

EDITORIAL

## Crossing the line

**P**unishing criminals is the job of the courts, not law enforcement, and a free society must insist that those wearing a badge never cross the line. That's supposed to be true no matter how reviled the criminal may be, which is one reason why recent events are worrisome.

A sex offender who had served a decades-long prison sentence raised a city-wide uproar not long ago when he took up residence in Providence's Washington Park neighborhood.

He did not live there for long.

Cranston police arrested the man for writing an incorrect address on a wedding form. Whether that was deliberate or an innocent mistake is a fair question.

But comments by Cranston's police chief suggest that this arrest was going to happen one way or another.

"Let's face it, if he crosses the line, there's going to be no leeway for Mr. Gardner," Police Chief Michael Winkquist said. "Whether he's jaywalking, filing a false document it doesn't matter to us. We feel that he should be behind bars."

"The police chief made very clear that they were going to look for some reason, any reason to arrest him," RI ACLU Executive Director Steven Brown said. "That should be troubling to anybody, to think that the police are using this arbitrary power to decide whom they're going to arrest ... not because of the crime itself but because of who they are or something they did in the past."

More curious is the case of mobster Whitey Bulger. Many felt he'd earned a worse fate than life behind bars for his career of torture, murder and mayhem.

The execution they demanded came last week.

Inexplicably, the 89-year-old Bulger was transferred to a West Virginia prison where it should surprise nobody that he didn't survive the day. This same prison houses a fellow Massachusetts organized crime hitman (from a rival outfit of that once run by Bulger), a killer who had loudly proclaimed his hatred of 'rats.'

Somehow, prison officials made no evident effort to keep the two apart or to watch over Bulger — they essentially handed Bulger to his executioners and looked the other way. (A later claim of short staffing was preposterous.)

There won't be many who mourn Bulger's demise. But there is every reason to deplore the way it played out. That's the sort of thing that happens in police states, not here.



Sakonnet Alliance members gather on The Commons on Sunday, Nov. 4.

## Alliance stands in memory of synagogue victims

**LITTLE COMPTON** — The Sakonnet Peace Alliance dedicated its weekly vigil on Sunday, Nov. 4, to the memory of the 11 members of the Tree of Life Synagogue who were gunned down at their place of worship on October 27 in Pittsburgh.

The intention of the vigil was to stand in solidarity with our members and friends who are of the Jewish faith and to condemn the anti-semitism and white supremacy that have been emboldened by the current president and by hate-filled postings on social media.

On a sparkling autumn morning on the town commons, over 60 people gathered to bear wit-

ness to this terrible event. The names of the Tree of Life victims on posters and a large banner reading We Condemn Anti-Semitism and another saying Stop Hate were held in front of the crowd.

Several members of the Sakonnet Peace Alliance addressed the group. Glenn Katz, who grew up in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood where the attack took place, talked about her neighborhood and the loss to her community, considered a model of diversity and harmony. Jana Porter told a story recounted to her by 90 year old peace group member, Virginia Peckham, about a time in Virginia's childhood when the Ku

Klux Klan was active in town and a group of a dozen or so men, including Virginia's father, peacefully drove them out of Little Compton.

Steve Sherman, Glenn's husband and a medical student, spoke passionately about what we can learn from the personal stories of last week. And afterwards, Glenn read the names of the dead from the Tree of Life synagogue with Ginny Greenwood responding with a Jewish prayer entitled "Remember Me".

The gathering closed with Jerry Cohen reciting the Kaddish in Hebrew while Abigail Brooks read an English translation.

— The Sakonnet Peace Alliance

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Wingover Farm's history, old trees indeed 'significant'

#### To the editor:

I urge the public to voice opposition to a proposed 40-acre solar "farm" at Wingover Farm on Crandall Road. The developer stated in previous meetings that the old house is "not significant", and that the 18-plus acres of woods were last farmed in the 1970s. Neither of these statements could be farther from the truth.

Researching Land Evidence Records, the owner/builder of the house was Peleg Simmons, who probably built the house around 1730-40 (earliest deeds housed in Tiverton only go back to 1747). He deeded the property to his son, Peleg Simmons, Jr., in 1784 with dwelling house and 50 acres. Junior sold it to William Hicks in 1795, who sold it to John Hart in 1808 (60 acres with dwelling house and buildings). It remained in the Hart family until 1929 when it was sold to renowned rum runner Herb Cavaca. Cavaca lived there all through Prohibition, until he sold it to the Tabers in 1944, from whom the present owner bought it.

As far as the history of the early

owners, Peleg Simmons was a Revolutionary War officer and is buried in the cemetery on the property, as mentioned in Bayles' 1888 "History of Newport County". The Historical Cemetery Commission recently unearthed another historic headstone of Joseph Simmons, who fought in the Battle of Rhode Island.

So not only is the house historically significant for being pre-Revolution, but also historically significant for housing Revolutionary War officers, generations of a significant Tiverton family (Hart), and a modern historically significant rum runner.

Note that through all this time the property is still a working agricultural farm; probably the last eighteenth century one in Tiverton — the same agricultural fields that will become acres of solar panels instead of cornfields, if the development goes through.

Now let's look at the "not-so-old" woods. About a month ago, RI arborist Matt Largess toured the Wingover woods. He was amazed at what he found: nearly two dozen different types of trees,

including American Beech, American Holly, Black and White Oak, Yellow and Paper Birch, Black Cherry, and Bigtooth Aspen. Having birch, holly, and beech together was "special", he said. But the biggest discovery was the best: a "mother" beech, about 300-400 years old, surrounded by younger beeches about 150+ years old. Largess stated that the property's open space is unique, featuring open fields, young woodlands, and old growth forest and should be protected. ([https://www.ecori.org/smart-growth/2018/10/20/walk-in-the-woods-leads-to-mother-of-all-trees?fbclid=IwAR186OHBbhr2DLP17RgXL4VE8Q-C1VeLvEou0A9z6mRr8-9AbCeUUT\\_UsoVY](https://www.ecori.org/smart-growth/2018/10/20/walk-in-the-woods-leads-to-mother-of-all-trees?fbclid=IwAR186OHBbhr2DLP17RgXL4VE8Q-C1VeLvEou0A9z6mRr8-9AbCeUUT_UsoVY))

By the way, National Grid has stated they will not enhance the infrastructure in Tiverton. The property is not zoned for industrial use like a solar energy "farm".

Help preserve Wingover Farm and write to the Planning Board and Town Council!

**Susan Anderson**

Tiverton Historical Preservation Advisory Board Chair

## SAKONNET TIMES

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