



Loans available for sewer tie-ins

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By Cassias Shuman

Island homeowners with antiquated septic systems may have an opportunity to connect to the town sewer system affordably through a state run program if they're eligible. Town Manager Ed Roberge introduced the item to the Town Council based on a recommendation made to him by Finance Director Amy Land.

The New Shoreham Town Council voted unanimously (5-0) at a recent meeting to draft a resolution in support of some homeowners on Old Town Road who wish to participate in the Rhode Island Infrastructure Bank's Sewer Tie-in Loan Fund program. The program, administered by Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation, will provide the town with up to \$150,000 in credit with the maximum loan amount of \$10,000 to each homeowner who wants to participate and tie-in to the town's sewer system.

The program stipulates that borrowers pay a one-time origination fee of \$300 and one-percent annual servicing charge on the outstanding loan balance; the no-interest loan has a term of five years, and no income level requirement; the sewer connection must be made within one year of the loan application; the property must be classified by the New Shoreham Tax Assessor as residential, and be in decent, habitable condition, and not be encumbered by a building violation; have homeowners' property and liability insurance. A copy of the Sewer District connection permit is required with the application.

Although the program was introduced to the town by Old Town Road homeowners, the Town Council intends to make the program available to all Island homeowners who wish to tie-in to the town sewer system. Councilor Sven Risom said there are a lot of Island homeowners who can't afford a sewer tie-in. "It's a real problem," he said.

Risom said the Planning Board, of which he is also a member, discussed the cost of transitioning from "out-of-date septic systems to tie-in, or upgraded sewer systems. If we can extend this program out as an opportunity for everybody I don't know why we wouldn't."

Finance Director Amy Land said, "It happened to be the Old Town Road homeowners who brought this forward, but the program's open to anyone. And I think there are between four and six participants in this group. And since the maximum loan is \$10,000 each, and the line of credit is \$150,000, that is going to leave a sufficient balance for any other applicants to come forward and participate."

Land noted that "at the point where \$150,000 is fully expended the town can consider restoring" the program with an additional amount of loan funding. She also said, "It's in no way limited to specific neighborhoods on the Island."

For more information about the program go to: www.riib.org/stilf.

Harbor Church's affordable housing project

The Town Council also voted 3-0 in favor of waiving building permit fees for the Harbor Church's \$450,000 affordable housing project. First Warden Ken Lacoste, and Councilor Martha Ball recused themselves from the discussion due to their relationship with the church.

Church Trustee Tony Pappas said permitting fees for the project total \$2,875, and include \$300 for a Zoning permit, \$75 for a Historic District permit, and \$2,500 for a construction permit. In a letter he submitted to the Town Council, Pappas stated that waiving the fees would allow the church "to complete its fundraising efforts, and ensure a minimum of delays."

In his letter, Pappas, who is overseeing the project, noted that the church is in the process of renovating the third floor of its building to construct four year-round, affordable, rental apartments. The project is being funded through donations and grants.

"We appreciate your consideration," said Pappas. "We will have a 501(c)3 corporation formed within 60 days," with a board to manage the property. "That group will be responsible for the selection of the tenants, etc."

"Does this help our 10 percent for affordable housing?" asked Councilor Chris Willi, referring to the State of Rhode Island's requirement that 10 percent of each municipality's housing stock be affordable.

"My understanding is that it does," said Pappas.

Second Warden Andre Boudreau, who led the item's discussion in Lacoste's absence, said, "This project will also benefit the church. And I think it's a wonderful way for you guys to raise money to keep the church running because of what the church does for the community."

In other news, the Town Council and Roberge will be facilitating an effort between stakeholders to address the request from aquaculture groups to tackle the issue of off-season dock storage at Rat Island. The docks present issues to aquaculture farmers in the Great Salt Pond, including access in the area at low tide, and the infestation of mussels, which encroach on the farmers' equipment.

The Council will host a budget session on March 19 at 4 p.m., and a regular meeting on March 21 at 7 p.m. at Town Hall.