

# Council wish list has high price tag

By STEPHEN HEFFNER

Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

**MIDDLETOWN** — The Town Council did some potentially expensive window shopping last night as it considered a \$21 million plan for expanding schools and a proposal to buy the Gray Craig estate.

In a letter to the council, Town Administrator Charles Roberts estimated that the proposed four-year, \$21 million expenditure, requested by the School Committee to renovate or expand nearly every school in the system, could raise the tax rate by \$4.85 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

At the current tax rate of \$25 per \$1,000, a home owner with property assessed at \$100,000 pays the town an annual tax of \$2,500. According to Roberts's calculations, that bill could increase over the four-year period to nearly \$3,000.

"It could even be higher by the time we're done figuring in the interest of the temporary borrowing we'll have to do before we go to a bond issue," Roberts said after the

## MIDDLETOWN

meeting.

Roberts said that optimists involved with the plan have argued that the cost will be less because of a 32 percent reimbursement from the state for school capital improvements. But he said the reimbursement will be slow in coming.

"It could take five years before we see any significant money coming in from the state," Roberts said. "In the meantime, the town would have to be ready to pay for the whole thing."

In other business last night, the council discussed three letters from residents requesting that the town join the effort to save Gray Craig, the former Van Beuren estate, from being developed into a 56-unit housing complex. The project is before the Planning Board.

Various council members expressed their interest in saving the 78-acres from development, with

Council President Philip Coen describing the estate as "Middletown as it used to be." Councilwoman Mary Roderiques saying said saving it "would be an absolute dream if it could become reality."

But with recent estimates of a buyout cost running as high as \$8 million, Roberts was cautious of even a fractional town contribution.

"Right now we've got zero dollars for the project," he said. "We'd have to borrow the money, and that would mean going out for another bond referendum. We just went out last year for \$2.6 million for the Town hall expansion, for the Fire Department, and for the senior citizens center. Now we're talking about \$21 million for the School Department and money for Gray Craig. It's a tough situation. We need the schools. We need the open space. But can we afford it?"

The council scheduled a workshop for Monday on the school expansion. The town open space committee will meet soon to discuss the Gray Craig issue.

## Council

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When Councilman Joseph Botelho Jr. said the railroad does not have a good reputation for the uses it has proposed along the waterfront, Harrold said those proposals did not originate with P&W.

"The real problem is not that we

## OBITUARIES

### Katharine Martin

Manager of Providence Journal Canteen for WW II servicemen

**CRANSTON** — Katharine Martin, 95, formerly of Lyndon Road, Edgewood, died yesterday at the Pawtuxet Village Nursing Home. She was the widow of John E. "Jack" Martin.

Born in Middletown, Conn., a daughter of the late Willis and Catherine (Stone) Tuttle, she lived in Cranston for 40 years.

Mrs. Martin was manager of the Providence Journal Canteen at LaSalle Square, Providence, for servicemen in World War II. She was a charter member of Woodridge Congregational Church.

Her husband was a Journal-Bulletin sports writer for many years, and was prime mover in the formation of the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, formed in the early 1930s, which organizes schoolboy sports in the state.

Mrs. Martin leaves a son, Harold Martin of Stamford, Conn.; two daughters, Jacquelin Wright of Waldwick, N.J., and Kathleen Jennings of Cranston; nine grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

The funeral will be held Thursday at 11 a.m. at the Doolittle Funeral Home, 14 Church St., Middletown. Burial will be in Indian Hill Cemetery, Middletown.

### Richard D. Poland

EAST PROVIDENCE — Richard

## Environmentalists seek judgment against Sherwood Park developers

**PORTSMOUTH** — An environmental group says it will ask a federal judge to issue a summary judgment against the developers of the Sherwood Park housing project.

Tim Boudewyns, the lawyer for

## PORTSMOUTH

The suit asks the judge to order the defendants to stop the sewage from flowing into the Sakonnet

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