

Letters to the editor

Communities & Banking welcomes your reactions to articles and your suggestions. All letters are subject to editing.

Rhode Island Economy

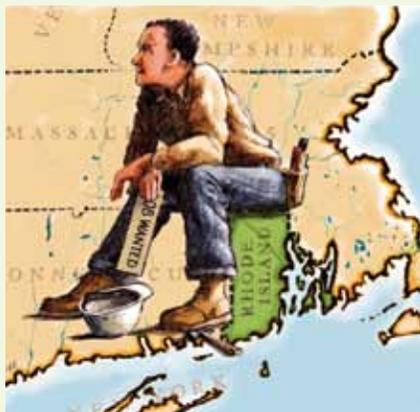
After reviewing the never-changing and lengthy list of this state's economic maladies, Prof. Lardaro of the University of Rhode Island (*Communities & Banking*, fall 2010) reaches this conclusion: the answer is more public spending on higher education. This can, I suppose, be termed enlightened self-interest. We affordable housing-ites do the same.

Considering that the valid points Prof. Lardaro makes include too high taxes, too many fees, and overregulation, one might be moved to pose a question that is never asked. How many "investments" can the 400,000 working people in Rhode Island—many of whom have wages that are barely breathing—support?

Bill Siemers

REACH Executive Director
Central Falls, Rhode Island

Illustration: Barrie Maguire



Foreclosure and Tenants

How can our nonprofit community development partners address the continuing impact on tenants from the foreclosure crisis? I would advocate becoming property managers. Many community development corporations (CDCs) are having to downsize their development staff because of cuts in housing funds and the dribble of private investments in affordable housing. So although advocacy and organizing efforts should continue to solicit public and private funds, I would argue for community development groups to focus more on keeping families in their homes and becoming managers of lender-owned homes.

In 2007 and 2009, I urged the Maryland-based Consortium for Housing and Asset Management to provide a conference workshop on how CDCs could use the foreclosure crisis to enter a field that might simultaneously benefit their business development and community engagement work. Although CHAM has not yet done so, similar initiatives can be seen in our region: for example, Boston Community Capital's Stabilizing Urban Neighborhoods (SUN) and City Life/Vida Urbana's Post-Foreclosure Eviction Defense Campaign.

It is not too late for a discussion on how we build CDC capacity to retain and hire staff to provide a vital service to families and elders remaining in their homes and neighborhoods.

Ray Neirinckx

State of Rhode Island
Housing Resources Commission

An Abenaki Responds

In the article "Tribal Recognition in Vermont," p. 7, Kesha Ram implies that the Vermont Senate's deliberations were undemocratic and not transparent, inequities that the House Committee on General, Housing, and Military Affairs had to rectify. The Senate committee is experienced, having been involved with Native politics for decades. Rep. Ram is a freshman legislator.

With regard to Odanak, it is inaccurate to say that Vermont is the homeland of a foreign Native community. There are several other communities of Native people within Vermont who claim Vermont Homelands that Rep. Ram does not mention. Her statement gives a level of recognition to a land claim that is beyond her authority. Odanak territory is in Canada. The Vermont territories are held by Vermont Abenaki tribes. As Gordon Day, author of the *Western Abenaki Dictionary* and *The Identity of the St. Francis Indians*, writes, "We should not assume that the Indians repeatedly noted at Missisquoi [Vermont] were actually from St. Francis [Odanak]."

I would also like to point out that the tribe in Vermont's southwest is the Mahican people, not "Mohegan" (Mohican) people. They are represented by the Stockbridge (Mahican) Munsee Tribe in Wisconsin, not any of the Connecticut-based Mohegan tribes.

Chief Don Stevens

Nulhegan Band Coosuk Abenaki Tribe
Lake Memphremagog