

Interview WMVY Radio, Martha's Vineyard
Robert Bailey interviewed by PJ Finn
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What is the basis of this organization, Source Newport?

Just as the Internet has changed the music industry and given a boost to small bands, the Internet is changing the building industry and giving a boost to small businesses and small cities. This is particularly true in historic towns and cities.

The green movement is starting to realize that it means business success to sustain it. But the hard work is thinking, which is what we do at Source Newport. LEED is a quasi-governmental agency directed by the building manufacturers. The National Association of Home Builders supports it. But lasting and significant change require that we work from the grassroots up. Top down only is tyranny.

Why do you think restoration and preservation are so important?

Restoration and preservation set a unique green standard. They reduce the landfill, they reuse materials, labor costs exceed materials costs, and you are preserving history. So there is the sustainability... economic, natural resources and culture. Can anyone say "BINGO"?

You pride yourself on your think tank format—how did you come up with that?

Too often political discussion and interaction are weakened by panels and committees. These tend to isolate preordained issues and choke ideation and information exchange. This is because these subgroups create time constraints. They also attract strong personalities creating a perfect environment for power trips and conflict.

To really engage problems you create situations where people will lower their defenses and make the problem, and not the person, the "enemy." Source Newport creates interaction on the economics, the resources and the culture. These naturally lead to joint ventures, partnerships, and next solutions. Historic cities were designed in ways that allowed them to sustain themselves. They fought against central governance of their daily affairs. How self-sufficiency pertains to the global economic discussion is right here at Source Newport.

How many people do you have scheduled to speak?

We have about 20 speakers. Each is been given a mandate to attract innovators in their field to this meeting. Not just to listen and learn, but to engage in the overall discussions. 50 people caught the vision last year. I would hope that that would double this year.

What kind of subjects will you be discussing?

Money is always important to people, but now so is physical health and longevity, especially where it regards the environment. We've got at least six ways to grow a business at this event. Everything we talk about regards the environment. But the topics are directed at how to create solutions NOW. So that again is Source Newport's role... to assist and implement business solutions for small businesses and small historic cities that protect the local environment and influence everyone positively now and looking ahead.

Why is this so important to you?

I've been fortunate to meet a lot of important people. And I've noticed that the best of those people, no matter what their political views, no matter what their success or failure, believe they are part of a mission higher than their own success. I've learned how to find those people and bring them into other people's lives. Since I can do that... despite the occasional aggravations and frustrations... that's what I do. It provides me with a sense of purpose, no matter what happens.

Why New England, why Newport?

I grew up in New England, in Newport... moved away and returned about five years ago. When I traveled, particularly to Europe and a few places in California, I saw how integrated Newport's architecture, history even some people here are to the history of the world.

With the proper planning and coordination New England could again become the best place to live on the planet. Some people like to argue that it is already... that's very quaint. But it ignores the global economic and political realities. I work. I connect. We'll see.

What do you like about radio?

Community radio and their online programming connect the importance of great music to the global community. The professionals who stick with radio inspire, challenge, relax, stimulate... a whole range of emotions and feelings. That helps me think more clearly, without forgetting my musical past. And that's really what the Source Newport conference shows, too. If the present and the past are inextricably linked, then what does that say about our future? Sustainability is really about community values and those values include economics, natural resources and culture. I am Source Newport and I am radio.