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Get ready taxpayers

Island property values expected to soar in the next citywide reassessment

BY MARY LOU WENDELL

So far, all the news stories about radical increases in property taxes have been about towns somewhere else, places like Chebeague Island, Freeport and, most recently, Portland. By now, you are familiar with the tale: Properties are reassessed. Taxes go way up. Residents become boiling mad.

As you read this, however, the city’s tax assessor is sending out forms to welcome Portland property owners to the club. The “data mailers” inform property owners about what’s on the property owned. Owners are expected to correct any mistakes and return the forms within two weeks.

The mailing is the beginning of an 18-month revaluation process that will result in new tax bills for everyone come April 2004. For islanders, the result is sure to be painful. In a recent meeting on Peaks Island to detail the reassessment process, the city’s tax assessor, Richard Blackburn, told a community room packed with worried homeowners that he couldn’t absolutely predict the future. But, he said, “you can expect there will be some adverse impact on your properties.”

To get some idea, take a look at what happened on Chebeague, Blackburn said. On Chebeague Island, a recent reassessment resulted in the doubling of taxes paid by many waterfront property owners, who are talking about seceding from the town of Cumberland as a result.

With any reassessment, though, the news is not bad for everyone. The purpose of revaluing properties is to raise everyone’s taxes, but to catch up with trends in the real estate market. The current revaluation in Portland is also referred to as the city’s “tax equalization project.”

Another way to understand the current revaluation, according to the city’s tax assessor, is in charge of the city’s property revaluation currently underway.

The Taxman Cometh. Richard Blackburn, Portland’s tax assessor, is in charge of the city’s property revaluation currently underway.

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The CBITD seat for Peaks is up for grabs.

BY DAVID TYLER

In the last two years the management of the Casco Bay Island Transit District (CBITD) allowed several workers to create a hostile work environment, according to a state agency, was criticized for a proposed rate increase, faced calls for a state audit and had to stop using an anti-pigeon repellent because it was killing migrating songbirds.

The rate increase wasn’t approved, there’s been no winter rate increase since 1988, a Merrill Lynch employee was charged with using an anti-pigeon repellent, and the pigeon repellent was removed after an outcry by passengers, but it’s been a tumultuous time for the district. So it’s no surprise that there are four candidates for the Peaks Island seat on the Board of Directors of the CBITD, which operates Casco Bay Lines.

One of the major recent issues is the investigation into working conditions at Casco Bay Lines. In 2001, the Maine Human Rights Commission found that a group of Casco Bay Lines employees created a hostile work environment through sexual harassment and intimidation, according to articles in the Portland Press Herald. The commission also determined that two ferry boat captains retaliated against a co-worker during the investigation.

Four vie for Peaks’ CBITD seat

The CBITD seat for Peaks is up for grabs.

Photo by David Tyler

BY MARY LOU WENDELL

Someone broke into Jay Soule’s house on Upper A Street on Oct. 12, stole a few credit cards and broke a fuel tank filter, causing 250 gallons of kerosene to spill into the yard, according to Soule. “I was at a (heated) pool party from 7 to 1:30 in the morning,” Soule said. “I got home at 1:30 and walked in the door and could smell kerosene.”

Soule, who delivers fuel for a living at Lionel Plante Associates, said he thought something was wrong with his kerosene heater. But then he noticed that some furniture had been moved. The blinds for a window had also been changed. Soule realized that someone must have entered his house through the window. He went outside to check out his fuel tank. There he noticed that the filter had broken off the side of his tank.

“Everyone on the island, including the police, know who did it,” Soule said. “But they can’t do anything about it because they have no evidence.”

Jay Soule

“So they must have used that as a step to get into the window,” Soule said. “As a result, 250 gallons of kerosene spilled out into the yard and under the house.”

The police arrived quickly that night after Soule called them. Two days after the break-in, Soule’s credit cards were thrown onto his lawn, he said. The police returned and took fingerprints from the cards, but Soule hasn’t heard from them since, he said. As far as he knows, no one has been charged for the crime.

So far, there have been a rash of break-ins in his neighborhood recently.

Portland police did not return phone calls for comment.

Break-in causes fuel spill

Photo by David Tyler

Photo by David Tyler

More election coverage inside

Please see CBITD race, page 6
In Brief

Pigeon repellent removed

Casco Bay Lines removed pigeon repellent from its most popular ferry terminal after migrating songbirds started getting trapped in the sticky material, losing feathers and dying.

The repellent was removed in mid-October at a cost of about $500 to $600, according to Patrick Christian, general manager of Casco Bay Lines. Numerous passengers complained about the small birds being maimed and killed by the repellent. Islanders rescued injured birds and took them to the Casco Bay Lot in Cape Elizabeth.

Christian said he got his first complaint that migratory birds were being stuck in the repellent product and making it stickier.

Christian said the repellent, called Bird-X, was applied in June to deal with a long-standing problem with pigeons living in the rafters of the terminal. In late September Christian said he got his first complaint that migratory birds were becoming stuck in the repellent. The substance is used in federal and state buildings across the country, and is approved by the federal Environmental Protection Agency, he said. The manufacturer claimed that Bird-X does not trap small birds when applied properly. “We do feel that we applied it properly,” Christian said.

In an Oct. 15 letter to passengers, Christian wrote that the smaller birds getting stuck “may have been precipitated by a change in the temperature, altering the viscosity of the product and making it sticky.”

Christian said he has received many complaints about the pigeons. Ferry employees on Peaks Island, Taylor said. The campaign for the proposed sale of the current Peaks Island Senior Housing Center, on Sterling Street, would also go to the capital campaign, Taylor estimates that sale could raise $150,000.

Taylor said the current health center is too small. "We pride ourselves on prompt, professional service."

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November 2002
Resources center planned

A committee of islanders, working with Nate Gray, a fellow with the Island Institute, is working to create a resource center to store information about Peaks Island.

The idea came from work on a neighborhood plan for the island, which is expected to be finished by the spring, Gray said.

Gray also said that he has signed up to continue as the island fellow until Aug. 1 of next year. He has been working on Peaks for the Island Institute since Nov. 1, 2001. "I'm really excited to be finishing up the neighborhood plan and to be working on the resource center," he said.

As part of the neighborhood plan, volunteers have gathered a wide variety of data, from geographical information to the results of a recent island survey. "But there's no place to put all this information that's accessible to everybody," Gray said. The proposed resource center could contain information from a variety of island organizations, such as the Peaks Island Land Preserve.

The committee applied to the MBNA Foundation for a $7,500 grant that would provide for desktop and laptop computers, a scanner and a printer. Gray said, if that grant comes through, the group will apply to the Island Institute for a $500 grant for office supplies.

They hope to be able to put the computer in the school. Long-term, the plan is to have the computer located in the library, after renovations are completed, Gray said.

The resource center should make it easier for future island planning. "Hopefully this will make the neighborhood planning process more of an ongoing process, rather than a stop-and-start model," said Gray.

In addition to Gray, the Peaks Island Resource Center Governing Board consists of Cynthia Cole, Roberta Deane, Charles Enders, Art Astarita, Bill Hall, Will Mitchell and Lynn Richard.

-David Tyler

Kissen book out


-David Tyler

Chickens killed

Jeanann Alves, who owns Horse Island Camp, said in late October a dog mauled one of the roosters she owns with Covey Johnson. "This is the third time this has happened," she said. In early spring, a dog killed five of the chickens. A second incident occurred during the summer. "It seems to be different dogs," she said. As a result of the dog attacks, the flock of about 40 birds has been reduced to two roosters and four chickens. Hall said she is not concerned about which dog is responsible, but she does want dog owners to be aware of the problem.

-David Tyler

Hoppin on Prom board

Peaks Island resident Chris Hoppin was appointed to the Eastern Prom Park Master Plan Committee. The committee, which was created by the City Council on Oct. 21, is to come up with a plan for the future use and improvements for the Eastern Prom. According to Tom Porter, the city's island administrator, once the plan is finished, it will be presented to the City Council to become part of the city's Comprehensive Master Plan. The board is chaired by George Campbell and includes representatives from the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization, the Adams Elementary School, Friends of the Park, the Little League Association and Portland House.

There is a major issue involved with the use of the Eastern Prom Park that affects island residents. Munjoy Hill residents have recently complained about the commercial use of the boat ramp at the East End Beach and would like the ramp restricted to recreational use. Without this ramp, the cost of shipping trucks and materials out to Peaks would skyrocket.

-David Tyler

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Candidates for the Peaks' CBITD board position (from L to R): John Flynn, Mark Hall, William O'Reilly, Norman Rasulis

Letters to the editor

DEP failed to protect islanders

I am writing in response to the soil issue at Battery Craven. My home is immediately adjacent to the site. My house was built in 1972 and my children were born in 1973, so I have been watching this soil issue closely. The soil was initially graded and removed from the property, then new soil introduced. Dr. Peter glasses, delivered large quantities of soil to the site, each, ultimately, bearing petroleum contaminants.

The first, which was excavated from the gas station where his home has been, is not particularly hazardous. Petrogenesis was described as "clean" or "good," because it was not as contaminated as topsoil. This is the soil that was installed in the "clean" process. The second delivery we observed also came from a pile at the railroad. The third delivery, which is impressed by the Board of Directors, is not as clean as expected.

The southern Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), headed by John Watson, has been involved in this issue for many years. The DEP has been monitoring the soil for far more complex and protracted. They failed to enforce their own mandates, exercised poor science, created outrageous deceptions, became rudderily and were deceitful.

Contrary to what was purported by the DEP, I believe the DEP simply wanted to make this problem go away, and that's precisely what they did. Commissioner Kirk Rasulis maintains that whether or not our family is not living on the Battery Craven property, I am still responsible for our water supply and our water resources are organically protected. I have not granted any access to our property, and I do not allow anyone to enter or use it with such care.

For months we waited after Wathen suggested city water be extended to our homes, only to find we never had the authority to grant that. I do not believe the DEP has ever had any genuine concern for our safety. While I feel fortunate my family is not living on the Battery Craven property, I am still responsible for our water supply and for my family's health. The DEP has repeatedly ignored our concerns.

For several years ago. As a result, I have been involved in the CBITD management failed to protect its workers from the assault rifle ban that was passed in 1994. This ban was not adopted, but the move upset some.

Early this year a rate hike was proposed for both the summer and winter schedules to cover a $97,000 operating shortfall. The hike is not justified.

 Flynn said that the ferry service is not in trouble. "I don't really see any problems," Flynn said. "I'm pretty content with the way the boats are run." He denied that the "clean-up" article about CBITD should not be relied upon as the only source for all ferry service. "There's a tendency to put a bad light on things." Fink said that the board management is to blame for problems at CBITD and that he is the only one to protect the workers.

Good managers would not have allowed the problems with harassment and discrimination to occur. "There were plenty of warnings that these problems were well known by management for a long time," Fink said. "They didn't follow-up or follow-through on these issues. I think poor management has continued because of management's inaction."

O'Reilly said that management was at fault in that situation. "They didn't act quickly enough," he said. "They let it go or ignored it until it got into the papers."

Flynn said that the two vacancies who retracted should have been dismissed by management much earlier. He also faults management for poor morale. "There's constant posturing on the part of management and the union," he said. "It's the inmates running the asylum - that's what it amounts to."

O'Reilly has been on the board for three and-a-half years and is currently the board's clerk. He is a 1962 graduate of the Maine Maritime Academy and served as the chief engineer on commercial ships. He was also the assistant vice president of engineering for 13 years at the New York City-based MT Corporation, which owned and operated oil tankers.

Flynn is also retired. He was Portland's Harbormaster for five years and deputy harbormaster for 15 years. He served as the Portland Fire Department, and was acting chief when he retired in 1978. Flynn has also been a lobsterman and was a captain for the Casco Bay Lines in the 1940s.

Rasulis was an English professor at Central Michigan University in Mount Pleasant, Mich., for 30 years and has also taught courses at the University of Southern Maine. He tests water quality for the Friends of Casco Bay and also delivers Meals on Wheels on the island.

Hall is a welder and a mechanic and owns his own business in Portland, which he has run for the past 13 years.

Each has different goals for the board. O'Reilly said there should be term limits for president and vice president of the board. "I'd like to see some changes, sometimes people get tunnel vision," he said. He also wants more openness on the board. O'Reilly said he believes some board members have been shut out on certain issues. "There are things that happen that other members of the board do not know about - I'd like to see that changed," he said.

With his experience, O'Reilly said he has a better sense of how CBITD is run. It will take any new board member time to learn the ropes.

O'Reilly said he fought against the proposed rate hike early this year. He advocated selling CBITD land on Peaks Island, which sold for $100,000, in order to make up the budget shortfall that triggered the rate hike proposal. O'Reilly said he also wanted to create a monthly car pass for year-round residents to use in the summer, so they would not have to pay $65 per trip to take a car off the island.

Flynn agrees that this fee is too high. "They have the car rates in the summer so high, it's a hardship for people," he said.

mean to streamline operations and have no accountability of the board chosen by CBITD. I have served on the operations committee and the special committee directed to sell the property on Peaks Island thus keeping down another potential rate increase. I am currently the clerk of the Board of Directors.

I am a year-round resident of Peaks Island. I graduated from Maine Maritime Academy in 1962 and was employed on oil tankers for over 25 years. I hold a United States Coast Guard license as chief engineer, steam and motor vessels of any horsepower and any tonnage.

Please vote for me for the Peaks Island seat on the Casco Bay Island Transit District Board of Directors on Nov. 5.

Bill O'Reilly

The Island Times is a community newspaper covering Peaks Island and issues affecting Casco Bay that comes out 11 times a year. We welcome birth, engagement and wedding announcements; obituaries; notices of community events; and letters to the editor. Please try to keep letters to 300 words or less. We reserve the right to edit letters.

Published by Mary Lou Wendell/David Tyler Design and layout: Craig Davis/Tim Frank Photographer: Arnie Pearson

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Halloweenville!  

In case you didn't already know that Peaks Island was the best place to go trick or treating, here is the evidence. Halloween festivities on Peaks included lighted (and most beautifully carved) pumpkins and a haunted house at the Lion’s Club, along with Christmas (that’s right, Christmas!) at Scott and Nancy Nash’s house, where you got treats whether you were naughty or nice.
The race for state senator representing District 27, includes Falmouth, Long Island and part of Portland (including Peaks Island). The Island Times sent a questionnaire to each candidate asking their views on several major state issues.

Why are you running for this office?
Brennan: Maine and this Senate District face a number of challenges related to the state budget, school funding, property taxes, health care and the environment. Having served on the Education Committee for six years, I am passionate about the need for this District to have strong schools that will produce high education and good jobs. I believe my experience and background in school funding issues and tax policy will help us build strong communities and offer social and economic opportunities for residents of the District.

Noble: I am running for this office because I feel like voters need a more radical candidate to address issues that the Democratic incumbents and the Republican are not going to address. I am the only one who is really representing the needs and issues of the average citizen of Maine.

Vamvakias: I am running for the Senate because I have wide experience at the local, state and national level in the issues that are challenging Maine future: Education, health care, the economy and the building of strong communities.

What do you hope to accomplish in the legislature?
Brennan: First, the next legislature will have to balance the budget in a way that reflects the state's priorities. I also think it is important for Portland to have a strong voice in Augusta. I intend to articulate the needs of service center communities. At the same time it is important to build bridges and collaborate with legislators from across the state on common issues. I have already introduced legislation to create a community college in Maine, end discrimination, protect the fishing industry and create affordable housing.

Noble: In the legislature, I hope to create legislation that will make the state of Maine responsible for the housing crisis. One way that this could happen would be for Maine to ratify the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which guarantees all residents the right to housing that is safe and affordable. Once this legislation is in effect, Maine will have to take some measures to alleviate the housing crisis. Maine will have to do things like build affordable housing, prosecute slumlord and rehabilitate slum housing, create more low cost that will protect tenants from corporate profiteering, and even look at rent control/rent freeze proposals.

Vamvakias I will advocate for a reduction of spending, responsible tax relief, stronger support for education, affordable health care, a stronger economy and an appropriate concerns for the environment.

What are your priorities?
Brennan: My top priorities are changing the school funding formula and reducing property taxes. Maine is too reliant on property taxes for education funding. In 1990 the state provided 50 percent funding for the cost of K-12 education—currently it funds 45 percent. The reduction of the state share has put more pressure on property taxes.

Noble: My priorities are: 1. Creating a single payer, universal health care system (free health care and prescription drugs for all); 2. Creating affordable housing; 3. Reforming property taxes so that they are based on income, instead of solely on property value; 4. Preserving our environment.

Vamvakias My priorities are education and a strong economy accomplished by good-paying jobs.

What about school funding? The state has never been able to meet its commitment to pay for 55 percent of education costs. Also, its funding formulas encourage sprawl and pushes cities like Portland at a disadvantage. What would you do to make school funding more equitable?
Brennan: It is correct that the current formulas encourage sprawl and is not favorable to Portland. It encourages sprawl by rewarding increases in the growth of student population and it hurts Portland because it relies too much on valuation at the center of our community. During the past six months, I have been working with State Representative Glenn Cummings and other legislators, municipal officials and education professionals on a plan to reform the school funding formulas. I have introduced legislation to implement this plan during the next legislative session. Essentially the plan would address the problem of dramatic increases in valuations, declining student population, tax exempt property and differences in cost of living. Also, the proposal would reduce other factors in the way of the community.

Noble: I would like to move school funding to a centralized level and have the same amount of educational funds at a relatively equal amount per child (so children in economically depressed towns with low property taxes would not have schools that suffer). Property tax shouldn't be the primary source of funds for education, you are right, the state should be forced to pay at least 55% that they were supposed to be paying by 2003, I would have municipalities contribute money (at more consistent rates) to Maine which then would be dispersed equally per child, so Portland wouldn't be disadvantaged.

Vamvakias The current formula is beyond tweaking or further adjustments. In its present form, Maine's largest city will suffer at a disadvantage. Since 1996, as a percentage of Maine's budget, school funding has dropped. This does not mean to me that it is the priority that some would lead us to believe. I would fight for funding for education being a larger piece of the budget pie.

How would you make up for the state's budget shortfall?
Brennan: I believe we can have a balanced budget without increasing taxes. We must cut the state budget, reduce duplication, and the budget is set to be increased, what parts will be left funded and what will be cut. My priorities will be education and the environment. We will be savings through the reorganization of state agencies.

Noble: I will make up for the budget shortfall by creating new taxes for tourists and the wealthy. I will look at cutting out unnecessary bureaucrats, but at this point, I don't know of any particular programs that I would cut. Though this is controversial a belief that the state should legalize marijuana so that we can produce it and sell it like New Hampshire sells alcohol. Farming it and packaging it would create jobs, and marijuana would be a cash crop. Maine could create a state run pharmaceutical company that could sell marijuana for medicinal use to other states who have approved its use. The by-product of marijuana could be used to make paper in the paper mills (it is much more renewable than trees for paper). Maine could cut the cost of health care by legalizing eliminating marijuana laws, by not paying for prison time for marijuana users, and it would cut the cost of law enforcement to have one less street drug. Marijuana is much less addictive and less deadly than alcohol.

Vamvakias Maine does not have a tax revenue problem, in fact, over the next two years, tax revenues would grow at 5% per year. The problem is that spending is growing at 17 percent, leading to a $900 million deficit. Spending must be controlled. If the state simply froze spending for the next two years at last year's level, then the projected deficit drops from $900 million to $35 million. That's with no cuts to any program. Maine needs a realistic budget that reflects Maine's ability to pay. Maine's budget shortfall should not be solved by raising taxes. Maine is already the number one taxed state in the United States.

Would you support state legislation to make it illegal for cruise ships to dump gray water or sewage in Casco Bay?
Brennan: I've been endorsed by the League of Conservation Voters and I know that's something that really matters to me, something that I would support.

Noble: I would support state legislation to make it illegal to dump sewage or "gray water" from cruise ships in the Casco Bay. I would also like to see the state get involved in the matter of waste management. The state gets the money that is used to clean up the state, instead of Maine taxpayers' money through our state's trash handlers. The state could be made to take responsibility for the clean up, and Maine can force them to pay. Vamvakias Absolutely! As a scuba diver I have experienced firsthand, from head to tow, the effects of discharged boat sewage and gray water.
Budding is underway for this office! Dudley: Economic opportunity and access to health care are too often determined by where we are born, not who we are. My fundamental political goal is to lift the barriers that keep so many from reaching their full potential; our success as a community and state will be measured by how well we do this. I am seeking reelect for the District 30 with a vision for economic and social justice for all people in Maine that includes universal health care, first rate public education, tax fairness, civil rights, and a healthy environment.

Spinney: Dudley: The past two election cycles the incumbent has run unopposed. That is not a choice. In a synopsis done by the Portland Press Herald [My opponent], I had all but one answer similar. He would vote to raise taxes to cover the budget shortfall. I would not. Now District 30 has a choice. What do you hope to accomplish in the Legislature? Dudley: I hope to build on my accomplishments to date, including enactment of comprehensive mental health benefits (voted by Gov. King), greater access to prescription drugs for seniors, low-income property tax relief, domestic partner health benefits, supports for homeless youth, promotion of clean vehicle fuels, tougher child sexual abuse laws, and increased funding for Casco Bay.

Spinney: Dudley: I hope to be a voice for this very unique district. I can't think of an area of the state, that has a more diverse representation of economic levels (from section 8 housing to million-dollar single family homes, renters and home owners), race (immigrants and emigrants), artists and professionals, islanders and mainlanders, natives and transplants. We have the potential to be trailblazers and anchors. Dudley: What do you propose to do to make sure that people aren't forced out of their homes because of higher taxes and that renters can still afford to live in the city? Dudley: Property taxes must be lowered if our city is to prosper. Growth in spending, whether it's from state or federal sources, is an anachronistic measure of wealth in a community, and are terribly regressive.

Spinney: Dudley: There are three approaches for the state to relieve this burden: 1. A state law allowing a lower sales tax devoted to education funding. This would allow the citizens to lower property taxes and use the saved money to obtain services for less. 2. A state school funding formula to soften the impacts of property valuation across the state, to ensure a more equitable distribution of the local median income; 3. Increase local aid to education by an amount based on the size of the student population which can vary significantly across the state, as to increase funding for the education of the local median income.

Spinney: Dudley: The state will have to realize that Peaks Island has a force to be reckoned with. The government of Maine cannot afford to treat its largest city in this manner. This is not an arrogant response and I don't mean it to be. This is a highly defensible position to live especially because of its small city amenities but also because of its residents. This is coming from the state in the state. The state can no longer cover up its shortcomings by partnering the islanders the difficulty during the years of taking away the harbor when the Scotia Prince, because it will free up its terminal for other cruise ships. Dudley: "How do you propose to do so? To make sure that people aren't forced out of their homes because of higher taxes and that renters can still afford to live in the city? Dudley: Property taxes must be lowered if our city is to prosper. Growth in spending, whether it's from state or federal sources, is an anachronistic measure of wealth in a community, and are terribly regressive.

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In addition to the race for the Peaks Island seat on the Casco Bay Island Transit District's Board of Directors, there are two other races: Arlen Davis is challenging current board President Cyrus Hagge for the Little Diamond seat and Elizabeth Weber is running unopposed for the Great Diamond Island seat.

All islanders vote in each CBITD race. Each seat is for a three-year term on the 12-member board.

Both Davis and Weber are running campaigns critical of the current management of CBITD.

"I've just been concerned about the direction of the district in general," Davis said. "I don't think that's any surprise to anybody who's been involved in it."

Davis said there have been problems with the budget, customer service and personnel; specifically the sexual harassment complaints that were investigated by the Maine Human Rights Commission. "What I'm really concerned about, in general there needs to be a little stronger management there," he said.

Davis said that it's been a difficult two years. But he said the ferry line is in the midst of change. "The company is getting more on top of things," Hagge said.

Davis said that things are turning around in terms of the personnel issues. "I'm sensing that employee relationships are improving dramatically," he said.

The board has been working hard to change how management works with employees, Hagge said. For example, evaluations of employees by their supervisors, and of supervisors by employees, were put in place. The role of captains has also changed.

"We're expecting captains to take more of a leadership and management responsibility," he said. Captains will exercise more supervision and will evaluate employees who work with them on a regular basis.

"When you try to change a culture like Casco Bay Lines, it isn't an easy process," Hagge said. "Sometimes things get ugly and you have to fight it out to make it better for people."

Davis said he was concerned by the harassment of employees and by a proposed rate increase (which was not adopted). "The Board of Directors and the management in the past have somewhat lost the confidence of the islanders," Weber said.

The proposed rate increase upset Weber so she submitted a complaint, signed by 126 islanders, asking the Maine Public Utilities Commission to audit CBITD. "The Board of Directors and management continually react to crisis," Weber wrote in her complaint, dated Jan. 25. "We should not have to suffer those injustices anymore, nor should we be penalized for their mismanagement."

When the rate increase was not adopted, Weber voluntarily withdrew the complaint, so no audit was undertaken. In terms of the employee harassment, Weber said management allowed the issues to escalate, rather than handle the matter. The employees felt they had to go to these outside agencies to protect themselves," she said.

Hagge, who lives in Portland in the winter, has been on the CBITD board for 11 years. He is a general contractor and owns Project Management Inc. Davis lives in South Portland in the winter. He owns Davis Construction Inc., a company that builds and leases small office buildings and condominiums. Weber is an artist who also works with her father's fuel company, Dinosaur Enterprises Ltd.

Davis said that the election is not personal. "I really don't have anything bad to say about Cyrus," he said. "As in politics, I think it's sometimes good to have some new ideas." Davis said he would not act hastily, if elected, but unless they were new problems. "I would like to be constructive and work with people," he said. "I think there are a lot of nice, hard-working people down there at the bay lines."

Davis, another big issue facing the board is keeping the budget under control. In 11 years on the board he said he's never voted for a winter rate increase. In general, rate increases have been small, he said. "Ever since I've been on the board, the rate of increases is well below the consumer price index," he said.

"In an effort to help year-round residents, Hagge pointed to the institution of the commuter pass, which saved Peaks Island residents money. Hagge said he was also unanimously endorsed by the Little Diamond Island Association at its Labor Day weekend meeting.

Davis said that CBITD should have an operating reserve, "so they're not going up to the state begging them for money." Davis has also concerned that CBITD listed the preventative maintenance budget as an asset as a method to help balance the budget. Davis said Casco Bay Lines needs to streamline costs and work on long-range planning. "I think, in general, there can be improvement in a number of areas," he said.

With ridership increasing every year by 3 percent, Weber does not understand why there are budget shortfalls. She questions whether the Bay Mist is used efficiently. "She would like to investigate the possibility of sending the boat somewhere else for the winter so it could make more money. She also said she thought Casco Bay Lines has too many managers for the size."

Weber said the problems with the ferry terminal bathrooms have been taken care of. "My experience with the bathrooms is there has been great improvement," she said.

Hagge said the bathrooms are cleaned daily, and twice a day during the summer. But keeping the bathrooms clean is a challenge, because the terminal is a public facility. "It would be nice if you could keep everyone out unless you're a passenger, but how do you draw the line?" he said.

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Across
1. Hatter descriptive
6. Trash
9. Up
12. Pub brew
13. Look over
14. Golden calf, e.g.
16. Say __ {agree)
17. Musician’s booking
18. Put away
19. Romeo to Juliet, e.g.
20. Hatch’s State
22. Stair part
24. ___ ___
28. Early Giant great
29. Anatomical pouch
30. “Not guilty,” for example
31. Participants
32. Place to hang your hat
33. Participants
34. Participants
35. Participants
36. Participants
37. Participants
38. Participants
39. Participants
40. Participants
41. Participants
42. Participants
43. Participants
44. Participants
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50. Participants
51. Participants
52. Participants
53. Participants
54. Participants
55. Participants
56. Participants
57. Participants
58. Participants
59. Participants
60. Participants
61. Participants
62. Eccentric

Down
1. “The Commoner”
2. What a sailing ship might do in a gale
3. Long suit
4. Catch
5. Swellhead
6. One of a pair of giants
7. Outlanders
8. Dishwasher’s chore
9. Early Northern Scots
10. Hebrew month
11. Hatch’s State
12. Up
13. Pub brew
14. Golden calf, e.g.
15. Say __ {agree)
16. This goes right to the heart
17. Musician’s booking
18. Put away
19. Romeo to Juliet, e.g.
20. Hatch’s State
21. Not ashore
22. Stair part
23. Participants
24. ___ ___
25. Participants
26. Participants
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Cynthia Cole
The young girl doing a swan dive on page 3 is a 14-year-old Cynthia Cole. She was being groomed, she said, to become a competitive diver. But she was never totally successful because, Cole said, she could never get her head up high enough. Who could tell? Cole was born in 1928 in Tulsa, Oklahoma and moved with her family to the New York City area when she was six months old. She married in 1951 and had two children. She was in teaching of one sort or another all her life, she said. The Cole family moved to Maine when her husband, John Cole, one of the founders of the now defunct Maine Times newspaper, got a job as editor of the Brunswick Record, now the Times Record. Cynthia first came to Peaks in 1980. She spent six months on the island and liked it enough to eventually make Peaks her permanent home in 1983. Cole spent some time working for an NGO, (Non Governmental Organization), in Kenya. Her NGO was under contract with the United Nations to collect information on environmental NGOs all over the world. Cole joined the Peace Corps in 1988 and again in 1996. Her first assignment was in Honduras, her second in Jamaica. Both times she spent three years away.
John "Jack" O'Brien
Member, Maine Legislature - 105th & 106th
Past President, N.E. Machinists Union
Resident, Portland & Peaks Island

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Former Peaks Island resident

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School candidates stress experience

Chong has been a tutor and mentor to Portland students. He's worked to recruit scholarship students for the Maine Community Fund. In his job as coordinator at the West End Community Police Station he also dealt with safety issues at the Reiche Elementary School, the King Middle School and the Portland High School.

Lavin has worked as an art teacher at Worcester Academy in Massachusetts, taught as a conditionally certified teacher in Richmond, and was a health educator for the Peace Corps in Jamaica.

Chong said he sees education as essential for the state's economic development. He also wants to make sure students receive a high-quality education and are encouraged to attend college. Maine is "at the top third in high school graduation rates and at the bottom third in college graduation rates, and that has to change," he said.

Lavin said it's time for fresh ideas. "It's time to ask new questions, it's time to try new things," he said. And he believes his experience in education gives him the insight into effective new concepts. "I've seen what's wrong with education and I've seen what works," he said.

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THE ISLAND DIRECTORY

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TAX, from page 7

what is about to happen is to go by the old tax assessors' adage, which is after any reassessment, taxes for one-third of the property owners will go up, one-third will stay the same, and one-third will go down.

Blackburn said he doesn't know whose taxes will go down in Portland because the revaluation hasn't taken place yet. But he was definitely pretty clear about whose taxes will go up, which he reiterated in a recent telephone interview.

Right now, waterfront property is hot, along with island property, Blackburn said. Multi-unit apartment buildings, especially those on the outskirts of the city, have also seen a dramatic rise in selling prices.

Values for these types of properties are not reflected accurately in the city's records. They will go up after the new assessment. After that, the tax rate will come down to make up for the changes in total assessed value of property in Portland, because, remember, the city is not trying to increase its total revenues received from property taxes.

But many already are panicking. Many are talking about packing up and moving off the island if their taxes go up too much.

Michelle Thresher, who lives on the back shore of Peaks with her husband and young daughter, said she is very concerned about the prospect of paying more in property taxes.

"We're definitely worried," Thresher said. "If it [her property tax] doubles, then we're up to almost $11,000 a year.

What's expected to happen on Peaks and elsewhere in Portland has been happening all over Southern Maine. But its impact on island communities could be more severe than on the mainland. If young families can no longer remain, school populations could diminish, ultimately affecting the viability of year-round communities.

The Island Institute, based in Rockland, held a two-day conference late last month focused on rising property taxes for island communities, along with the lack of affordable housing and shrinking access to working waterfront. Many Peaks Islanders attended.

"We had people from most of the island communities," said Nathan Michaud, who organized the conference. The problem for many, especially old-time and middle-income islanders, is that "taxes are being assessed based on values that aren't theirs," Michaud said.

Many of those who attended the Island Institute conference heard about a new proposal that originated on Chebeague called the "Maine Land Bank and Community Preservation Program." This proposal was authored by David Hill, a summer resident on Chebeague who says his island taxes have quadrupled in 16 years. His plan would allow homeowners to "land bank" their property. Assessments to this property would be capped at 2 percent a year. If the owner decides to sell the property, a substantial penalty would be paid as the time of sale.

Hill's proposal received support from a number of islanders at the conference.

A primer on tax reform proposals

There are many tax reform proposals floating around right now. Here is a brief explanation of the main ones:

The Taxpayer Group. This is Carl Folsky's organization, which is working to pass a referendum next year based on California's Proposition 13. This would cap property taxes at $10 per $1,000 of assessed value and freeze assessments at the time a property is purchased. This proposal sets the tax rate at only 1 percent of a property's value and freeze assessments at the time a property is purchased. This proposal is a difficult situation," Blackburn said. "It could create a difficult situation for people who can't pay."

Blackburn also said that he hopes that people don't worry about the increases too much. He said just because the value of a property doubles or triples doesn't mean taxes will double or triple. Residents should remember that the tax rate will go down to compensate for the increase in values.

"I just hope that people don't panic," Blackburn said.

The MMA proposal. The Maine Municipal Association also fears the tax cap proposal. So it came up with its own proposal to limit property taxes by requiring the state to increase its share of the cost of education. This proposal, which is being actively promoted by Portland city officials, would require an increase from 43 percent to 50 percent of the state's share of public education. This would also require the state to pay for all costs of special education.

The only problem with this proposal is no one knows where all the extra money for education will come from.

Eco/Eco Civic Forum. This nonpartisan group has come up with a plan to lower taxes for middle income families by replacing the sales tax with a gross receipts tax on services such as legal and accounting services.

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Board of Directors
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November 2002

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An indirect course

Mary Jo Roth was a teacher and ranch hand before becoming a Casco Bay Lines captain

BY DAVID TYLER

For Casco Bay Lines, Mary Jo Roth, a job that started out as one of life's detours has become a career. Roth, who is 30, got her bachelor's degree from Castleton State College in Vermont in commercial art and education. And she was a teacher for three years. But that job wasn't fulfilling. "I kind of burned out on that," she said. "I didn't like it, it wasn't for me, especially being indoors like that."

So in the summer of 1997, she and her husband, Matt Barnes, left Barre, Vermont, where she had been teaching, and moved to Portland. When they got there, her husband had summertime in Biddeford Pool, but they had never been out in Casco Bay. But she couldn't find a job. She called Casco Bay Lines looking for an office position, and was told the only jobs available were as deck hands. "So I started out decking, and it only means to be here for a short while," she said.

Five years later, Roth is still working on the ferries, but now she's the only woman captain of the nine ships employed by Casco Bay Lines. She passed the exam to captain vessels of 100 tons or less two years ago.

This summer she was captain of the Machigonne II for two days a week and captain of a "down bay" boat for three days a week. Since Roth is eight in seniority, which is the band for who gets to run a boat, she also works as a deck hand in the winter, when her husband had summertime in Biddeford Pool, but they had never been out in Casco Bay. But she couldn't find a job. She called Casco Bay Lines looking for an office position, and was told the only jobs available were as deck hands. "So I started out decking, and it only means to be here for a short while," she said.

Roth said she's happy as a ferry captain in a way that she was not as a teacher. Her father had a similar career path. He was working in an insurance office in New York City and decided he would rather be out working in the harbor. So he served in the Coast Guard for four years. "It's the same pattern, going off to work with your hands instead of your head," she said. "It's more satisfying, and you don't take it home with you."

And she loves working outdoors. "I can't even shut my bedroom window anymore. It's open all year 'round, winter, too. You get used to this much air and you die being inside."

KEROSENES, from page 1

The day after the break-in, Soule said, the police came back with the Fire Department to assess what needed to be done to clean up the kerosene. Luckily he and all of his neighbors are on city water. The state Department of Environmental Protection was also called in. They decided to remove all of the contaminated soil. Soule said:

"Two days after the break-in, a Yarmouth company hired by the DEP brought out a vacuum truck and sucked up all the contaminated soil from the yard and under the house." Soule said. Fill was brought in to replace the soil.

Soule filed a homeowner's insurance claim to cover the cost of the clean-up, plus the $490 in kerosene that was spilled. The DEP could not be reached for comment on the cost of the clean-up.

Although Soule's yard has been put back together, he group ed that no one has been caught and charged with the crime. "It's been a major inconvenience," Soule said.

He said there was a suspect. "But I guess you can't get fingerprints unless there's probable cause," he said. "So we haven't done anything.

He said the police are trying to tie his break-in with a burglary that took place some months ago in Peaks Café and with "recent break-ins throughout the whole island," Soule said.

"Everyone on the island, including the police, know who did it," Soule said. "But they can't do anything about it because they have no evidence."

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