

## NEWPORT

# Zoning Board takes up hotel plan

A special meeting on the Fifth Element project was held, but not everyone who wanted to speak had the chance.

By Sean Flynn  
Staff writer

A former city director of planning who oversaw the design phase of the Broadway streetscape project gave strong support Thursday night to the proposal by the Fifth Element restaurant owners to construct a hotel above the restaurant and on the adjacent Foley's garage site.

"This project is exactly what we wanted when Broadway was redesigned, working with local property owners and developers," said Paige Bronk, who for many years was the director of Newport's Department of Planning, Zoning, Development and Inspections until 2012. Design began in 2008 and construction was not

completed until last year.

The proposed 40-room boutique hotel meets all city zoning requirements except for parking, so the city's Zoning Board of Review is being asked to approve a parking variance.

There would be two parking areas within the footprint of the hotel — 20 spaces on the ground floor and 20 spaces on the second floor. Cars would drive up a ramp from Kilburn Court to access the second floor parking area.

However, the 40 spaces fall short of the 61 spaces required under the zoning ordinance for restaurant and hotel guests and employees, based on the size of the building. Fifth Element currently has no parking.

The zoning board held a special meeting devoted only to the project Thursday night, but was not able to hear from all the scheduled experts or from neighborhood residents who want to speak. A second special meeting was scheduled for Thursday, April



Herk Works Architecture/2Hands Studio

An artist's rendering shows the proposed expansion of the Fifth Element restaurant on Broadway into a 40-room hotel with enclosed parking.

HOTEL A7

# LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION



Dave Hansen | Staff photos

Portsmouth High School seniors, camera operator Jake Vaspol, dolly grip Justin DiGennaro, left, and first camera assistant Noah Gramitt film a scene for 'Singleton' Thursday at the school.

## From storyboard to set, Portsmouth High School seniors are reaching for the stars, hoping to make movie magic

By Derek Gomes  
Staff writer

PORTSMOUTH — The production team crammed into a narrow office inside Portsmouth High School, trying to capture 1 minute and 20 seconds of perfection.

Sure, the scene featuring Joel DeMarco and Gary Vaspol was short, but the film crew's high standards had to be met. The discerning gaze and slick coordination the crew displayed Thursday was all the more impressive because it is comprised only of Portsmouth High School seniors.

They are students in Vaspol's advanced video production course and have been working on their original short film, "Singleton," for months. They have shepherded the project from the storyboard to the set, spending countless hours after school bringing the film to life.

Though an elective course, some of the students said they have expended more effort there than any of their core classes. It was their choice to be in video production, after all. And "Singleton" will have a wider audience, with a showing at the Jane Pickens Theater as part of the inaugural Aquidneck Island Student Film Festival in April.

"Singleton" chronicles students' efforts to disrupt the administration of standardized tests by stealing copies of the dreaded ELBOW test. (Acronyms are go-tos for naming such tests.) The cast includes students, faculty and two of Vaspol's former students,



Portsmouth High School seniors shoot a scene for their film 'Singleton' Thursday at the school. Behind the camera are Noah Gramitt, left, and Jake Vaspol. Collin Turner, center, is marking the scene, and teacher Gary Vaspol, left, and physical education department head Joel DeMarco are the actors. At right is Amanda Franco, who is in charge of recording the sound.

Portsmouth High alumni Stephen Marold and Jesse Tolppa.

The scene the students filmed Thursday had DeMarco and Vaspol playing custodians so preoccupied with their conversation about cryptocurrencies that they missed

security footage showing the students breaking into the school. A screen behind them showed black-and-white footage of the disguised students traipsing through

SINGLETON A7

# House OKs \$1.3 trillion budget bill

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress was poised to pass a giant \$1.3 trillion spending bill that would end the budget battles for now, but not without risking another shutdown as conservatives objected to big outlays on Democratic priorities at a time when Republicans control the House, Senate and White House.

This would be the third federal shutdown this year, an outcome both parties want to avoid. But in crafting a sweeping deal that busts budget caps, they've stirred conservative opposition and set the contours for the next funding fight ahead of the midterm election.

The House easily approved the measure Thursday, 256-167, a bipartisan tally that underscored the popularity of the compromise, which funds the government through September. It beefs up military and domestic programs, delivering federal funds to every corner of the country.

But action stalled in the Senate, as conservatives ran the clock in protest. They can't stop the bill indefinitely. But without agreement, voting would spill into the weekend, past the midnight Friday deadline to fund the government.

"Shame, shame. A pox on both Houses — and parties," tweeted Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky, who spent the afternoon tweeting details found in the 2,200-page bill that was released the night before. "No one has read it. Congress is broken."

The omnibus spending bill was supposed to be an antidote to the stopgap measures Congress has been forced to pass — five in this fiscal year alone — to keep government temporarily running amid partisan fiscal disputes.

Leaders delivered on President Donald Trump's top priorities of boosting Pentagon coffers and starting work his promised border wall, while compromising with Democrats on funds for road building, child care development, fighting the opioid crisis

## Reed: R.I. projects to benefit from bill

By Patrick Anderson  
The Providence Journal

Rhode Island's all-Democratic congressional delegation is applauding the \$1.3-trillion bipartisan federal spending bill moving through the Republican-controlled legislature.

The bill, which passed the House on Thursday, is expected to clear the Senate before the end of Friday and avert another federal government shutdown.

Sen. Jack Reed, the top Democrat on a key transportation and housing appropriations committee, said Thursday that pieces of the spending bill he helped craft with Republicans will boost federal funding to the Rhode Island Department of Transportation by roughly \$12 million this year compared with last year.

Most of that would come in federal highway assistance, which would rise from \$231 million to \$241 million. Transit funding for the Ocean State would rise from \$38 million to \$40 million, according to a breakdown from Reed's office.

Rhode Island's share of Community Development Block Grant funding would rise from \$15 million to \$16.8 million.

Both Rhode Island House members, Representatives David Cicilline and James Langevin, voted for the bill Thursday as it cleared the House, 256 to 167. The lawmakers voting against it included 90 Republicans and 77 Democrats.

Reed and Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse support the bill and expect to vote for it either Thursday night or Friday, according to their

HOUSE A7

REED A7

**INSIDE**  
today's news  
Some things you won't want to miss

**MIDDLETOWN POLICE MEMORIAL REDESIGN** to be reconsidered by council. **A3**

**>>> SALVE REGINA UNIVERSITY** men's hockey team preparing to play in its first Frozen Four. **B1**



## WEATHER

**42** Today, mostly cloudy. High near 42.

**28** Tonight, slight chance of showers. Low around 28.

Details, **A7**

Advice	<b>B6</b>
Classifieds	<b>B7</b>
Comics	<b>B4</b>
Local & State	<b>A3</b>
Lotteries	<b>A7</b>
Obituaries	<b>A4</b>
Opinion	<b>A6</b>
Police & Fire	<b>A5</b>
Sports	<b>B1</b>
Television	<b>B5</b>



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