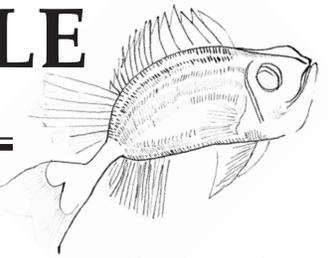


CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 30 : NUMBER 6 JULY 2020



Rummage Sale: 100% Off

Bad news for Cornwallians who have spent the Covid-19 shutdown streamlining their personal collections Marie Kondo-style: this summer's annual Woman's Society Rummage Sale has joined the list of canceled events.

The rummage sale has existed in one form or another since 1925, making this the first pandemic it has ever had to navigate. Over the years, the sale has evolved into an intense and finely tuned three-week period of hands-on work in July: sorting, pricing, and displaying thousands of items for sale at three town locations, staffed by an experienced team of about a hundred volunteers, and aided by a "small army" of industrious 13- to 16-year-olds.

Given the amount of space needed, the lack of any long-term storage for items, and the level of person-to-person interaction required for the sale, not to mention the looming question of whether shoppers would even come in a time of social distancing, the Woman's Society wanted to make the call sooner rather than later, that the sale, described as "complicated but manageable," couldn't happen this year. "We just couldn't figure out a way to do it safely," said Woman's Society President Maggie Cooley.

The rummage sale is unofficially Litchfield County's largest recycling event, drawing shoppers, not just from Cornwall and Litchfield County, but across neighboring state lines as well, in search of everything from the rare and unusual to everyday necessities. Past Woman's Society President Brenda Underwood has heard of shoppers from as far away as California. In the past, people have lined up for two hours the morning the sale opens in order to have first shot at the best things.

But the rummage sale is more than the sum of its parts. According to longtime resident Nancy Berry, "one more aspect of the rummage sale, and perhaps the most magical one, is the way that the rummage sale brings Cornwall together; young and old, donors and volunteers, year-round residents and summer folks, everyone coming

together to make the rummage sale a wonderful community event."

With a wonderful purpose: hometown support for continuing education for Cornwall kids. Educational grants funded by the rummage sale are, as Brenda Underwood puts it, "Cornwall's way of saying, we believe in you—go out and change the world." Graduating seniors heading to college or training school can receive \$2,000 each. Extra funds go to town nonprofits, like the Food and Fuel Fund, rent relief, and other essential Cornwall services that are voted on by the Woman's Society. The society hopes to be able to fulfill scholarship requirements for this year with revenue from last year's sale, as well as some level of support for selected nonprofits, but community support could make a difference. Donations can be sent to: CWS, PO Box 124, Cornwall, CT 06753.

But what about that pile of donations by your door? Do-it-yourselfers looking to de-access are welcome to turn to the free and open-to-all Cornwall Community Network. Administrator Casey Cook suggests that including photos of items is helpful. And while the transfer station remains closed for anything other than trash and recycling, the American Red Cross bins for clothes and small items are still being emptied regularly and are accessible anytime. For donating bookworms able to hold out a little longer, the library hopes to start taking donations for the annual Columbus Day book sale, but as with all things in this time of Covid-19, final decisions won't be made until the fall.

Finally, Cooley says, "It's fair to say we're struggling with the knowledge that everyone has been cleaning with the expectation of bringing things to the rummage sale in July. If we can possibly figure out an alternate solution, we will publish it here."

—Meg Tansey

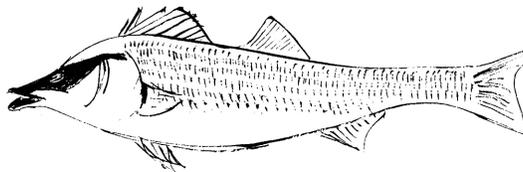
Open with a Twist

It was an ad with a picture of happy people and a slogan: that the great outdoors "is always open." If you didn't live under a rock during recent months, you would have known that things are not that simple.

Fortunately, regulations and restrictions have been tapering off slowly during June. Covered Bridge Electric Bike has seen a nice uptick in business, renting bikes by the hour, and the reopening of Hammond Beach at the end of the month was one of the clearest signs of a return to something similar to normal, although beach protocols and regulations were revised for Covid-19 prevention (short stays are encouraged and wearing masks is required).

Cornwall has been strictly following directives out of Hartford and moved cautiously when a so-called second phase of the state's efforts was announced to reopen as much as 95 percent of the businesses, parks, hotels, sports complexes, pools, and lakes in Connecticut. This has come with a long list of guidelines to prevent a new wave of infections, including an order for every business to self-certify that they are following relevant standards to keep their employees and customers safe.

The relaxing of stricter regulations instantly inspired many people to check out the attractions in town, including those who came to Clarke Outdoors on Route 7 and rented kayaks and canoes for a trip down the Housatonic River, from Falls Village to the revamped ramp at the bend right below the Covered Bridge. Because the weather was perfect, it was a great little adventure, for example, for a family of four from Brooklyn who had been housebound in the city for months. Or for a paddle-savvy construction worker from Bristol and his wife. He had worked on the rebuilding of the big bridge next to the high school ten years ago, and now had come back for a glimpse of the structure from down below. To open up the outdoors in line with the rules, you need to be creative. Take YMCA Camp Mohawk off Great Hill Road, which



JULY 2020

(continued on page 2)

SUNDAYS	MONDAYS	TUESDAYS	WEDNESDAYS	THURSDAYS	FRIDAYS	SATURDAYS
<p>Most meetings and events are virtual and held remotely.</p> <p>Zoom meeting web links and dial-in numbers can be found on the town or sponsor's web page.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-School Lunch Time Story Time Every Monday, Noon ◆ Agricultural Advisory Committee July 6, 7:30 pm ◆ Zoning Board of Appeals* July 27, 7 pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-School Lunch Time Story Time Every Tuesday, Noon ◆ Inland Wetlands/ Water Courses July 7, 7 pm ◆ Board of Selectmen July 7, 7:30 pm ◆ Planning & Zoning Commission July 14, 7 pm ◆ Housatonic River Commission July 14, 7:30 pm ◆ Board of Selectmen July 21, 7:30 pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-School Lunch Time Story Time Every Wednesday, Noon ◆ Library Re-opens July 1 See Website for Updates ◆ Deadline: August Chronicle Copy July 15 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-School Lunch Time Story Time Every Thursday, Noon ◆ Cornwall Conservation Commission July 9, 10:30 am ◆ Board of Finance July 16, 7 pm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Pre-School Lunch Time Story Time Every Friday, Noon ◆ Ted Perotti Film <i>The Art of Work</i> Cornwall Library via Zoom July 17, 5 pm ◆ Elizabeth Ridgway on Covid-19 Cornwall Library via Zoom July 24, 5 pm 	<p>JULY 4TH INDEPENDENCE DAY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Co-op Farm Market Town Green Every Saturday 9 am–12:30 pm ◆ West Cornwall Farm Market Wish House Every Saturday 10 am–1 pm ◆ Historical Society "Women's Right to Vote" Reopening July 4 & Then Every Saturday 10 am–4 pm

* Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

was able to get ready for the summer. For the first time in its 100-year history, the camp decided to not only take in girls, but also boys between the ages of 7 and 15, a gesture towards the local community. The camp has a capacity of 70 kids per week. The counselors will wear masks and make sure that surfaces are sanitized constantly. In addition, the children will be kept in groups of ten and won't intermingle with any of the other groups.

Yes, the outdoors are open again. With a twist.
—Juergen Kalwa

The Cure to Our Internet Woes?

Cornwall has limited internet coverage that many discover only after their car breaks down and their cellphone can't get a signal. The town tried to deal with this problem some years ago by building a cellular tower on the theory that "if you build it, they [a cellular provider] will come." They didn't. Inadequate internet reception continues to be a problem throughout the Northwest Corner.

On May 18, the Cornwall Association and other local organizations hosted a remote presentation by Ben Paletsky, a consultant with Northwest ConneCT and the Northwest Hills Council of Governments, organizations that are attempting to bring high-speed fiber optics technology to 25 towns in northwest Connecticut (the presentation can be viewed at <https://bit.ly/2Upjy6D>).

Internet statistics in Cornwall are surprising. Of 1,043 homes in Cornwall, more than half (528) have no mobile access, and 16 percent are without broadband internet. Out of 81 miles of road, Cornwall has 44 miles without internet connection. Northwest ConneCT is advocating for the installation of a fiber optic network that will end these problems and hopefully encourage younger people, entrepreneurs, and those who work from home to move in.

The fiber optic system installation is underway. According to Mr. Paletsky, 20 miles of road have fiber optic already installed on telephone poles, most of which goes to town offices and schools. The installation was done by a private company without permission or input from local officials, the subject of two stories in the October 2019 issue of the *Chronicle* (<https://bit.ly/2zgmjgu>).

Even if you have internet, it has limitations. While the existing network can handle download speeds adequately (think Netflix, Spotify, and other streaming services), upload

capacity has been reached due to the increased use by people working at home, using cloud computing, or uploading film and media, thereby slowing the network.

Promoters of a town-wide fiber optic system predict this will be resolved by the system, with a box attached to every third utility pole, creating thousands of mini-cell towers.

Mr. Paletsky presented several possible fiscal models for the installation of a fiber optic system. Because of the rural character of the area and a \$50,000 cost of installation per mile, it will be unlikely that a private company would build the network. Instead, he suggested a business model whereby the town would form a municipal electronic utility that would pay for the wiring of the system and its maintenance. Homeowners would pay approximately \$1,200 to connect to their residence. The installation cost would depend on how far the home was from the tower on the road. The monthly cost would be similar or less than current internet service provider fees.

There are environmental and partisan issues. Within the box on the utility poles are small cells that emit radiation. *The Lakeville Journal* published an article and a letter on this issue last year (<https://bit.ly/3fcQ0i0> and <https://bit.ly/3fa6jvR>). The political issue is that since 2016, a Koch brothers-funded lobbying group, the American Legislative Exchange Council, has introduced legislation in every state promoting small cells and overriding local jurisdictions. On the other side of the aisle, California's former Gov. Jerry Brown vetoed a 2017 bill that would have allowed the small cells transmitting radiofrequency (RF) radiation from utility poles very close to homes.

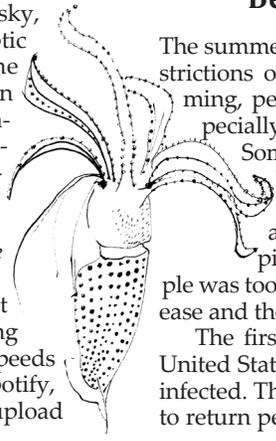
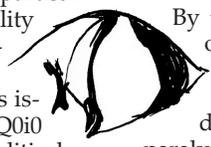
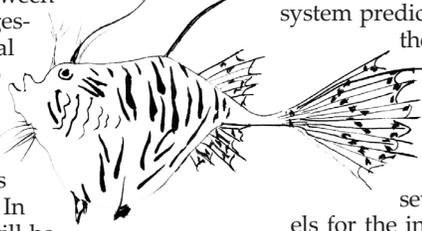
A committee to explore internet expansion and give a representative voice for Cornwall has been formed. If you are interested, contact Cornwall Association President Gary Steinkohl at garysteinkohl@gmail.com. Perhaps the best advice on this issue is don't hold your breath, but stay tuned—if you can.
—Jim Fishman

Before the Vaccine

The summer seemed worse. There were restrictions on social gatherings and swimming, people avoided large crowds, especially families with young children.

Some people stayed away from Torrington and more populous towns; some stayed home, avoiding cookouts, parades, and picnics. Being around other people was too much of a risk. There was a disease and there was no cure. It was polio.

The first recorded case of polio in the United States was in 1894, with 132 people infected. Then it seemed to disappear, only to return periodically—typically spiking in



Welcome

Idelyn Alice Julian
to Cecelia and Justin Julian

Land Transfers

Timothy A. Stevens to April Neubauer, his interest in two properties on Route 128/ Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for \$75,000.

Dominique Lasseur and Catherine Tatge to Alexander K. and Rebecca A. Rehnberg, two parcels of land with all improvements thereon at 60-62 Furnace Brook Road, for \$750,000.

the summer months—so people thought it was "seasonal." There were peak infections in Connecticut in 1916, 1931, and 1945. The state health department provided recommendations for preventing the spread of the disease that are all too familiar today, including "avoid crowded places where you may be close to another's breath or cough," "wash hands," and postpone elective surgery, especially "nose and throat operations." There was a debate over whether or not to close schools, and arguments over the effectiveness of quarantines.

By the early 1950s, polio had become one of the most serious communicable diseases among children in the U.S. (In 1952, nearly 60,000 children were infected, with thousands paralyzed and more than 3,000 deaths.)

Nora Horan and her older brothers John and Tony recall that Dr. W. B. Walker closed Cream Hill Lake in the summer months during the early 1950s, and there was particular concern in their family. Their father had contracted the disease when he was nine, sitting down after playing baseball with friends, and suddenly unable to stand up. He spent time in an iron lung, and wore a brace on one leg and used a cane for the rest of his life.

In 1954 Litchfield County was selected to take part in a test for a vaccine, and in May, Dr. Walker administered the experimental Salk vaccine to nine second-graders at CCS, including Elizabeth Besozzi, Donald Cokely, Martha Griffin, Ralph Gold, Lauren MacNeil, Richard Matyas, Kathleen McCafferty, Betty Pond, and David Washburn. The area newspapers hailed the students as "modern pioneers" helping to "build a better future for the rest of us."

Lolly Besozzi remembers receiving the vaccine; she vividly remembers that the summers were hotter in the village before the vaccine. The elm trees that once provided cool shade were cut down (losing their own fight against disease) and she was told she couldn't cool off in the brook on Colts-foot Farm. "There was a tremendous amount of fear about water spreading the disease," she recalled, "and a tremendous relief when the vaccine worked."

After seven years of experimentation and testing, Jonas Salk announced the first formally approved polio vaccine on April

12, 1955 (the tenth anniversary of the death of Franklin Roosevelt, who had been diagnosed with polio in 1921). Less than three weeks later, all CCS students were vaccinated. The disease was not eradicated immediately—new cases continued for years (the last case of polio in the U.S. was in 1979)—but the fear was gone and restrictions eased. Summers seemed safe again.

—Gregory Galloway

Does Cornwall Count?

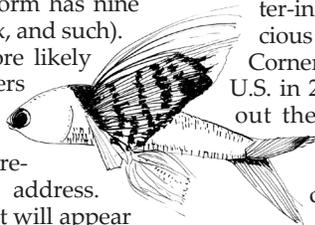
The decennial U.S. Census count traditionally starts in January in a remote and frozen part of Alaska, partly because the coming spring thaw will make travel difficult, and the Census Bureau works on a deadline. It's required by law to wrap up the count by year's end and report to the president and Congress.

Elsewhere, the count began in earnest in March, with a mailing asking recipients (one per household) to respond by completing a questionnaire and mailing it back, or online, or by telephone. The mailings were politely labelled as "invitations to participate in the census," even though there are fines on the books—unenforced—for failing to do so.

Invitations were not sent to post office boxes, since they can't be matched to physical addresses. Each solicitation contained a unique 12-digit census ID, to be used when responding. Non-responders will be contacted to secure as much participation as possible, the goal being to count every person living in the country. The census is then used to determine congressional representation (by district and state), assess infrastructure needs (schools, roads, services, etc.), and allocate federal spending.

Starting in August, the more intensive (and expensive) process of personally contacting non-responders will begin. Volunteer "enumerators" are paid a variable rate based on location; in Litchfield County the rate is \$25 per hour, along with reimbursement of mileage and some expenses.

Covid-19 disrupted census training and organizational activities, and may result in some target date delays, but things are getting back on track. As of mid-June, the overall response rate had reached 60.8 percent. In Connecticut, it was 64.6 percent, and, closer to home, Litchfield County had a 62.2 percent rate. Cornwall trails at 42 percent, as it did for the last census, when we finished at 43.9 percent. Complexity is probably not the issue: the form has nine easy questions (name, age, sex, and such). The low response rate is more likely due, in addition to boxholders not getting the mailing, to "weekenders" ignoring their invitation here in favor of responding at their primary address. While this is entirely logical, it will appear as a non-response from their Cornwall address and likely result in some follow-up contacts. This may be avoided by going on-



line or calling the service center to clarify.

Incidentally, the questionnaire does not ask, and no one will be asking about citizenship, social security numbers, bank accounts, or anything else of a financial nature. No emails from the Census Bureau either.

Your best bet is to call the service center to complete the questionnaire or ask questions (844-330-2020) or go online (2020census.gov) before anyone needs to call or visit you.

—Tom Barrett

Cornwall Protest Turns Out Large Numbers

An intergenerational crowd estimated by some at over 500 gathered on the Cornwall Bridge green the afternoon of Sunday, June 7, in response to the May 25 Minneapolis police murder of George Floyd and in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. The rally, billed as an opportunity for open discussion of all views and indubitably the largest assembly in town in recent history, was the brainchild of Cornwall's Sabina Busby and Caroline Kosciusko, who were joined by Sabina's sister Camilla and their Rice University friend Clara Kraebber.

The organizers felt a need to create an opportunity for the disproportionately white community in the Northwest Corner "to open EARS" to people of color, to motivate and provide resources for continuing self-education and activism. Out of respect for potential virus hazards and to reassure attendees, especially older ones, they made both facemasks and social distancing a requirement, established a special "drive-by" section, and in lieu of handing out printed matter, set up posters with QR codes that could be accessed with cellphones.

During the rally, moments of silence while taking a knee alternated with the reading of names of black victims of police violence. As Kosciusko reached the conclusion of her speech to the gathering, she delivered this message from a concerned community member: "Just change. Be change. Show change. Love change."

—Paul De Angelis

The Elastic Problem

Who could have foreseen that one quarter-inch elastic would become a precious commodity in the Northwest Corner of Connecticut, much less the U.S. in 2020? Home stitchers throughout the country have been making masks, in clubs and home alone for social distancing, causing a shortage of the elastic band needed to keep your mask in place. Even the nationwide crafting behemoth JOANN had sold out of it by early March (it's back now).

Ingenuity abounded, however. A friend in New York who wishes to remain nameless was using the elastic from worn-out ladies' unmentionables. I've noticed men and women who have folded a bandana into a triangle and tied it around their heads, bandit-style. And there's a funny video from Spain circulating online in which a man demonstrates how to turn a pair of men's jersey boxer undershorts into a face mask. No kidding. No stitching!

Many beautiful fabric masks have been made by members of Cornwall organizations and individuals. Cornwall-made masks have even made it into the halls of Congress, as State Rep. Jahana Hayes has worked with the Selendy family to distribute their masks (made with 3D printers) to people in need.

A kind of etiquette has developed about wearing masks. If you're social distancing on someone's porch or living room, you can pull your mask under your chin (how else could you sip your wine?). If you're taking a walk with a friend, it's OK to bag the mask if you're keeping a reasonable distance, but whoever gets the middle of the road must watch out for cars. If you feel as if you're going to pass out from the heat generated by your breath, by all means find an empty corner and remove your mask!

Which leads me to a story told by Elisabeth Kaestner, who went into a bagel store and realized she'd left her mask in the car. So she hurriedly pulled her sweater over her mouth and nose and asked if that would be OK. "Sure," said the man behind the counter. "Yesterday we had a man who pulled off his sock..." As it happens, Elisabeth's husband, Paul De Angelis, had a mask moment as well, when, on opening day of the farmers' markets, his mask became an object of great interest to the gnats.

When Covid-19 finally leaves us, what shall we do with our lovely fabric masks? Pull them down to shore up a sagging chin? Fill them with birdseed and hang them in the trees? Make a hammock for a chipmunk? Refashion two of our favorite "duckbill" masks into a colorful bra? The possibilities are endless. —Carol Schneider

Cornwall Briefs

- **Hammond Beach** opened for the summer on June 20, a happy sign of return to normal life in Cornwall. Beachmaster Marina Kotchoubey and fellow selectmen have devised a sensible set of rules to ensure social distancing and family safety. The sand has been divided into grids for visitors, and short visits are being encouraged—you know: dip, dry, go home to sunbathe on the lawn. Lifeguards will be on duty and in charge of a sign-up sheet to make contact tracing easier if the need arises. There will

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

be no swim lessons or swim team this summer. The final version of the beach rules will be available on cornwallct.org and through the selectmen's office. Prices for passes (available by mail only) are the same as ever—\$10 for individuals and \$20 for families. Call 672-4959 for more information.

• **YMCA Camp Mohawk** will be open for co-ed day sessions this summer. Cornwall kids are eligible for financial aid from the Cornwall Foundation and the Woman's Society. To learn more, contact director Patrick Marchand at 672-6655 or campmohawk.org.

• **The DEEP woke up** and finally banned spraying herbicides in village areas along the railroad tracks. This milestone was achieved with the help of State Rep. Maria Horn and State Sen. Craig Miner after repeated appeals to the Housatonic Railroad by the Board of Selectmen went unheeded.

• **Housing in Cornwall** must be available to everyone who wants to live here. That is the aim of the 2020 Plan of Conservation and Development. The selectmen and the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) are working with Litchfield Hills COG and planner Jocelyn Ayer to update Cornwall's zoning regs to be sure no exclusionary language lurks. The selectmen have voted to allow First Selectman Gordon Ridgway to apply for funding to hire a consultant to prepare an affordable housing plan.

—Lisa L. Simont

Events & Announcements

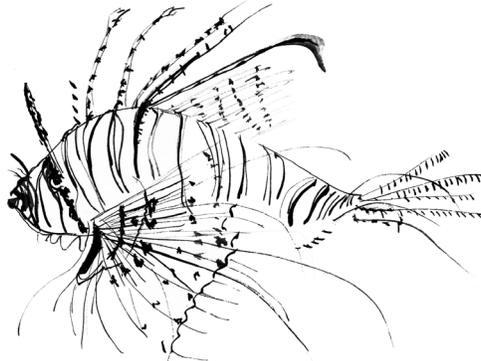
During this time of social distancing on account of the Coronavirus, the Chronicle will be posting important updates, information about online events, and reflections on the moment on our Facebook and Instagram feeds. Readers can also find our Web-exclusive reports posted directly on our website at cornwallchronicle.org.

Taxes Due July 1: The first half payment of taxes on the Grand List of October 1, 2019, is due July 1, 2020. Taxes not in excess of one hundred dollars and motor vehicle taxes shall be due and payable in full on July 1,

Let Loose!

Think of all that money you're not spending on vacation travel and summer festivals and shake free a fraction for your town paper. We'll keep you posted as we stay apart together!

2020. Payments must be postmarked by August 3, 2020, to avoid interest. Any tax bills not paid by August 3, 2020, will be considered delinquent, and interest will be charged at the rate of 1.5 percent per month and fraction thereof (including July). This means that even if you pay on August 4 you



will be charged for two months interest. No additional bills will be mailed for second installments. Please use the bill you received in July.

Taxes must be paid at the Tax Office on Mondays from 1 to 4 P.M. and on Wednesdays from 9 A.M. to 12 P.M. and 1 to 4 P.M., or sent by mail, addressed to: Cornwall Tax Collector, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. Taxpayers also have the option to pay online at cornwallct.org, but there is a 2.95 percent charge for this service, or pay with an echeck.

—Jean Bouteiller, CCMC, Tax Collector

At the Cornwall Library

The library reopens on July 1, carefully following guidelines from the state. Please see cornwalllibrary.org for updates.

Ted Perotti's film *The Art of Work* will be screened (via Zoom) on Friday, July 17, at 5 P.M., followed by a Q&A with Ted and other local skilled workers.

Elizabeth Ridgway will discuss the Covid-19 pandemic from her viewpoint as an EMT for Cornwall and an emergency room nurse at Sharon Hospital on Friday, July 24, at 5 P.M. (via Zoom).

The Cornwall Historical Society will reopen on Saturday, July 4, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. with an exhibit "Celebrating 100 Years of Women's Right to Vote." Face coverings are required and will be available if one is needed.

Voter Registration for Presidential Preference Primary: The deadline for voter registration by mail is August 6 and the deadline to register in person is August 10 by noon in order to vote in the August 11 primary. A registration session will be held at the town

hall on July 28 from 3 to 5 P.M. Voters can also register online at <https://voterregistration.ct.gov>.

August 11, 2020 Primary: The state of Connecticut has arranged to have absentee ballot applications mailed to all active, eligible voters (only registered Democrats and Republicans) for the August 11 primary. Voters who wish to vote by absentee ballot should mail the completed application to Town Clerk, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. The town clerk will enter the information into a centralized voter system. That information will be forwarded to a mailing house, which will mail the ballot to the voter. The voter can then return the executed ballot to the town clerk either by mail or by inserting it into a designated drop box outside the town office building at 26 Pine Street. The ballots will be counted in the usual manner at the polls on the day of the primary.

The polls will be open on the day of the primary for those choosing to vote in person. The registrars of voters will follow the guidelines from the CDC and the Secretary of State's office to keep the polls safe.

The Little Guild cat and dog adoptions are by appointment only. Dog adoptions are outside; all visitors to the cat rooms will be required to wear a mask. Please visit littleguild.org for more information.

Take Care of Each Other: The Cornwall Food Pantry reminds us all to check in with our neighbors, especially those who live alone. A call or socially distanced visit can make a big difference in the life of someone who is unable to see friends and family.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

Jane Bevens, Illustrations

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Jacque Schiller and Cara Weigold, Facebook Posts

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