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Mary Lou Wendell

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Gem Gallery helps Peaks arts community thrive

New array of holiday offerings now on sale, the summer of and commercial focus for locally thal could offer both an aesthetic and practical focus of locally produced art.

BY DAVID COHEN

When the Gem Gallery opened in the summer of 2003 there seemed to be huge push up energy from island artists and demand from the general community for a venue that could offer both an aesthetic and commercial focus for locally produced art.

It was the stuff of dreams, more literally than figuratively though. The space at 62 Island Avenue that is now the Gem Gallery used to be Kristen Chalmers' bedroom. She's lived in her house since the early 1990s and rented out a portion of the space that fronts on Island Avenue to the Umbrella Cover Museum for many years. But the idea of the Gem Gallery is something that Kristen dreamed up with the help of her brother Rick who reconfigured his house so that she could rent all of it to make room for the new gallery.

Her dear, dated bedroom was transformed into a bright, modern Manhattan-like gallery space with white-washed walls, big windows, new flooring, and a welcoming door opening onto Island Avenue, and some exciting design elements, such as the floating corrugated aluminum ceiling and gooseneck track lighting fixtures.

Stop in on a Thursday evening during the summer when a new gallery exhibition is having its opening and you'll find year-rounders and summertime residents please see THE GEM, page 6.

New group of knitters offers comfort with prayer shawls

BY REBECCA STEPHANIS

It is Thursday afternoon and I am sitting with a circle of women who are all knitting or crocheting colorful bulky yarn into shawls of various patterns and sizes. On this particular day we are at the parish house of Brackett Memorial Church. I am sitting cross-legged in a circle, my lap is full of dog - a chihuahua and a dachshund napping contentedly on each leg - I knit thick, battery yellow yarn into a prayer shawl.

I am joyfully warm and happy sitting in this circle of women with the dogs in my lap and I hold the intention of infusing the shawl with all of the love and kindness I feel in this room.

When the shawl is completed, it will be given to someone in the community who is in need of comfort. I do not yet know who will receive the shawl, and the recipient may never know who knitted it. Welcome to the Peaks Island Prayer Shawl Ministry, a group of needleworkers who are spreading warmth, comfort and prayers for peace and healing throughout the island community. At present, we have twelve members. Some of us are members of the church and some are not. Some of us are experienced knitters and some are just learning. We all share the joy of gathering in service.

Prayer Shawl Ministry was conceived in 1997 by Janet Bristow and Victoria Gare, two graduates of the 1997 Women's Leadership Institute at The Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut. They wanted to combine their love of knitting and crocheting with spiritual practice and mission work. Shawl makers begin with prayers and blessings and carry meditative intention throughout the creation of the shawl. When the shawls are complete, the minister offers another blessing before it is given to a community member in need of comfort, solace or healing. Sometimes shawls are also given in times of celebration and joy.

In one of these serendipitous connections that are so frequent please see SHAWLS, page 17.

The new Peaks Island Council begins its work

Following the defeat in the Maine Legislature State and Local Government Committee of a bill that would have permitted Peaks Island to separate from the City of Portland and form its own town, the city established the framework for a seven-member Peaks Island Council to be formally elected by the registered voters on Peaks Island and to thereafter serve as the island's representative body.

The ordinance establishing the Council authorized it to "exercise all powers and fulfill all functions of a town council," including but not limited to... "a broad mandate indeed.

Following an election campaign reported previously in the Island Times, on November 6, 2007, Peaks Island voters in a relatively high turnout, selected the following islanders to constitute the first Peaks Island Council: Thomas Tom Bahan, Robert Bob) Hurley, Kathryn Moday, Lynne Richard, Michael Mike) Langella, Elizabeth Jenny) Stout, and Robert (Bob) Tiffany.

In accord with the ordinance, the top three vote getters, Bob Harley, Lynne Richard, and Mike Langella received three-year terms, the next two, Tom Bahan and Jenny Stout, two-year terms, and the next two, Kathryn Moday and Bob Tiffany, one-year terms. In this way, future elections will be for only one or two seats instead of for all seven, as was the case this year.

As of December 7, 2007, the Council has had its first regular Meeting, plus one Special Meeting, and three Workshops. These events are described in the article below, which also sets out the anticipated schedule for future Meetings and Workshops.

The newly elected seven-member Peaks Island Council gets sworn in.

BY KEVIN ATTRE

Since last month, the new Peaks Island Council has been elected, launched, and given the task of figuring out how it is going to operate and interact with the rest of the island.

As a consequence, the seven islanders elected to the first Council have been busy and for the most part have had the experience of trying to shape a new type of organization while carrying on their deliberations in public.

Between Nov. 13 and Dec. 5, the Council held its first regular Meeting, the occasion of its inauguration, one Special Meeting, and three Workshops.

In addition, several two-person subcommittees have been at work preparing recommendations for the Council as a whole. Below are set out some of the details of these events.

Nov. 13, 2007: Before a capacity crowd at the Peaks Island School, the first Peaks Island Council was sworn in at 7:07 p.m. this evening by Assistant Portland City Clerk Linda Cohen, who was unable to attend because of a prior out-of-state commitment.

The ceremony consisted of the seven councillors standing behind a table bearing the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Maine to the best of their respective abilities. At the conclusion of the swearing-in, there was enthusiastic applause from the audience.

It is rumored that somewhere on YouTube there is a video tape of this event.

Witnessing the inauguration, in addition to the crowd of islanders, were Kevin Donovan, Peaks' City Council representative, Portland Mayor Nicholas Mavodones, and Portland Corporation Attorney Gary Wood, who formally congratulated the new councillors on their election, and welcomed them into Portland's political fold. Following that, Attorney Wood outlined some basic requirements for Council procedures, while emphasizing that "procedure mustn't thwart the will of the majority," and recommending that the new Council avoid adapting the cumbersome procedures used by the City of Portland.

He stated that the Peaks Island Council's primary duty is to seek community involvement please see COUNCIL, page 9.

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Inside

Briefs

This Island Life

Police Log

Star Gazing
Lines from the Casco Bay Lines

BY CHRIS HOPPIN

As Catherine Debo completes her first year as General Manager of the Casco Bay Island Transit District, she continually mentions her pride in the Casco Bay Lines service provided by the District's team. Here's an update on that service.

The first meeting of the new board of directors on November 14th elected new officers for 2007-2008. Jim Phillips of Chebeague continues as President while Rick Fritz of Great Diamond Island and Patrick Flynn of Peaks continue as vice president. Bill Overlock of Long Island is the new treasurer. Donna Rockett of Long Island and Chris Hoppin of Peaks are "at large" members and the newly-elected clerk and assistant clerk respectively. The other new board members are Frank Peretti from Peaks and Dave Crowley from Cliff. Retiring directors Leo Carter, Chuck Rudis and Gene Taylor were thanked for their service.

The 2007 Islander Questionnaire survey, available on the Bay Lines' website, www.CascoBayLines.com, noted a wide range of suggestions to balance overall satisfaction with the company. As a quasi-municipal utility, the Bay Lines support the City of Portland, State of Maine, and the Federal Government, but most revenues are derived from ticket sales and freight.

The Board reports from the Operations Committee, which had earlier increased service with a new 8:30 PM ferry to Long and the Diamond Islands at their October meeting. They also switched passenger service for car ferry service to Peaks on Saturdays, Sundays and Mondays on the Diamond Islands at their November Board meeting. The Operations Committee also promulgated suggestions to balance overall satisfaction with the company. As a quasi-municipal utility, the Bay Lines support the City of Portland, State of Maine, and the Federal Government, but most revenues are derived from ticket sales and freight.

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Several board members also suggested exploring mainland parking issues. Although the Bay Lines do not own the attached parking garage, its customers are "at large" members and the newly-elected clerk and assistant clerk respectively. The other new board members are Frank Peretti from Peaks and Dave Crowley from Cliff. Retiring directors Leo Carter, Chuck Rudis and Gene Taylor were thanked for their service.

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For the love of Peaks!

BY FRAN HOUSTON

Join me in my newest adventure! Last year it was traveling to Hawaii. This year it is staying on Peaks Island, gathering life stories through writing and photography. The results will be shown as an exhibit at the Gem Gallery in June of 2008, the month we celebrate Peaks Island. My hope is to capture the heart, history, and humor of the older (and wiser!) Peaks Islanders. I invite those who can, to write their own story; for those who prefer to tell their story, we can interview, record, and transcribe; for those who have passed, we can recreate their narratives by collecting memories from the community. Each story will be accompanied by either a new photograph or a previously taken portrait, in an 8½” x 11” format. Put all this together, and viola, a top-sorry of our island gems, faces and stories, reminding us of who we are and why we’re here. Peaks Island is changing so fast, but it has changed before, and will again. Despite change, the heart of Peaks, the magic of it, remains true, and that, my friends, is what we know. If you are interested in seeing this project culminate in a book let me know. If there is enough interest, I can plan ahead accordingly. Thanks and please, come be a part of this journey. It’ll be fun. Fran Houston, 250 Island Avenue, 766.2286, fran_houston@hotmail.com.

Happy Holidays!

Pictures above were taken at the Peaks Island Craft Fair at The Inn by Rhoda Berg. Below, Santa and his helper and tree-lighting ceremony photos were taken by Diana Moxhay.
Island Views

Kevin Donahue

My first year for the First District

BY CITY COUNCILOR KEVIN DONAHUE

Old Beginnings

I wrote my first monthly column of my three-year term as District One City Councilor back in January, which was ambitiously titled "Plans for Action in 2007." I wrote with optimism of what I hoped to accomplish in my assigned committees of Transportation, Housing, and Community Development. I had so many ideas and visions for our successes even as I have failed to accomplish all before 2008.

First, I would like to thank former Councilor Jim Counter, with whom I served on all three committees, for his nine years of public service in elected office. I trust Jim will continue to stay close to City Hall. I would also like to thank neighborhood leaders from Downtown, the East End, and Casco Bay Islands. I am intent on fully hearing their concerns rather than pretending to be the lone voice of District One.

Transportation

District One rarely speaks with just one voice, but it was exciting attending to the Peninsula Traffic Study. I worked to help the plan. That is the reason why the Eastern Waterfront, which resulted in problem statements and vision statements which stood in median through Labor Day. Our case for a transformative planning process was so compelling that the city will be seeking Federal funding to continue our work with professional support. What is your vision for a Franklin Boulevard?

The Transportation Commission made strides on its own, not least by approving several new bike lanes on major roads recommended to us by the Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee to the City Council. Another success for bicyclists and pedestrians was the creation of streamlined administrative authority to remove on-street parking that create user conflicts or impede lane direction in intersections.

What excites me most is that, after some delay, we are finally ready to start the Peninsula Transit Study, a response to the failures of the Peninsula Traffic Study. We have retained the services of NRC Nygard to help us limit single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs) and promote Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). I will chair the study committee and appoint a Bill Hall of Peaks Island to represent District One.

Housing

Once it became clear that the former Adams School would be turned over by the School Department, former Councilor Bob Goshorn appointed its planning group, the Adams School Re-Use Committee. After hosting a public forum on its redevelopment with the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization, the appointed committee and I asked the Muskie School to help us with a Community Design Day.

The Community Design Day attracted dozens of area residents to draw and draw their own visions for the redevelopment of the school. The Adams School Re-Use Committee recommended a public design for community space and affordable homeownership opportunities for families on Munjoy Hill. The Housing Committee is likely to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for developers this December.

While we faced significant challenges from staff turnover and staff shortages in the Planning Division, we were able to mitigate some significant losses. The former NRYCA was dismantled and, on October 2, we will host an emergency shelter at Peabody Street due to the loss of dozens of single-room-occupancy units (SROs). We responded by issuing an RFP for developers to use nearly 400,000 square feet of buildings in the public process.

An early success of the legislative year was passage of our first ordinance for inclusionary zoning (IC). This offers land use incentives to developers who include permanently affordable units in new buildings in residential and business zones on the peninsula. I hope that we extend this principle to the islands, especially as we recently granted a variance to HOMESTART for affordable housing on Peaks Island.

Community Development

I suggest that the Community Development Committee (CDC) managed to accomplish nothing in 2007. We began by failing to negotiate amendments to the now-repealed Formula Business Ordinance (FBO) and spent the rest of the year in disagreement over land uses in Bayside and on the Eastern Waterfront. Each instance illustrates the inherent folly of decision-making without meaningful citizen involvement.

In Bayside, after having retained a commercial brokerage to expedite development of city-controlled rail yard parcels below the Peninsula Transit Study and more robust policies for Inclusionary Zoning Community Development Block Grant (CD-BG) reform has already begun with neighborhood meetings to solicit citizen project requests for income-eligible districts of Downtown, East End, and Cliff Island.

The new year also inaugurates a new City Council. A new City Councilor will join the Planning Committee: Army veteran Dr. Sarah Stone, who will join us on January 1, 2008. We hope to be fully staffed for the first year in office and hope to serve you better this next year.

Please tell me your thoughts on the past year and hopes for the next. Let us know at Friends of Peaks Island, 0080 Broadway, Portland, Maine 04101. To comment, please call 207-772-0955. All e-mail addresses are available to the public.

Kevin Donahue represents the island neighborhoods of Portland as the District One City Councilor. He works at Mitchell Geographic, Inc. and lives on Munjoy Hill. If you have a question about the Friends of Peaks Island, please call 207-772-0955. All e-mail addresses are available to the public.

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December/January 2008

Letters to the Editor

A note of thanks

When I read about David’s departure from the Island Times, I had to write to thank you, admittedly belatedly, for all you both have done to enrich the communities we care about. Casco Baykeeper Joe Payne and the rest of the staff and volunteers here at Friends of Casco Bay know that you and your readers care as passionately about the health of Casco Bay as we do. You were one of the first newspapers to devote front page coverage to issues such as cruise ship pollution and sewage disposal.

We know that commitment will continue. Please count on us to support you in any way we can. Mary Lou, as you assume the helm alone.

Best of luck to both of you in your new adventures.

For all of us here at FOCB, we wish you the best.

Mary M. Cerullo, Associate Director

Friends of Casco Bay

The Island Times takes on new format

Now that co-publisher David Tyler has stepped down to pursue a career at full-time stay-at-home dad, nearly 20 volunteers from Peaks Island have stepped forward to fill the void. Beginning this month, you will see the names of many of these talented writers and photographers. Thanks to all of them, as well as the continued support from a solid core of advertisers, the Island Times will continue public service.

Please let us know what you think of the new format by emailing at friends@mainenews.com. Also let us know if you have ideas about material you would like to see covered in the coming months. Ideas for new regular features will also be happily accepted.

Other contributors will be leaving in coming months as new ones join us. This month, we say good-bye to Cevia Rosol as our local crossword puzzle master. Thanks so much for your dedication and the more than five years of puzzle fun you will be missed. Lee Carter, who writes the column on Cliff Island, will also be leaving after this issue. We thank him as well and his contribution has been greatly appreciated.

This leaves us with a need for writers to cover the other Casco Bay Islands of Cliff and Long. We also need another puzzle master. Anyone interested in submitting a new puzzle of any type, please contact us. And anyone with an interest in covering those other important islands, please contact us as well.

Thanks so much to all and have a great holiday season.

Mary Lou Wendell, publisher
This island life

BY GEORGE ROGAL

Long experience has taught us that it is best to ease into cold weather. The winter catalogs began coming in summer. I saw some islanders wearing vests over their short sleeve shirts in November. And there were folks with one earmuff and a single glove directed toward the windward side of the island. This could lead to a revolutionary line of between-season wear, jeans with one lined leg. Half-body long johns call them semi-joys for short. And for half the money.

Do Matters really look and dress as seen in the ELL catalog? Are we king and queen of the proum jumping in the snow in high-tech shoes and space-age snowshoes with our otherwise beautiful kids tagging behind? Are our yellow labs and poodles picture perfect splashing about the surf and sandy beaches of grand cottages? And who sees it’s okay to name shirts and coats and other stuff after our towns and mountains and rivers and bays and islands? Can we extract a royalty on the use of our names and maybe get a little tax relief? Those catalogs number in the millions and they’re everywhere. It is said that a long-expired spring sale issue was left in the module abandoned on the moon. Copies are likely to be found in the book racks of nuclear submarines and in the sealed of Seattle high schools.

The real side of all this is that it paints a picture far different than the one I see as I walk the wintry streets of Peaks Island. I see folks that are beautiful in an island way. Coats leaking goose down and umbrellas, complications worn cagily by the wind and whatever happens to be falling out of the sky. Bare-legged kids tattooed with summer bruises, running aimlessly in search of mischief. Our dogs, compared with media mutts, are shaggy, mostly friendly brutes that roam when and where they please. It’s sad that a mountain of catalogs is what paints a sugar-coated picture of our state. It’s rugged and beautiful, yes, but it takes a special kind of plain and uncomplicated folk to live every good and bad minute in it.

I thought I had my own Star of the East this holiday season. The difference was that it was seen shining to the south. And it didn’t change its position throughout the night. Just seconds before I was to place calls to the Miracles Department of the Vatican and to astronaut Mike Richards, it occurred to me that I could see this star through only one window, a sloping bedroom skylight. Then my analytical skills saved the day. While I stumbled about in the dark, the astronomer Mike Richards, it occurred to me that I could see this star through only one window, a sloping bedroom skylight. Then my analytical skills saved the day. While I stumbled about in the dark, the

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www.portlandbuylocal.org
Cliff Island News

By Beata Carver

Another snow season approaches, and Cliff Islanders await the joys of the coming holidays as well as the changes planned for our farmland and woodlands. Some have gathered to discuss ways of sustaining the year round population of Cliff Island and adults are still recalling the events of the most recent scary evening.

Halloween

The last day of October Alice and I were just finishing supper when we were overwhelmed, and our personas were taken over by two monsters, who had been gaining strength in a dark forgotten corner of an upstairs closet last year at this time. I struggled to resist becoming Ghoulia, but I knew it was hopeless when I noticed my Ghoulfriend, Ghoulatrina going to answer the door. The front steps were crowded with small people looking like bats, princesses and many other scary and funny creatures. Ghoulia could not help grinning when someone suggested that he was really Lenny. He issued the little ghoulies that he had eaten Leo for supper, and was looking for dessert. There were protests from the refreshingly innocent and yet delicious group. Soon a new voice was emerging from Ghoulatrina’s face. She had given the treats, and was on hand to answer the door. The little ghoulies followed Ghoulia’s first-grade-teacher voice. She quietly rose, and peeped back my face. Big smiles of relief ran across the faces of the littlest ghoulies. The monster had lost those powers for another year, but they might be hiding in some dark place while building up their strength for another.

Logging bugs

Starting in late November the city port and FIME are beginning to project a number of significant quantities of spruce and other trees from Cliff Island. This effort is being made in response to the need to reduce the fire hazard associated with the catastrophic Patriot’s Day storm which fell hundreds of trees on this half square mile island. According to Portland’s island historian, Mike Murray, there will be enough crewmen working in the woods to justify the renting of two houses on the island. This will avoid the expenses and delays associated with daily transit of workers between the mainland and the island. Murray expects that the crew size, the heavy equipment as well as the arrangements made with the larger service company (Lionel Pellet) will ensure the completion of the project before mud season begins next year. The new hanger building will be a workout from the very heavy traffic associated with this work, and we hope that the saving of hanger time and the increased access time will pay off.

Will the new landing pass this test?

New Wharf/sub.

Let’s suppose a petition signed by one hundred Cliff Islanders was presented to Portland officials attending their annual island visit to the community hall. The petition requested that the shed, which provides shelter for people and freight awaiting the ferry, be repaired, and that the fifth association (carrying two birds pigeon and swallow) be eliminated. After the meeting the officials viewed the structure and readily agreed to the petition. The petition suggested a deadline of October for at least a temporary repair and cleanup. The good news in mid-November is that a plan for a permanent replacement has been agreed to by all parties and that the project promises to get a good result at a low cost. The bad news is that the bypassing of the immediate temporary repair means more time before the situation gets corrected. The materials have not been ordered yet, the cold rain and bitter winds are not yet ended and the bridge has made it pretty disgusting. Oh well, the fresh air outside is probably good for us!

Cliff Island research committee

The ad hoc group calling itself the Cliff Island Research Committee CBIC made an effort over the past few years to assess the pros and cons of possible secession from Portland, and to approximate the potential viability of a Town of Cliff Island. The Island’s geographic, and cultural separation from Portland made the idea seem quite appealing to some residents, and a surprising percentage of the eligible voters indicated a willingness to serve in essential roles in the hypothetical town. The tax base appeared to be large enough to fund all of the foreseeable needs of the Island. Even so, the preliminary investigation never really allowed serious interest in the project, and quite a few were openly opposed or at least very skeptical. A few persons include satisfaction with current services, the effort needed to accomplish the change, fear of change, fear of others, lack of faith in the democratic process or ignorance about town government. As the Island population evolves it is not clear whether this issue will ever arise again.

Many long time residents are concerned that the escalating prices of property and the associated tax and mortgage burdens are making it difficult for the traditional island occupations and a year round community to continue. The number of full time lobster catchers has plummeted to eight from about twenty in the past. One hears predictions of an island occupied primarily by summer residents. Three quarters of the houses are not occupied by most birds and many of these are mainly used for short term rentals during the summer. Worries about sustaining the homes and school and post office are always present. Island residents led by Roger Beale have been meeting with Island resident fellow, Brooke Brewster, to try to understand these issues and to develop a strategy to help maintain the positive features of our Island life. Ms. Brewe is living on Peaks Island where her efforts include assisting in providing affordable housing. Clearly, there is much to be understood and even more to be done, but the nervousness are vast.

Farewell

This will be my final contribution to the Island where she lives, the foreseeable future. It has been a great pleasure and privilege to write about Cliff Island people and issues, and to work with Roger Beale whose political supervision has been encouraging and insightful.

THE GEM's new home.

The Gem Gallery is moving! Having the gallery now is a good thing for the island artist community as we get to know one another both artistically and professionally.

Her husband Marty Braun, an illustrator, and a freelance graphic artist, agrees and adds that island artists working their own private studios can sometimes feel isolated. "I don’t think people on the island generally know what happens, at least, I mean, for instance," he says. "The Gem is a venue that’s eliminating some of these barriers to contact that different island artists do see their art." This new effort includes Janie’s and Marty’s eleven year old daughter’s artwork.

Diane Winnie, an island abstract painter who works in wax and oil mixed media, says the Gem Gallery is crucial to the evolution and maturation of the artist community on Peaks. "I love that the Gem is here," she says. "It’s important as a community resource, common thread of creativity among the people who live here...Winnie, who also exhibits in places like the Whittney Artworks, Aurocist and Hay Gallery and in Victoria, B.C., has pleased to see her clientele grow through the visibility and local connection that the Gem affords her. Since summer’s end, half a dozen regulars who first saw my work at The Gem who now will call me to see if I have any new works available," she says.

In the past year, many of the island artists recognized themselves into a collective at the Gem. A “kind of artists’ cooperative," Chalmeri explains. “Local artists produce a sale and if we get to show it off, sell it, and support Island art. It is that simple."
Chebeague Chronicles

BY DEB BOWMAN

How are your senses? Active? Functioning? Forgot you had them? One definition of the word senses is "to become aware of." I guess this means using any one of those further defined, "animal functions of hearing, sight, smell, touch, and taste." Animal functions? Okay, I’ll go with that. It would seem that on many occasions, the animal functions do kick in, overwhelming us with joy, awe, hunger, pain and fear. These emotions connect us to the natural world and make us feel a part of it.

You don’t have to be an ardent outdoor-person to feel connected to the natural world around you. You do have to open yourself up to what is around you, to listen, look, smell, touch and sometimes taste things that come before you. Take a walk, be aware, breathe deeply, and be conscious of each and every step.

I hear crunching and scratching and look up to find a tiny red squirrel sizing me up from her perch high above my head. She is holding a pinecone and warily watches me approach. I acknowledge her and then look down at the scattered remains that she has let fall down to the woody carpet. Her brisk brisk call lets me know I have invaded her space and off she goes back to her evergreen world.

Many Chebeaguers have been watching with interest the development of at least two wild turkey broods. A wild turkey can only be described as something mildly prehistoric. When one appears in the yard, it takes a second to register what you are looking at. It seems quite odd to have such a large bird slowly strutting around the truck and in and out of the saplings and brush. The strut is quite regal but one also has an edge of caution. The West End brood has eleven chicks that are now almost as large as their mother. I was quite concerned for a few days after finding several large feathers in the road, but counted eleven babies soon after and was filled with relief that the family was still intact. Mother sometimes will foolishly promote her family down the road in between afternoon naps and on more than one occasion, I have gone out to shoo them all to the side before the traffic gets too close.

Now that we have snow on the ground, the mornings are sparkling and sounds are muffled. Winter brings a breath to everything, the tide laps more gently, and I strain to hear the ducks and birds. Water gurgles beneath snow and ice, quietly as though it were thick as molasses. Snubborn leaves flutter at the end of bony branches, but do not fall. Scents are harder to track but the beach bas no flavor wafting up to us.

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The first order of business for the new Council was the selection of a presiding officer. This was done through the unanimous election of Michael Langella as Council Chair. Langella's election demonstrated the respect held for the people of Peaks Island through the seven other Peaks Islanders who had run for the office. 

Chair Langella informed the City Council of these concerns, to find out Island concerns, and to bring them up to the City Council. He also noted that in the normal course of events, there would be public commentary, in contrast with the practice to be followed at the regular meeting. As it turned out, there was public input at the first meeting, in response to questions put to the audience by individual Councilors.

The workshops, or "so here we go, first workshop," Chair Mike Langella launched the Council into its initial session, the primary tasks of which were to fill open positions, and to establish basic procedures for conducting business, notifying the public, and communicating with the City of Portland.

The Council concluded that because of the distractions of taking minutes, it was important to have the secretary position be filled by someone who is not a counselor. However, indications were that Council Treasurer was a position best held by a Council member, and a position best held by a Council member was to fulfill open positions, and to establish basic procedures for conducting business, notifying the public, and communicating with the City of Portland.

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The Council decided to schedule its first monthly meeting for the fourth Monday of each month, the comment being made that it would be obvious how busy the Council would be during the month of December and the graduating month of 2006. The decision was made to hold the Council meeting in the Peaks Island School gymnasium starting at 6:30 p.m., the early hour being necessitated by custodial schedules at the School. When attention was called to the fact that the fourth Monday of December is Christmas Eve this year, the December Meeting was moved to the third Monday, Dec. 17.

Continuing with the concern regarding the amount of structural work needed to be done early on, the Council at first had proposed weekly meetings during the first three months. This seemed to be a burden that that would place on those City officials mandated to attend all Peaks Island Council meetings by the ordinance creating the Council, the Council decided instead to supplement the monthly, Nite time with Workshops, a less formal gathering with no attendance requirements for City officials. 

The Workshops were scheduled to take place on the first three Wednesdays of each month, the first being Wednesday, the School not being available on most Wednesdays. The Workshops will continue to be held on Wednesday evenings, the third Wednesday of each month.

The third Wednesday of November being the night before Thanksgiving this year, the Workshop for that week was delayed for the fourth Wednesday, the 28th, having been moved from Thanksgiving week. The result was that the first Workshop was held the night immediately following the first Meeting.

Chair Langella had explained that at a Workshop session, matters can be discussed informally but that no decisions requiring a vote of the Council can be made. He also noted that in the normal course of events, there would be public commentary, in contrast with the practice to be followed at the regular meeting. As it turned out, there was public input at the first meeting, in response to questions put to the audience by individual Councilors.

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On the winter solstice we work and play just before Christmas when the sun has gone out. It is not until you find your shadow that it is at its shortest. It is longer than it is, as you may not notice it because of the snow and other environmental factors. It is longer than it is, as you may not notice it because of the snow and other environmental factors. It is longer than it is, as you may not notice it because of the snow and other environmental factors. It is longer than it is, as you may not notice it because of the snow and other environmental factors. It is longer than it is, as you may not notice it because of the snow and other environmental factors.

**Star Gazing**

*BY MIKE RICHARDS*

Sunrise comes late this month, as Earth's north pole tips away from the sun and depresses us northerners of heat and light. But it gives us more of morning darkness and chance to look east and see our closest neighbor-planet Venus blazing in the first blush of dawn. Overhead is our next closest neighbor.

Venus is lower than last month but still brilliant as it shines more of its cloud-covered surface even as it drains away from the sun as its inside track toward the far side of the sun. Before dawn, Sirius, our silver giant star (next to the sun) is still up in the southeast. It's only 0.6 light years away and slides a diminutive companion star.

The sun peaks over the horizon around 7 am and only gets to 4,842 the way up (in the sky) for the mostly cloudy day, but think — the light you see was sent by the sun 8 minutes ago and is finally getting here. It's not immediate. Imagine going to Mars and back — light can't got that fast.

**Balls:**

from page 2

and the $4,900 raised from their efforts was added to the Essex Cancer Research Foundation donations. Jim also supplied, gratis, three decorative bouquets for the room.

When asked their thoughts on why the women's group continued, they had a variety of answers: It's an opportunity to get away and to get warmer, sometimes a chance to be outrageous while otherwise think of their pros and cons, regarding it. These were also interesting, as they either already decided to do it or to try it out first, making an entire evening of it. For others, it is simply an inexpensive, fun and rewarding way to spend a few hours getting to know other women. It has been enjoyable all year to exclaim over the great desserts they found at one of the different events on the menu. A woman's Christmas Ball collects all year long for those interested to do something nice and stay away. It seems to be a popular event.

**COUNCIL, from page 9**

taxi's, but Gemlnlcs come from an asteroid orbiting eastward, at 30.7 miles per second. Its orbit is tilted.

Then Mars, the next planet out from the sun after Earth, rises up from the eastern ocean and glares its rusty redness at us, dashing us or come. And we will, in less than a generation, after the first images of space robots scout out the surface and our accompanying satellites map every nook and cranny.

Mars' surface has in fact rusted through, as the planet was first discovered by observers rather than from oxidation by ultraviolet radiation in almost pure carbon dioxide at sub-zero temperatures. Its atmosphere is 6.8 times thinner than earth's rich air-blanket, and it can't diffuse the sun — except when moonlight falls on its yards across the yellow sand and red desert. Mars is half the size of Earth and less mass, allowing the atmosphere to rise so high it's almost all open. Our top solar wind, leaving a faint dust trail.

Mars' two little moons are just captured asteroids and orbit perigee closely to the planet. Deimos (13.6 km) and 14,000 miles high. Phobos is 6.6 km and only 4,500 miles high — close enough to be slowed by Mars' upper atmosphere, promising a big red splash on the surface as it falls away from us now. We already get the occasional Mars meteorist raining down on Earth, so this could get messy.

Mars is going retrograde now, seeming to move backward compared to the stars that lie hundreds of light-years behind it, as Earth's shadow drifts inside. At mid-month, Mars reaches opposition and its closest approach to Earth for years to come. And with its opposition, the constellation of Venus, the swan. As darkness deepens look north-east for yellow Gallow, a multi-stardust view of Auriga the Charioteer. It includes two giants 10 times the sun's size and 90 times its luminosity. The transit of Venus (next to the moon) is AIDBAREN (all-de-Ba-De-ten) as well as being a red giant star. That makes it fast, closer than Venus to the sun, and orbiting a central object in our galactic neighborhood. Now look south and find the young star cluster Pleiades (PLE-ay-deez) — the Seven Sisters, the Little Dipper. Many are in Aldebaran (all-de-Ba-De-ten) the red giant star that is the head of Taurus the Bull and the top of the constellation Hyades (I-ad-eez) a dozen stars that forms his head.

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from page 2

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**COUNCIL, from page 9**

As Christmas approaches, the lights begin to twinkle and the air begins to thicken. The children are excited and ready to see what the future holds. It is a time of wonder and magic. The world comes alive with excitement. The children are filled with hope and joy, as they eagerly await the arrival of Santa Claus. The streets are decorated with lights and the trees are adorned with ornaments. The air is filled with the sounds of carols and the aroma of gingerbread cookies.

On Christmas Day, the children wake up early, eager to see what the morning will bring. They race to the tree, hoping to find the perfect present. The day is filled with laughter and joy as the children open their gifts and share their stories. The night is filled with the sound of sleigh bells and the sight of snowflakes falling from the sky. The world is a magical place at this time of year, and the children are filled with wonder and amazement.

The New Year brings new beginnings and fresh opportunities. The children are eager to make the most of the new year and to see what the future holds. They are filled with hope and determination as they set their goals and make plans for the future. The world is a new and exciting place, and the children are filled with joy and wonder as they explore it.
such a point that Mike Langella finally or the public in attendance. Councilors Bohan and Hurley presented the

meeting, made no reference the Peaks Island. The PJC scheduled the following

COUNCIL, from page 10

to the Portland City Council that they had prepared in response to the charge given them at the Meeting the island's representative to the City Council, Kevin Donoghue, had made no mention of their unanimous request. The contract was awarded to Olympia Companies.

In a comprehensive presentation, Art Astarita demonstrated the use of the Peaks Island Exchange (PIE) information system, and made it available to the PIC for use in land management of the island. The PIE data base includes aerial photographs, zoning, street and property maps, topographic data, wetlands, conservation areas, and other geographic and demographic information for use in land management of the island.

In other business, seven names have been received for consideration in creating the Study Commission, which will determine how the PIC will form and operate sub-committees under its jurisdiction. From these seven, Kathryn Moxhay and Tom Bohan, who represent the PIC on the Commission, will recommend five persons of the public to be confirmed by the PIC at the Special Meeting to be held at the close of the Workshop on December 12th.

The PIC scheduled the following meetings for January: Workshops on 1/2/18 and 1/19; Regular Session 1/28. The remaining December schedule was also continued: Workshop on 12/12; Regular Session 12/17.
Don’t miss this weekend’s Peaks Island Music Association Holiday Concert

By Farm Toon

Advent, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa. The Festival of St. Lucy. Winter Solstice. The Feast of St. Nicholas. December 9th local icon Nancy J. Hoffman will once again lead our diverse and amazing group on a celebration of this season. The 21st annual Peaks Island Music Association Holiday Concert promises to be a quality program of music, and faithful to its own custom of being a well-rounded, respectful, and representative salute to differing ways.

How very important it is, and how very grand, that such a small community is so beautifully diverse. It is able to join together in a single unified observance of and joyful tribute to its many diverse traditions.

Throughout this concert’s colorful history, we have been granted marvelous opportunities to witness the likes of various religious and secular rituals. These have included an African Thanksgiving rite, African tradtions.

Thinkgreen

Think green this holiday and join the Peaks Island Environmental Action Team PEAI and the Peaks Island Community Notes as we celebrate the release of its first CD recording. The CD will feature music from the 11th through the 21st century, including works by William Byrd, Ralph Vaughan Williams, Torda Luiz de Victoria, and others, as well as the Maine premiere of Handel’s "Messiah" by Anne Burt-Betts.

The audience is invited to a reception after the concert to celebrate the release of its first CD recording. In the Ending of the Year, a collection of pieces from medieval times to the present. Copies of the CD will be available at the concert, on the website, and at several area music stores.

Sudden Fiction

Portland and Casco Bay Childrens for Life-Learning is offering a class in Sudden Fiction On Peaks Island. The local course starts January 17th. Instructor Eleanor Morse endeavors in the seven week program to "create a community of writers and teachers, support and encourage each other's writing efforts, with all its modest success, private and public." The class will focus on quick writing, the helpful of a new writing prompt each week, we write for an hour into our memories and imaginations, the first day "mysteries and miracles." Thursdays, 6:15 p.m. For more information, call 775-0432.

Zumba

Zumba is a dance class inspired by Latin dance that has come to Peaks. Classes are offered on Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:15 p.m. at The Inn on Peaks Island. Says instructor Nina Alves, "Come join the party...first class is free!"

The Cockeyed Gull

The Cockeyed Gull on Peaks continues its popular Sunday night buffet from 5 to 7 pm. This week bring along with some canned goods, including a recent "sold-out" Mexican dinner. Upcoming featured cuisines include Greek and Korean.

TaxAssistance

The Income Tax Assistance Center on Peaks is now open, and will soon be mailing out the new property tax bills, we just wanted to remind you that our local peaks Island group of neighborhood groups, the Child Shoehorn, Desi Larson or Ruth Watson will be glad to answer this is your first time or you have used us before. The program is easy, your tax liability is assured, and we are anxious to help islanders remain in their homes.

CheckClub

Check Club meets every Monday evening at the Community Center. Notice for advanced, all welcome.

KnittingGroup

Prayer Shawl Knitting Group meets at Ann Henderson’s house most Thursdays at 1:30 pm. This group is affiliated with Brackett Church, but also serves the island community. For more information, contact Greta Henderson, greta@fastmail.fm.

LibraryelF

For families, Handmade gifts for the Holidays at The Gallery. December Hours: Fridays 5 to 8 pm, Saturdays 10-4. Gift cards are available. 

Gifts for sale

Handmade gifts for the Holidays at The Gem Gallery. December Hours: Fridays 5 to 8 pm., Sat. and Sun. 12-7 pm.

American Legion

Legion Post # 142 on Peaks Island held its annual Christmas Pageant on Peaks Island featuring Lucia with attendants and the little "tontos" / Swedish grooves - there will be a cash bar from 6:30 pm at 3 pm at the Brackett Memorial Methodist Church. Suggested contribution: Adults $5, children $2. All proceeds to benefit The Peaks Island Children’s Workshop. All children from six to 16 who study drama or speech at any school or institution, who are considered to be benefits to which all Peaks Island youth are entitled.

Handstart

Handstart is celebrating the end of an exciting year. Please join us for food and cookout December 14th at The Inn. A special party at the Senior Center. An open community meeting will be held immediately afterwards. Please share your thoughts on what we as a community want to see in the future.

Brooke Brewer, brookbrewer@fastmail.fm

LibraryelF.com

The Portland Public Library is now a member of a FREE web service that will notify you before your library materials are due. Call 766-0067 or go to www.libraryelf.com. This is an especially nice service for families with several cardholders, or to one person who will borrow a book for another.

LibraryelF is a member of the Maine Public Library Network. You can renew your library card online at www.libraryelf.com. This is an especially nice service for families with several cardholders, or to one person who will borrow a book for another.

Taxi Volunteer Needed

For a group of islanders has volunteered to help those needing transportation on Peaks Island. The volunteers are included in both island and part-time residents. We always can use additional help, especially in the very busy months when the need is often the greatest and many of our drivers are not on the island. If you can donate one day of your time, please call Nancy Hall at 2514 or Cecilia Bessell at 5059. It’s a great way to be part of the Peaks Island community.

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