

Opinion

LETTERS

SEND YOUR VIEWS AND LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: DON@NANTUCKETINDEPENDENT.COM

CALLING ALL TEENS

To the editor:

In a recent issue of *The Nantucket Independent*, I read a letter from Joseph Kardell that caused me to wonder how we might better inform our community of services and programs available to our young people. Joseph was addressing the issue of the need for young people to have either drop in space or other activities in the community. As I read the letter I thought, "We have a drop in space right here!" Every Friday evening from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. approximately 25 young people arrive here at First Congregational Church for a time of fellowship and discussion, eating pizza and often playing various games. They have a wonderful time together. And then, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. they gather to watch a movie that has been carefully screened by our Director of Youth Ministries, Charles "Chip" Davis, for appropriateness and viability of discussion. These young people are not just members of First Congregational, but from various religious backgrounds and some with no religious background. That is not a requirement. All young people on the island are invited.

Chip Davis is a teacher here on Nantucket who has devoted his life not only to educating children in the school system, but has also felt a call to give of himself in extraordinary ways to these young people. They are planning a weekend retreat in February and have many activities throughout the year joining with other youth groups in the area.

Joseph — don't give up! We want to do all we can to make space available and you are always welcome

here. If you have ideas for other programs we might provide, let us know. We will do everything we can to meet that need. The Church is more than a religious institution. The Church is a vital part of the community. We are not just in the world — but of the world. Let us know ways that we might serve you better. Our hearts and minds and arms are open.

— *The Rev. Joy A. Baumgartner*

Interim Senior Minister

First Congregational Church in Nantucket

A NEW SHERIFF IN TOWN

Gov. Deval Patrick's plan for the state to take over the remaining seven sheriff departments still run by counties is one that makes fiscal and administrative sense in adding cost certainty to budget planning and providing a level playing field for all correctional facilities and sheriff's offices.

While some county officials are wary that the proposal is a precursor to ending county government - and we can only hope it is - the measure is a common sense attempt to take the volatility out of the annual funding dance, while still keeping a sheriff elected by and accountable to the county voters.

The legislation is aimed at Plymouth, Norfolk, Bristol, Barnstable, Suffolk, Nantucket and Dukes counties, which struggle annually to avoid running in the red while the other seven counties, already under state control, are free to do what they were meant to do - provide safe and secure correctional facilities and administer community support programs.

Under Patrick's plan, the portion of the deeds excise tax - 10.62 percent - that currently funds sheriff's departments would merely shift to the state's general fund, along with other revenues such as federal inmates' payments, to cover the counties' shares.

The counties would no longer have to carry the burden of the so-called "maintenance of effort" payments. In Norfolk County, with an annual sheriff's budget of about \$35 million, that payment is roughly \$1.2 million while in Plymouth County, where the sheriff's department budget is \$60 million, the maintenance of effort payment is \$414,000. In nearby Barnstable

County, the payment is \$2.3 million. Quite a disparity that would cease under a state takeover.

Sheriff's department employees would become state employees, and their health and pension benefits would be administered by the Group Insurance Commission and state pension board.

That is a little more difficult to quantify in savings because some pension plans are not fully funded and the health plans are not the Cadillacs offered by the self-funded county programs, but for taxpayers, it would mean millions. In Barnstable, for instance, the savings would amount to about \$3 million annually.

There must be something appealing in the plan for a Republican such as Plymouth County Sheriff Joseph D. MacDonald Jr. and Norfolk County Sheriff Michael Bellotti to give it their initial endorsements.

Like all proposals, the devil is in the details and there are some questions that need to be answered before the bill is passed, such as who picks up the remaining 19 years of debt service on the new Plymouth County Correctional Facility.

But overall, this measure goes a long way toward stabilizing the rough ride that sheriff's departments have had in recent fiscal years, and would do much to maintain professional oversight and administration of an essential service.

— *The Patriot-Ledger*

THE NANTUCKET Independent

The Island's locally owned weekly source for news, business and the arts

DON COSTANZO
Editor & Publisher

DANIEL W. DRAKE
Associate Publisher

Writers

PETER B. BRACE
News

PETER A. SUTTERS JR.
News

MARY LANCASTER
Arts/Features

STEVE SHEPPARD
Sports Editor

Ad Production

KADY DECKER

Classifieds/Subscriptions

SHARON LIBURD

A&E Calendar

GENE MAHON

Cartoonist

JAMES CENNAO

Sales

GENNIFER COSTANZO
HADLEY ST. JOHN DUTRA

Photographers

ROB BENCHLEY
MICHAEL GALVIN

Contributors

KEN BLACKSHAW
JAN JAEGER
GRANT SANDERS
LESLIE ANN SHEPPARD
ANDREW SPENCER
LUCRETIA VOIGT

Intern

SAM TOOLE

Distribution

NANTUCKET AIR FREIGHT
DELIVERY SERVICE, INC.

© Copyright 2007 The Nantucket Independent, LLC. All rights reserved. The Nantucket Independent is published weekly on Wednesdays by The Nantucket Independent, LLC, 15 North Beach Street, Nantucket, MA 02554-2114. Standard postage paid at Nantucket, MA 02554-0000 (permit #110) and additional entry office. ISSN# 1550-6800. Mailed to all active addresses on Nantucket Island (Zip Codes 02554, 02564 and 02584.)

Off-island subscription rates are \$45.00 for 12 months or \$35.00 for nine months by Standard Mail (No forwarding or change of address service available); \$25.00 for full-time students. First class mailing to U.S. subscribers off-island is \$100.00 per year. Back issues (subject to availability) are \$5.00 to cover postage and handling.

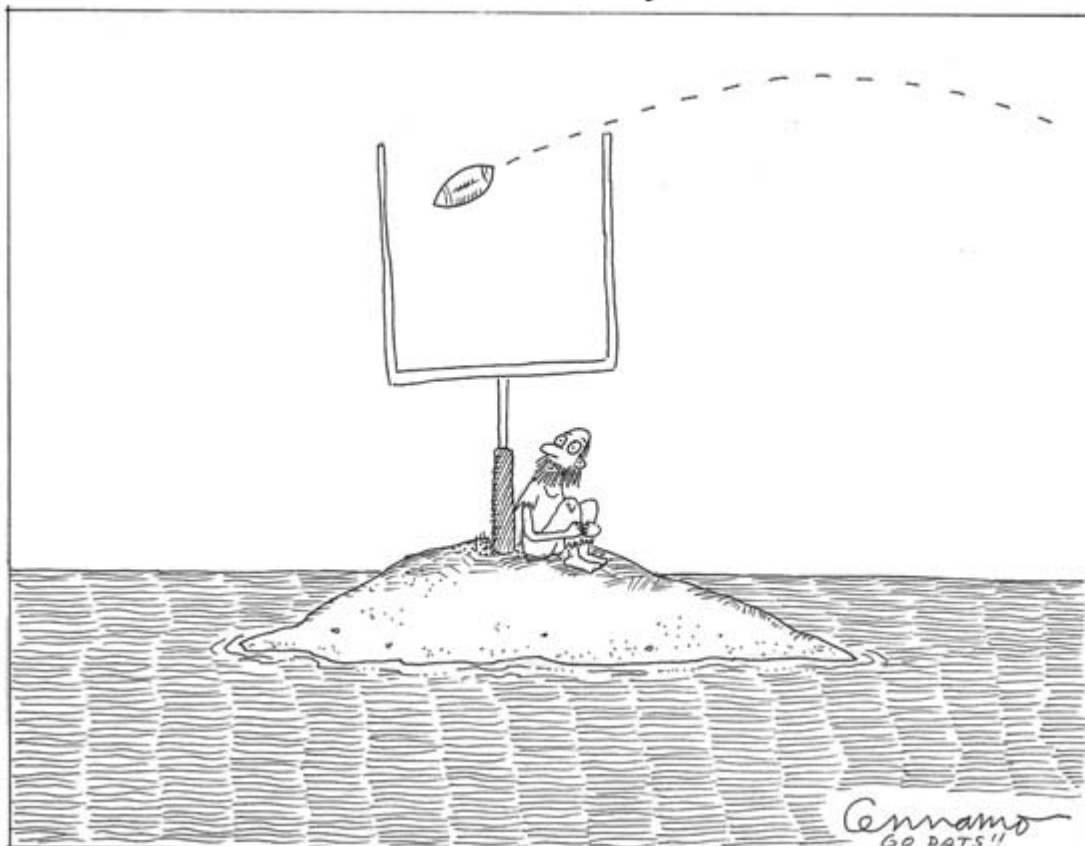
To place a subscription order change an address, or for back issues, call 508-228-1654, fax 508-228-4858 or, for print subscription orders only, go to www.acknews.com. For correspondence, Email info@nantucketindependent.com or write The Nantucket Independent, 15 North Beach Street, Nantucket, MA 02554-2114.

The Nantucket Independent is the island's weekly newspaper for all segments of the community. Its main focus is to provide relevant and current environmental, economic, real estate, political and development news. The Independent's in-depth journalism explores trends and issues affecting the island in all segments of community life. It profiles businesses and individuals, and celebrates successes. At heart, The Independent is dedicated to the maintenance and improvement of Nantucket's character. Our mission is to be the best, most reliable and relevant weekly newspaper for Nantucket and its residents.

Member
New England
Press Association



GREY MATTER by James Cennamo



Sleep better.
Got a gripe?
Got something to say?
Get published next week.
Get it off your chest, now!
Tell it to 10,000 of your friends.
Write a Letter to the editor of the Indi.
Email it to don@nantucketindependent.com
or buzz on down to 15 North Beach Street
and while you're here check out Brant Point and
Jetties Beach. And yes, those great big hotels too.