

Portsmouth, Tiverton are waiting for positive actions by governor

Next year will be an exciting year of economic development for the residents of Newport County. A vote on a casino will dominate the Tiverton political season; the Navy will finally begin the demolition of the tank farms in Portsmouth; and a developer is proposing a huge project in the Tiverton Industrial Park.

These events will undoubtedly affect the future of both Tiverton and Portsmouth. It is Gov. Gina Raimondo, however, who can positively affect current needs in both communities.

First, the gantry on the Sakonnet River Bridge is a symbol of distrust in her administration. As long as the gantry casts its shadow, residents of Portsmouth and Tiverton believe tolls shall return. Restoration of faith and trust costs only a few bolts, a crane and truck. A few hours of effort will reverberate throughout the region and open residents' hearts and minds to other initiatives she desires.

Then there is the rusting old Sakonnet River Bridge. Multiple times each day, we pass a reminder of failed maintenance policies of governors past.

We understand studies are underway to protect marine life at the base of the bridge structure, but the logical question is, "Why not remove the unsightly deck and leave the columns for later?" Since demolition funds were budgeted, authorization of the deck-removal phase would seem as simple as a phone call. It would be nice if the

gateway to the island, and the first vista of the bay for tourists, was free of this blight.

Management by crisis is a terrible maintenance policy. Cost creep over time takes funds from other needy projects. Tiverton's bridge abutment at Grinnell's Beach is literally collapsing into the river. Further delays in replacing the abutment are adding significant costs to a project that time has forgotten.

I invite the governor to visit this area. She will realize that tourism, spirits and safety can indeed be affected by governmental indifference.

Portsmouth and Tiverton are more than bedroom communities. Land availability, technological resources and a ready workforce are primed to lead Rhode Island's cyberfuture. The area is desirable for business, which is why the casino and other industries are looking to prosper here. However, we would literally look better if the governor removed the gantry, demolished the bridge and built a wall.

Tiverton voters will be asked next year to protect and preserve Rhode Island's gambling revenue by supporting the proposed Twin River casino. It is reasonable to ask that the Raimondo administration show Tiverton and Portsmouth that Newport County residents matter. Simple efforts today will pay big for both her administration and for local residents.

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