1) Town of Hopkinton, Resolution in Support of Full Funding of Categorical Transportation Aid as outlined in RIGL §16-7.2-6
 - 2) At the regular meeting of the Burrillville Town Council held Wednesday, January 24, 2024, for and within the Town of Burrillville, at which time a quorum was present and acting throughout, the Burrillville Town Council voted to support the resolution from the Water and Sewer Commission of the Town of Jamestown (Resolution No.: 2024-01) requesting the Rhode Island General Assembly to amend RIGL §46-15 relative to a public water system's obligation.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Vice President Meagher with a second by Councilor Brine to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Vote: President Beye, Aye; Vice President Meagher, Aye; Councilor Brine, Aye; Councilor M. White, Aye; and Councilor R. White, Aye.

Attest:


Roberta J. Fagan, Town Clerk

Jamestown Community Farm

To: Jamestown Town Council
From: Bob Sutton
Subject: Financial Terms for Purchase of Ceppi Property
Date January 31, 2024



Subj. Major terms relevant and specific to the land acquisition portion of the lease/purchase agreement between The Jamestown Community Farm Inc. and owner Peter Ceppi (aka John Eldred Farm 1,2,3, LLC)

The agreement was signed on December 17 2023 but is effective as of January 1, 2023 and is in effect through December 2037. specific terms are as follows:

JCF paid the owner on or about December 17, 2023 the sum of \$76,000.00. (\$26,000 rent, \$50,000.00 option to buy). The entire option payment and one half of the rent payment are applied to the purchase price upon exercise of the Option to purchase. The rent changes annually based on increases in the consumer price index.

The option may be exercised upon the death of the owner. When the owner's estate notifies JCF of the owner's death, JCF then has up to six months to exercise the option. A closing must take place within the one year period following exercise of the option. It is possible that the owner may elect to sell during his lifetime, in which case JCF will proceed to exercise the option under the same timetable. (The JCF Board of Directors has already agreed to begin fund raising immediately.)

The entire property is a little over 17 acres. Carved out of the option are two lots of about one acre each fronting on East Shore Road. The owner is keeping these lots for his daughter and granddaughter. JCF presently has a registered survey of the entire property and intends to get this survey revised to properly describe the property to be purchased and the property retained by the owner. Over the course of the negotiation the owner has shown some inclination to sell the entirety of the 17 acres to the JCF and we are prepared to consider that. However, the option applies to the remaining 15 acres.

If the option is exercised, the final sale price will be determined by certified appraisal as follows: JCF hires a certified appraiser to complete a full appraisal of the 15 acres. If the owner does not accept the appraised value, the owner selects his own certified appraiser to provide a second appraisal. If the two appraisals differ by less than 10%, the selling price value is the average of the two. If the two appraisals differ by more than 10%, the two appraisers select a third appraiser, and the selling price will be the average of the three.

The signed lease/purchase agreement is for 15 years with some cost increases at five-year intervals. The JCF has already covered our costs through the first 5 years. Thanks to the generosity of one of our board members (Fox Hill Farm) who has donated \$50,000.00 each year for the next five years, (\$250,000.00) and our fund-raising efforts to date, have raised the necessary funding for the balance of the first five-year period. First year payment in full was wired to owner December 17 2023.

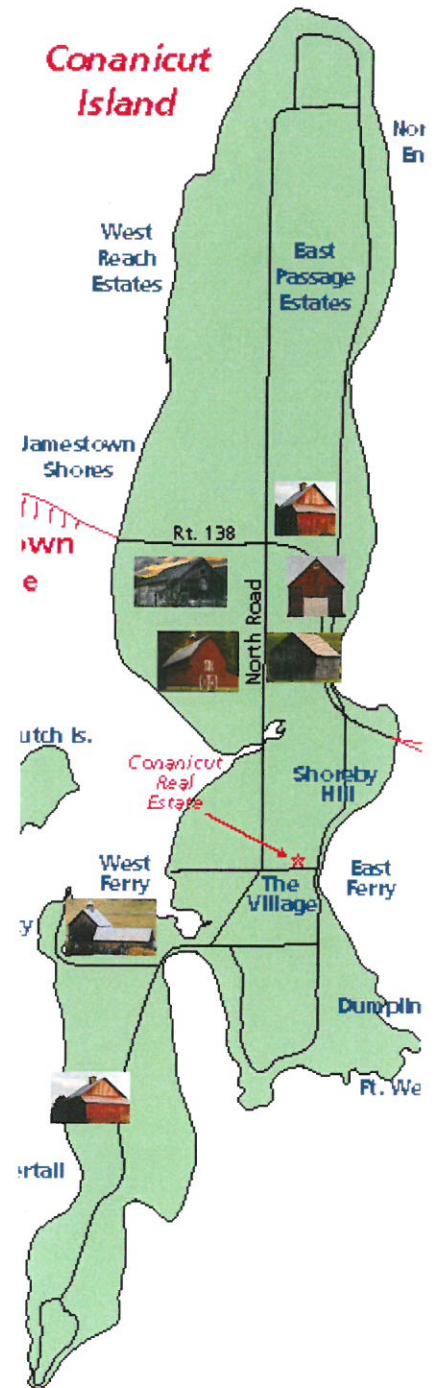
The JCF attorney has filed a "Memorandum of Lease" signed by both parties in the Town of Jamestown Land Evidence Records. The purpose in doing so is to provide notice to anyone researching ownership of this parcel that the property is encumbered by a lease and option to purchase.

JCF Inc. is responsible for paying local property taxes (approximately \$350.00 annually) and the seller is responsible for all other administrative fees, taxes, etc. associated with his ownership of the land. There are annual "cost of living" adjustments to the rent and 5 year adjustments (\$10,000) to the cost of the option. However, all additional costs except for one half of the rents will be credited against the final cost of the acquisition.

The agreement was negotiated by an attorney employed by the farm and an attorney employed by the seller. The final document is professionally written with safeguards for both parties and I can make it available to you, if you wish.

Conanicut Island A Culture of Farming

Although we tend to think of Jamestown as both a residential and summer community, there is another functioning community of which we may not be completely aware. Coming back from the Beavertail Lighthouse there is a continuous six-mile stretch of roads along which seven active working farms are located. Each of these farms have farmhands and grow and sell agriculture produce. Also, along this same route there are two hi-tunnel greenhouse hobby farmers and throughout the town a number of beekeepers and chicken coups housing small flocks of egg- laying chickens. Jamestown residents are clearly continuing a culture of growing in Conanicut Island's rich soils. A culture that extends back thousands of years.



*Bob Suter
Jamestown Community Farm*

Jamestown Community Farm Inc. (JCF)

Jamestown Community Farm 2023 Production	
Lettuce	112 lbs
Blackberries	134 lbs
Spinach	12 lbs
Elderberries	17 lbs
Tomatoes	3458 lbs
Peppers	392 lbs
Basil	28 lbs
Fruits	432 lbs
Asian Pears	292 lbs
Swiss Chard	146 lbs
Shishito Peppers	27 lbs
Fennel	54 lbs
Leeks	163 lbs
Cukes	981 lbs
Melons	529 lbs
Beans	697 lbs
Butternut Squash	371 lbs
Onions	497 lbs
Collard	431 lbs
Delicata Squash	232 lbs
Kale	298 lbs
Zucchini	3,024 lbs
Spoerdi Squash	875 lbs
Herbs	46 lbs
Cabbage	299 lbs
Summer Squash	2,100 lbs
Eggplant	29 lbs
Watermelon	152 lbs
Honey Nut Squash	172 lbs
Garlic	92 heads
Eggs	763 dozen
TOTAL 16,250 lbs	
Thank You!!	

The JCF was created 23 years ago with the mission to grow fresh vegetables and deliver this produce to food pantries throughout the state. Originally organized as an element of the Conanicut Island Land Trust, we reorganized as a 501 c(3) in 2009-2010 and we are now producing and distributing 9 to 13 tons of fresh vegetables annually. We do not use chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides. We are primarily a volunteer organization (100 + volunteers annually). We also have a private foundation grant to employ 4 high school/college student interns annually. We have had the same unpaid volunteer farm manager for 23 years, a stable Board of Directors, no debt and we are presently in the final stages of purchasing the 17 acre parcel of land that we have been farming for 23 years. We have committed from the outset to extending and improving our agricultural practices creating a minimum impact on the Island's resources with a primary focus on healthy soil. (i.e. regenerative

agriculture). We have been a successful organization and we have achieved longevity. It is now time to consider and create the next generation of leadership.

Succession:

Our commitment to growing and delivering fresh vegetables to food pantries is a long-term commitment. We know that our commitment to grow these vegetables utilizing regenerative agricultural is very long term. And, although we are a private non-profit 501c(3), we are now confronting the same problems of farm succession facing many farmers throughout the state and the nation: How do we keep our land, our ideas, ideals and our efforts alive, beyond our own individual leadership and individual participation?

We have had the same organizational structure for all 23 years. We have also had the same farm manager. Our farm manager is well educated, and experienced and still very active but he is also 82 years old. We all recognize that succession of both organizational leadership and maintaining our committed direction is essential and we are not ignoring the inevitable. We have created a viable working farm that fills a need and now we must develop the next generations of leadership.



Regenerative Agriculture and Carbon Capture

Regenerative agriculture is a way of thinking about and acting upon better methods of managing the soil.

The Plow

The plow as an agricultural tool goes back thousands of years. What most likely started by dragging a heavy wooden pointed stick through the soil evolved over time into a modern piece of essential farm equipment. The man associated with developing the modern plow was a talented blacksmith named John Deere who in 1838 designed and hammered out a shiny surfaced plow blade from a large discarded saw blade. The shiny blade steel plowed deeper and kept the soil from sticking to the plow blade.

In concert with the development of mass production techniques created by the industrial revolution; the mass transportation opportunities, created by the new continental railroads; made the "Deere" plow available throughout the country.

At the time no one understood the fragility of soil structure and soil stability. No one understood how quickly that stability could be destroyed; how quickly wind and water erosion would blow and wash these soils down the rivers to the oceans and the Gulf of Mexico.

No one knew how this invasive soil- impact farming would systematically diminish the naturally formed nutrient value of the soils, forcing the farmer to rely increasingly on manufactured chemicals in an attempt to replace and rebuild soil fertility. And, no one could have possibly known that this very type of soil- impact farming would be a major contributor to global warming.

Now we know.

At the Jamestown Community Farm we are using our "One Chance" to eliminate soil destruction. We will concentrate our agricultural efforts on methods that understand, reflect and take seriously the irreplaceable value of our natural earth.

Regenerative agriculture prioritizes the critical importance of soil health and maintaining and improving soil nutrient values. Successful regenerative agriculture pursues solutions to agricultural production that are much less reliant on chemistry, mechanization and economics. Instead, it emphasizes farming and growing practices that recognize, respond to and maximize the Earth's natural order. Although not perfect, though perfectly intended, the Jamestown Community Farm is pursuing farming methods that respond to these ideals.

Several years ago, the United Nations published a report on "global warming" and in that document they identified atmospheric carbon as one of the critical causal elements.



Along with identifying "big business" agriculture as a significant contributor to atmospheric carbon; they identified the ability of properly managed plants and soil, to capture and retain carbon as a major solution to reducing atmospheric carbon. Since that report was published the JCF has completely changed its' methods and the equipment needed to more effectively capture and store atmospheric carbon. These methods and equipment are completely consistent with regenerative agricultural practices.

Land Ownership



There can be no meaningful plan of succession without the farm first having an ownership interest in the land. The 17 acres of land that we farm is some of the best farmland in Rhode Island. It is also presently sub-divided into 6 one-acre house lots and an 11-acre lot that could be further sub-divided into 5 additional house lots.

In 2022, with the owner's consent, we began negotiations for the outright purchase of 15 acres of the farm. The two attorneys have been negotiating over the past 18 months and on December 17, 2023 we signed an agreement to purchase the 15 acres. We have also reached an agreement that the Farm will hold title to the land and the Town will hold a permanent development rights easement.

The Board of Directors has no illusions about what this acquisition will cost. We have created a fund-raising program and have already witnessed community enthusiasm and a generous willingness to contribute. We intend to fund the acquisition with governments grants, private foundation grants and private donations,

Volunteerism

For 23 years the Farm has utilized volunteers for a major portion of the farm work, primarily planting and harvesting on Tuesday and Thursday evenings and summer Saturday mornings. We generally average between 12 to 20 volunteers on every occasion. We have never had a volunteer event where no-one showed up, nor have we failed to accomplish a task for lack of volunteers.



Volunteerism is an important element of our organization; it creates community support for our mission and it provides a very important element of how we get the necessary work done. Successful volunteerism does not happen by accident, it is built into our organizational mentality. A succession plan has to recognize volunteers' critical importance and commits to a volunteer program that is reflective of our existing program success and is actively and conscientiously managed.

Powering the Farm

Although we use diesel and gasoline powered tractors, we are increasingly looking for ways of reducing our carbon footprint. In 2012 we installed a 3.5-kilowatt solar array which during day light provides all our power requirements. In fact we have a \$1500 credit with the power company. We sell back to the power company much more than we use, In 2023 we purchased an electric powered van which recharges directly from the solar panels. One of our members also purchased an electric powered tricycle that we can use for short commutes and also for work errands within the farm property.



Recycling/ Composting, Water Management

We purposely involve the Town's commercial community in our overall farm plan. We intentionally search out areas where the farm can fill a community need and also provide value to the farm.

About 10 years ago we made an agreement with Atlantic Landscaping to bring their autumn leaf pick up to the Community Farm. Tons of leaves are composted over a one-year period and make an excellent soil additive for the next growing season.

Several years ago, McQuade's Market, the only super market in Jamestown, contacted us about the State's requirement for disposal of "out of date" or spoiled fruits and vegetables. They would no longer be allowed to throw them in a dumpster and truck them to a landfill. We agreed to pick up the spoiled produce for our composting operation three times a week and mix it with the Atlantic Landscaping leaves along with our chicken manure, We rotate the pile for one year and at the end of that year have tons of a beautiful compost mixture which we annually add to our farm soils.



We rely entirely on annual rainfall for all farm irrigation. We have no wells, and we do not pump from any surface water areas. We irrigate approximately 4000 square feet of high tunnel greenhouse and a 60-tree apple orchard with stored rainwater. We have the capability to capture, store and distribute approximately 7000 gallons of rainwater annually. The field crops rely upon the annual rain fall and compost rich soil that provides nutrient value and holds moisture necessary for plant growth.

We also work from time to time with the Conservation Commission. Presently we are starting a test growing area to start sea grass that if successful, will be transplanted on local beach erosion areas. This outreach to the Town's commercial community and the Town government administration must be incorporated into our succession and recognized as critical to our own organizational strength and longevity. We fill a community need and we act totally consistent with our regenerative agriculture commitment.

The Community Connection

The word "Community" in our name is no accident. Not only do we need and depend upon the people as volunteer workers on the farm, we need a community of people who understand the importance of our mission, our agricultural direction and are supportive of our land and water protection. And, we need a community of people that are willing to support financially both our "food security mission" and our agricultural direction.



We work closely with the local newspaper to keep townspeople aware of our projects and we encourage people to walk around the farm at their leisure.

We participate in the Memorial Day Parade and the winter holiday celebrations, assisting other organizations with their events and maintaining a presence/visibility and an attitude of helpfulness in the Jamestown community.

Financial Stability

The October 2023 financial statement is provided to give an example of spending by the month. Generally speaking, the Board does not prepare an annual operating budget. Instead, it uses the previous 12-month statement of expenditures as a budget guide for the upcoming fiscal year. This has proven over the years to be an adequate guide to provide spending control.

Additionally, our public "farm patron" fund raising campaign is held in February of our calendar fiscal year so that we have a solid understanding of our available funds early in the year and can make adjustments in spending, if necessary. If foundation or governmental grants are anticipated in our annual budget, no spending on those grants occurs until the grant is verified.

Jamestown Community Farm
 Profit and Loss YTD Comparison
 October 2023

	TOTAL	
	OCT 2023	JAN - OCT, 2023 (YTD)
Income		
43425 Fund Raising - Land Purchase		45,729.00
Direct Public Grants		
43300 Grants - Other		2,558.00
43330 Foundation and Trust Grants		75,359.00
Total Direct Public Grants		77,917.00
Direct Public Support		
43450 Individual & Bus Contributions	700.00	11,518.70
43454 Patron Donations		14,050.00
47246 Farm Sales - Eggs & Produce	302.00	6,874.50
Total Direct Public Support	1,002.00	32,443.20
Total Income	\$1,002.00	\$156,089.20
GROSS PROFIT	\$1,002.00	\$156,089.20
Expenses		
62100 Contract Services		
62110 Accounting Fees		250.00
62150 Outside Contract Services		67.98
Total 62100 Contract Services		317.98
62800 Facilities & Equipment		
62841 Equipment Maintenance	275.55	481.49
62842 Misc Repairs	152.89	1,674.37
62843 Delivery Vehicle Maintenance		2,444.50
62870 Property Insurance	925.50	3,556.00
62890 Rent, Parking, Utilities		9,161.68
Total 62800 Facilities & Equipment	1,353.94	17,318.04
65000 Operations		
65020 Postage	66.00	430.84
65022 Office Supplies & Expense		1,056.01
65030 Printing & Copying		114.04
65040 Volunteer Supplies & Expenses	19.61	89.86
65041 Seeds & Plants	821.12	2,948.53
65043 Diesel Fuel and Gasoline	197.98	808.44
65044 Chickens		1,656.59
65049 Misc Supplies		269.33
65055 Farm Labor	660.00	15,522.00
65060 Payroll Taxes	66.99	1,575.61
65065 Payroll Processing Fees	91.60	1,513.84
65100 Insurance - D&O and W/C		1,772.46
65210 Class & Demo Expenses		300.00
Total 65000 Operations	1,823.30	28,067.55

Capital Budgeting

Generally speaking, we do not budget for capital expenditures. We keep a list of costly capital items that are in need of replacement or significant repair and we search out grant opportunities to fund all or a significant portion of the cost.

A general rule for non-profits is to hold enough cash in savings to fund operating costs for two years. The JCF has never ended a fiscal year in debt and has more than enough savings to cover operating expenses for that two-year period of time. Some of our infrastructure and our farm equipment is old but is well maintained. However, we are in the process of purchasing the property and given the dynamics of the purchase and of the anticipated purchase price, our annual budget will have significant new demands placed upon it that cannot be ignored. How we meet the demands of the land acquisition without diminishing the farm's annual operating costs can be accomplished but it will require significant attention to our

fund-raising apparatus and careful attention to our annual spending. It is important that the farm continue to appoint and employ professional accounting s

Greenway Protection:

Landowners, residents and the local government administration have long been committed to the protection of land on Conanicut Island. One of the major protected areas is the Center Island Greenway, a 1000-acre+ contiguous land area that extends from the golf course on the south all the way north to Carr Lane. This 1000 acres contains 2 recreational areas, a 3-mile bike/walking path, sanctuary walking paths, 5 farms, acres of salt and fresh water marshes, contiguous forest land, 2 public drinking water reservoirs and their corresponding watershed, a great diversity of wildlife, bird habitat and the Windmill Hill Historic District.



Presently, this 17-acre Jamestown Community Farm is one of the largest unprotected properties in this greenway. The successors to the leadership of the



Presently, this 17-acre Jamestown Community Farm is one of the largest unprotected properties in this greenway. The successors to the leadership of the JCF must recognize their responsibility to the beautiful contiguous land that surrounds our farmland. They must protect and build upon the farm's commitment to regenerative farming practices and refuse the use of chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides etc.

The JCF: A Demonstration Farm

Jamestown is today considered a “high-end” residential and summer home community; however, its’ historical routes are deep in its excellent agricultural soils. The Narragansett’s used the island as a summer encampment and actively farmed much of the island. The first European settlers in Newport used Conanicut Island as common sheep and cattle grazing ground which quickly evolved into privately owned large active-farm subdivisions, and continued that way until the early 1900’s.

Although farming is no longer a major occupational pursuit, there remains a small, strong and diverse agricultural community in Jamestown. Because the community of Jamestown has, over the years, made a strong commitment to permanently protecting farmland and critical open-space there remains significant opportunity to support and sustain agricultural production on the island.

<u>Active Farms,</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Years Protected</u>		<u>Com. Crop</u>
Wine Grape Vineyard	25	Beavertail Road	20	No	Yes
Orchard, Grazing, Bees	50	Fort Getty Road	200+	Yes	Yes
Hay Production	50	North Road	200+	Yes	Yes
Veggies. Cattle, Sheep, Hogs	40	Weeden Lane	100+	Yes	Yes
Hay, Vegetables	120+	Weeden Lane	250+	Yes	Yes
Sheep, Cattle, Oyster	250	North Road	200+	Yes	Yes
Horses, Vegetables	10+	Carr Lane	40+	No	No
Vegetables, orchard, chickens	17	Eldred Ave.	23+	Yes**	Yes
** Signed permanent protection agreement 12/17/23					
<u>Inactive/ Protected Farmland</u>	20	Fort Getty Rd	30	Yes	
Total Farmland Acreage	582	Jamestown RI			

Opportunity

The end of WWII initiated a major transition in farming. What was labeled the “green revolution” took shape primarily in post-WWII era, taking advantage of much of the chemical technology and mechanical inventiveness created during the War. Farmers and farmhands- the labor supply- left the farms after the war in pursuit of better paying jobs in the cities. In order to keep going, and replace the lost manpower the remaining farms turned almost completely to chemical solutions, larger mechanized equipment and much larger landholdings . Small family farms disappeared and large-acreage, mono-crop corporate farming, supported by large government, increasingly dominated the food-supply business.

The interstate highway system and high-speed trucking rearranged totally the location and profitability of farm production. It was no longer essential to have farms on the outer edge of the city. Trucks loaded with farm produce from corporate farms can

deliver to any US city in less than 40 hours. Huge, fast moving container ships travel across the oceans, in both directions, delivering incredible amounts of agricultural produce and agricultural equipment. Satellites far out in space, steer the tractors and direct the operation of huge farm equipment through the massive fields; Giant chemical and seed companies determine what the farmer plants; large financial institutions loan the farmer the money to pay for it. Farming has become a corporate “bottom-line” business with all major decisions being made in Chicago, New York City and Washington DC, and not by the farmer and his family, sitting around the kitchen table.

John Deere, (the person, not the lawn mower) started the problem. In 1838 as a young man, he moved his blacksmith shop from Vermont to Illinois. He had an idea that changed the agricultural world. He designed and hammered out the first moldboard plow, from a used sawmill blade. The plow blade, with its shiny surface and new design, was exactly what was needed to break through tough native midwestern soils. The plow made it possible for a single farm family, with a couple of horses, to till the rich native soils and grow their crops. Unfortunately, neither the famers nor anyone else in 1838 could know, understand or protect against the negative aspects of plowing these soils.

A new study in the journal *Earth's Future* led by the University of Massachusetts Amherst shows that, since Euro-American settlement approximately 160 years ago, agricultural fields in the midwestern U.S. have lost, on average, two millimeters of soil per year totaling 57.6 billion tons (over that 160-year time period) The study's authors conclude that plowing, rather than the work of wind and water, is the major culprit.” Science Daily, March 2022

And, when you consider that the act of plowing releases thousands of tons of stored carbon back into the atmosphere, you begin to understand why regenerative agriculture addresses a very real positive response to very immediate critical problems.



The Jamestown Community Farm has a unique opportunity to demonstrate actual regenerative farming techniques and growing methods that are not at war with our Earth. The Jamestown Community Farm cannot change the world. But maybe some young girl bikes to the farm to help pick beans or a young lad stops by to help with the weeding. They pick and weed in the farm's deep rich composted soil and they think, "this is good." This is the generation that is going to have to solve the agricultural problems that we leave behind. The JCF must continue to provide support and opportunity to this next generation.



Conclusion: The Jamestown Community Farm has been in existence for 24 years. Over the years we have had the financial support of major charitable foundations, federal state and local government agencies, and most importantly, the people. Currently, the JCF Board of Directors is moving forward successfully on two extremely important additional projects:

- A plan for administrative succession;

- Fund support for acquiring the property that the farm is located upon.

We truly believe in what we are doing and we look forward to your continued participation and support.

January 30, 2024

Town of Jamestown Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee Report to the Town Council

The Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee consisting of seven (7) voting members: Erik Brine, JD Coleman, David Dolce, Michelle Estephan-Owen, Robert Raymond, Edward Ross, Beth Smith; and one (1) non-voting ex-officio member: Christine Brochu was charged by the Council with seeking opportunities to encourage year-round residency and make Jamestown more affordable for both property owners and renters alike. The committee was directed to review current commercial and residential property taxes, including owner-occupied, short-term and long-term rental properties and identify strategies employed by other local governments to incentivize year-round residency and affordability such as tax exemptions and incentives. Upon completion, the committee should present recommendations to the Town Council which may include new or amended ordinances; qualifying exemptions and incentives; tax relief tiers; defined qualification requirements; and/or suggested public education and outreach strategies.

The committee met ten times between September 20th 2023 and January 30th 2024 in order to develop recommendations that could be acted upon by the Council and the Rhode Island State Legislature in the 2024 legislative cycle. This report intends to outline those recommendations agreed upon by the committee.

From the onset of discussions, the members of the Tax Committee agreed that it was important to first agree on the goals and priorities of the committee in order to develop a framework in which tax strategies and policy recommendations could be made.

Goals and Priorities of the Tax Committee

- 1 – Make Jamestown more affordable for primary residents
- 2 – Create opportunities to meet town budgetary objectives while minimizing impact on Jamestown residents
- 3 – Protect and/or support Jamestown businesses
- 4 – Keep taxes low for elderly and need-based populations on fixed budgets
- 5 – Make Jamestown more affordable for town employees whose salaries have not risen commensurate with property values and who the community depends on
- 6 – Incentivize long-term rentals

To that end, the committee has developed a list of recommendations for the Jamestown Council that we believe support these goals and priorities. We recognize that some of these recommendations could have significant impact on revenue generation and some may not have significant fiscal implications but are policy positions that we believe represent the values of our town.

Recommendations

- 1- Update Current Exemptions

- a. Veterans Exemptions (table below) – The current veteran’s exemptions are credits and not currently tied to any index, so they are static and in reality, worth less every year due inflation, until specifically voted on, and in most case sent to the State Legislature to change. The committee recommends instead tying these exemptions to an index, such as the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to ensure that these credits increase annually commensurate with the general rise in costs. The committee believes that most current credits are in-line with other Rhode Island cities and towns however, the value of the Gold Star Parent and Prisoner of War credit seem low compared to the other veteran exemptions. The committee recommends that these credits should be raised dramatically to represent the tremendous sacrifice by those eligible. This change will have extremely low to no budget impact, but we feel will fall more in line with Jamestown values.

	Real Estate	Motor Vehicle
Regular Exemption	\$250 Credit	N/A
Unmarried Widow/Widower	\$250 Credit	N/A
Totally Disabled/Service Connected	\$500 Credit	N/A
Partially Disabled Service Connected	None	N/A
Gold Star Parent	\$300 Credit	N/A
Prisoner of War	\$500 Credit	N/A
Specially Adapted Housing	\$500 Credit	N/A

- b. Senior Exemptions (table below) – The income based senior exemptions are tied to published poverty income rates, which is helpful because it allows for those income requirements to change year to year. The qualifying incomes are capped at 220% of the poverty level which means that at income levels above \$29,898 for an individual or \$40,282 a family of more than one individual (in 2022 dollars as shown in the table) exemptions are fully phased out. The committee recommends that the Council consider shifting each of the categories to a higher percentage of poverty level to commensurately increase the income level caps.

Type of Program	Amount of Exemption or Tax Credit	Household Income Requirements	Age	Residency/ Occupancy Requirement	Length of Ownership Requirement
Income Based Exemption	61% to 100% of assessed value	1 resident-\$13,590 or less	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		More than 1 resident-\$18,310 or less			
Income Based Exemption	60% of assessed value	1 resident-\$13,591 to \$19,026	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		1+ residents-\$18,311 to \$25,634			
Income Based Exemption	50% of assessed value	1 resident-\$19,027 to \$21,744	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		1+ residents-\$25,635 to \$29,296			
Income Based Exemption	40% of assessed value	1 resident-\$21,745 to \$24,462	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		1+ residents-\$29,297 to \$32,958			
Income Based Exemption	30% of assessed value	1 resident-\$24,463 to \$27,180	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		1+ residents-\$32,959 to \$36,620			
Income Based Exemption	20% of assessed value	1 resident-\$27,181 to \$29,898	65+	5 Years	5 Years
		1+ residents-\$36,621 to \$40,282			
Disability Based Exemption	\$10,000 to \$25,000	Less than \$25,000	No Age	2 Years	2 Years

- c. Disability Based Exemption (table above) – The Disability Based exemption correctly is not tied to an age but is also not tied to any index and therefore is not updated regularly. The committee recommends changing the Disability exemption to match the Senior exemption and tie it to the same income-based exemption. This entire table would then apply to those who are 65+ and/or disabled.
- d. Firefighters Exemption – The Committee recognizes that the town just updated the tax exemption for firefighter and commends the Council for doing so. Jamestown is very lucky to have a superb group of volunteer firefighters, and which not only helps keep the town safe but also keeps our taxes significantly lower than they would be if Jamestown had to fund a full-time firefighting organization.

2- Add New Exemptions

- a. Town Employee Exemption – The Committee recognized that there are a diminishing number of Jamestown employees, including police officers, public works, and teachers who also live in our community due to the rapidly rising costs of housing in Jamestown and pay increases not keeping pace with inflation. We also believe there are real benefits to people who work in our community being able to live in our community. The Committee recommends considering an exemption in the form of a credit, similar to the firefighter exemption, for all full-time Jamestown employees. We believe this will help the town recruit and retain talent, show our town employees that they are appreciated, and make them more accessible to the community they serve.
- b. Homestead Exemption – Homestead exemptions have become very popular especially in communities that are vacation destinations and have a large non-resident population. An estimate created by cross referencing property tax rolls with voter registration rolls show that of the approximately 2,700 residences in Jamestown, nearly 50% of them are owned by non-residents. These exemptions provide an opportunity to keep taxes low for residents while leveraging the popularity of their communities for vacation goers and multiple-home owners to provide the necessary funding to maintain the infrastructure and management of the town. The Committee recommends that the Council adopt a homestead exemption as 12 other Rhode Island Communities have. (RI municipalities that offer a homestead exemption are Central Falls, East Providence, Johnston, Lincoln, Middletown, Narragansett, Newport, North Kingstown, North Providence, Providence, West Greenwich, and Woonsocket) Homestead exemptions can be instituted in a variety of way and can become both complicated to understand and onerous for the town to oversee. With that in mind the Committee recommends the Council consider two possible options.

(1) Provide a flat percentage of home value as an exemption for all residents. *Example – If a home is assessed at \$500,000 and the exemption rate is 20%, the resident homeowner would have the first \$100,000 of their home value exempted from their property tax bill therefore resetting their property assessed value at \$400,000. If a resident's home is worth \$1,200,000 the property assessed value would be decreased by \$240,000 to \$960,000. This could be capped at a certain level (for example the median home value) to ensure the amount of tax savings is not dramatically skewed by outliers with extremely high-valued homes.*

or

(2) Provide all residents a flat exempted amount off the value of their homes. *Example - If a home is assessed at \$500,000 and the exemption amount is \$200,000 the resident homeowner would have the first \$200,000 of their home value exempted from their*

property tax bill therefore resetting their property assessed value at \$300,000. If a resident's home is worth \$1,200,000 the property tax value would be decreased by \$200,000 to \$1,000,000. If this option is chosen, the Committee recommends that the Council ties the amount of the exemption to the change in median home valuation made during every revaluation assessment.

And

- (3) In order to incentivize long-term rentals and increase the availability of full-time housing options in Jamestown, the Committee recommends that the Council offer the Homestead Exemption to non-residents who provide a current 12-month lease on an annual basis.

3- Tax Stabilization Program

The Committee recommends the Council consider a Tax Stabilization Program to allow residents on fixed income to defer taxes that are more than 5% of their income. Taxes deferred are held, as a receivable, by the town until a triggering event occurs (sale of property, deceased etc.) which requires a full payment of deferred taxes. Amounts deferred can be charged interest and are accounted for in the Tax Collection Office. Applicants file on a yearly basis as this deferral is based on household income that can fluctuate year to year. North Smithfield has such a program that has benefited many older low-income property owners.

4- Reverse Mortgage Options

The Committee considered town-sponsored reverse mortgage options to allow aging residents on a fixed income to stay in their homes as tax rates rise. Since a similar program is being pursued through affordable housing policy, the Committee did not want to interrupt that progress and commends the Council for supporting such efforts.

5- Ensure Exemptions are Stackable

The Committee recommends that eligibility for any exemption should not eliminate the eligibility for another, especially for those that are need-based. *For Example, residents may be eligible for a Homestead Exemption, a Firefighter credit and an age-based senior exemption.*

- 6- The Committee recommends that the Council does not make any changes to commercial properties or businesses in Jamestown. Commercial property tax makes up a fairly small part of tax revenue in Jamestown and the Committee believes it is more important for Jamestown to keep the businesses that are here, especially those that stay open year-round, in town, rather than chase them off with higher taxes.

- 7- Seek greater revenue from fees and leasing of town properties and facilities.

While the committee recognizes that revenue generation from fees and leases may fall outside the charge of this committee, we did discuss it as it directly relates to the need for the town to primarily rely on property taxes for funding. The Committee therefore makes the following recommendations that pertain revenue creation that can offset or supplement revenue from taxes.

- a. Property leases – Avoid long leases with one-sided renewal options that prevent the town from receiving competitive rent for high-value properties. *For Example - golf course, harbors, pier/dock access to commercial operations.*
- b. Facility Use – The Committee commends the Council’s recent increase in rates at Fort Getty at a rate higher than in years past but urges it to continue to look at raising rates especially for non-residents to those similar in surrounding similar communities.
- c. Parking – The Committee recommends that the Council consider instituting online/ap-based paid parking throughout commercial and recreational areas in town both to limit parking congestion by non-residents and bring in revenue for the town. Rather than selling summer beach parking passes to residents the Committee recommends selling annual town parking passes that allow residents to park without additional cost in all commercial and recreational areas in town, all year round. Additionally, the town should increase the cost of beach parking for non-passholders to be commensurate to beach parking prices in Narragansett and Newport.
- d. The Committee recommends that the Council publish the balances of all other funds outside the general fund, which only appear in the town’s audit report, in the annual budget documents for greater transparency and public education of the town’s financial position. (*Example – Golf Course Fund, Harbor Management Fund, etc.*)

The Tax Relief Ad Hoc Committee strongly believes that Jamestown’s tax policies and exemptions are not only a necessary tool to provide resources to maintain and manage the town, but also a means to incentivize or influence desired behavior or outcomes in the community. We believe that the slate of recommendations provided does just that while meeting the goals and priorities for our community laid out at the beginning of this report. While the charge of the Committee is complete, we stand ready to answer your questions and support you as you move to the next phase of implementation of any or all of these recommendations.

The Jamestown Ad Hoc Tax Relief Committee - Erik Brine, JD Coleman, David Dolce, Michelle Estephan-Owen, Robert Raymond, Edward Ross, Beth Smith