

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11 : NUMBER 7 AUGUST 2001



New Referendum on CCS Project

Cornwall's cabin fever arrived a little late this year. No sooner is the near-term future of Region One finally decided in a fourth referendum, than another referendum is scheduled on the long-term future of Cornwall Consolidated School.

On July 10, voters in the six-town Region One district approved a \$10,053,757 spending plan by a vote of 849 to 777. Cornwall's heavily negative vote, 164 noes to 94 yeses, along with thumbs-down tallies in three other towns, was offset by an overwhelming vote of approval in Salisbury. This vote concerned expenses for the high school, as well as for administrative services and special education in all six towns.

Also on July 10, a legally correct petition, signed by 20-plus electors, requiring the Board of Selectmen to call a town meeting that would "consider and act" upon a proposal to "terminate and discontinue the Cornwall Consolidated School building project" was received at the Town Office. At a special meeting of the selectmen that same day, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway explained why the petition would probably result not only in a town meeting but also in a second referendum on the school building plan. After an hour-long session of explanation and public comment at another special

meeting on July 16, the selectmen voted unanimously for a town meeting on July 28 (CCS, 7:30 P.M.) and a referendum, using voting machines, on August 11 (Town Hall, noon to 8:00 P.M.).

About \$280,000 of the \$4,715,000 approved by a 255-235 vote at the December 2 referendum has already been spent or committed. The CCS Building Committee will continue work as usual until the issue is resolved, but try to avoid immediate expenditures.

At the July 16 meeting, Gordon Ridgway explained why, although the issue could be legally decided by a town meeting vote, such a course of action would be impractical, cumbersome, and unfair. "In the past, a major issue that attracts a great deal of attention has always gone to referendum," he said. For one thing, the CCS gym will hold only about half of the 600 probable voters. For another, certifying voters who are not electors but own property in town is often a complicated and time-consuming process. Then, too, voting by absentee ballot would be possible only at a referendum. Ridgway added that information on absentee ballots would be posted on the Town Office door as soon as possible. (See "Referendum Rules," page 4.)

Toward the end of the meeting, some people wondered if other people would have trouble reading the ballot, and for this reason

vote the opposite of their true intentions. The ballot must be legally phrased in the language of the petition—to rescind the December 2 vote for the building project. Therefore a *yes* vote is a vote to stop the project. Persons wishing the project to continue as scheduled should vote *no*. (For opinions on the merits of the building project, see "Letters," page 3.)

—Bob Potter

Here Come the Towers

Residents of Poppel Swamp Road and other Cornwallians can sign all the petitions they want, but that doesn't mean that citizen opposition to the proliferation of cell towers will have much impact. That seems to be the conclusion of most state and local officials in the wake of growing opposition to a new 190-foot cell tower proposed on property owned by Ralph Gulliver on Bell Road off Poppel Swamp.

Several recent court decisions interpreting how the federal Telecommunications Act regulates the cell phone industry have made it clear that towns have little power to control the siting, height, and scenic impact of cell towers. That is because Congress, when it passed the act in 1996, assigned greater importance to the expansion and utility of cell phone use than the environmental impact of the thousands of towers needed nationwide to ac-

(continued on page 2)

AUGUST 2001

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 <i>Scaly Wings: Butterflies and Moths</i> 7-8 P.M. Cornwall Library (p.4)	2 School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	3 Stories, Crafts, and Music for Ages 3-6 10:30-11:30 A.M. Cornwall Library Rose Algrant Art Show 5-8 P.M. Mohawk Ski Lodge (p.4)	4 Rose Algrant Art Show 10 A.M.-4 P.M. Mohawk Ski Lodge (p.4) Cell Tower Meeting 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.1) Chamber Music Concert 7:30 P.M. Cream Hill Lake Assoc. (p.4)
5 Absentee Ballots 9-11 A.M. Town Office (p.4) Community Interfaith Service 10 A.M. Village Green (p.4) Rose Algrant Art Show 10 A.M.-4 P.M. Mohawk Ski Lodge (p.4) Farewell Party for Art Branch 3-5 P.M. Village Green (p.4)	6 Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Agricultural Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	7 Blue Mt. Satsang Every Tuesday 6:30-8 P.M. UCC Day Room Inland Wetlands 8 P.M. Town Hall	8 Juggling Workshop 7-8 P.M. Cornwall Library (p.4)	9	10 Stories, Crafts, and Music for Ages 3-6 10:30-11:30 A.M. Cornwall Library	11 Tag Sale 9 A.M.-2 P.M. St. Bridgets (p.3) Referendum, noon-8 P.M. Town Hall (p.1)
12	13 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Day Room P&Z 8 P.M. Town Hall	14 Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	15 Deadline: September Chronicle Copy	16 Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	17	18 Folk Art 10 A.M.-1 P.M. Historical Society (p.3) Fiddling on the Village Green 7-10 P.M. (p.3)
19	20	21 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	22 Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	23	24 Child Center Fall Registration 9 A.M.-3 P.M. at the Center Wadsworth Athenaeum Curator Tom Denenberg 8 P.M. Cornwall Library (p.4)	25 Cornwall Association 9:30 A.M. Town Hall End of Summer Reading Program Raffle Drawing 11 A.M. Library
26	27 ZBA 8 p.m. Town Hall*	28	29 CCS Opening Day Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	30	31	

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallct.org

(continued from page 1)

commodate the industry. Cell phone companies have indicated to state planners that they may need 12 to 15 towers to accommodate demand along the scenic Route 7 corridor between Kent and Canaan. Cornwall could be forced by state and federal regulations to accept as many as half of those towers. As Cornwall Planning and Zoning Commission chairman Rick Lynn points out, ultimate authority rests with the Connecticut Siting Council in New Britain, with local towns merely having the right to enforce proper observance of lot division and wetlands codes.

"This is one of the largest land-use issues facing towns like this right now," said First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. "How do you provide service without making towns look ugly? My sense is that there's already fair coverage in most of the town, and a dozen more towers littering the landscape is not the way to go."

"There was some interest a couple of years ago in giving towns more authority on the placement of these towers," said Phil Hart, who represents Cornwall on the Housatonic River Commission, an advisory board that was involved in an earlier controversy over the siting of a tower in Sharon, just outside the Cornwall line. "But my understanding was that there just wasn't enough sympathy in Congress for giving towns more say. Towns like Cornwall trade on the fact the people come up here to fish and canoe on the river and enjoy the scenic isolation," Hart continued. "These visitors don't want to look up everywhere they turn and see towers all over the place."



Republicans Name Slate

At their July 17 caucus, Cornwall Republicans made a noteworthy adjustment in the profile of this year's municipal elections. Gordon Ridgway, running for reelection as First Selectman, will face an opponent for the first time since 1995. His opponent is Roger Kane, an unaffiliated voter running on the Republican line. Kane is a retired state highway engineer and currently a member of the Inland Wetlands Agency and the School Building Committee.

Another change involves Katherine Gannett, who will not run for reelection to the Board of Education. In a statement read to the caucus, Gannett said she would complete her term—running through November 2002—on the Region One School Board. The caucus voted to thank Gannett for her decade of service.

The caucus also nominated the following candidates: Board of Selectmen—K. C. Baird; Town Clerk—Cheryl Evans; Treasurer—John Green; Tax Collector—Helen Migliacci;

Board of Finance—full term, Sally Hart; filling a vacancy, Jack Preston; alternate, Peter Kalmes; Board of Education—Barbara Gold and Charlie Yohe; Board of Assessment Appeals—David Hurlburt; Planning and Zoning—Pat Hare and Bobbie Tyson; Zoning Board of Appeals—James Longwell and Janet Gold; Park and Rec.—Debbie Morehouse and Tom Baird. —Charles Osborne

www.cornwallct.org

Have you looked at the Cornwall Web Site recently? You should!

First, a little background: The Web Page is one of the most visible and successful outcomes of the Cornwall Association's Town Profile of 1999. Lazlo Gyorsok, who had already set up a Web Site for Cornwall on his own, became the volunteer technical expert and Webmaster. He actually creates the page using his own software and stores it in his server. With great forethought, Virginia Brecher had already registered the name www.cornwallct.org, and the name was transferred to the newly formed Web Group which, earlier this year, affiliated with the Cornwall Association.

First look at the "Calendar," which is managed by Anne Baren. If you are scheduling an event, call or E-mail her at pbaren@snet.net. If you find a meeting or event you want to attend, then look at "Minutes and Agendas" to find the agenda and what happened at the last meetings. Pages for "Town Offices" or "Civic Groups" will tell you who you can expect to be there.

Next check "Weather" (for the next ten days) to see if you need a raincoat or shorts or a snow shovel, and from there you can check on flight arrivals at Bradley for anyone who may be coming to visit. You had best check "Cornwall School" for your children's homework assignments.

And if you still have time, check out the "History" page for an interesting read or "Archives" to see what you have missed in the past few months.

Then go on to "Businesses" for places to stay in Cornwall or for someone to cut your lawn. Incidentally, there are links from business web sites to just about anything you might want to do in the Litchfield Hills or the Berkshires.

Look for "Library" hours and the newest books; and "Churches" for Sunday service times.

If you now look at "Special Events," you'll see where you should have been instead of at that meeting; and click on "What's New" to find Web photographer Richard Griggs's up-to-date pictures of the event and who was there.

And there's the "Cornwall Exchange," a "give" and "receive" section. "Regulations" contains 70 pages of zoning regulations, instructions on use of the dump, the Town Beach, and when to burn. Last and probably least is a daily count of the Cornwall black flies.

There's something for everyone.

—Celia Senzer

Welcome

Lancelot Charles to
Sarah and Maurice Oyanadel

Good-bye to a Friend

Marion "Pete" Hayward

Congratulations

Noah Oskwarek to Francesca Falletta
Philippe Rummens to Monica Diogenes
Thomas Wolf to Alice Sarkissian
Christopher Zabriskie to Catherine Hays

Land Transfers

L&B Consultants (USA) Inc. to MK Design & Build, LLC., 3 acres on Reed Brook Road for \$48,000.

R.I.P. Rattlesnake Pond

There was quite an uproar in the middle of June when the beaver dam near the north end of Rattlesnake Road was removed by the Town Crew and all the water held back from the Mill Brook hurtled down to the Housatonic.

"Who had made the decision to empty the pond?" Billie Jo Thitchener (age seven) asked her grandmother. Joanie explained that it was probably the First Selectman, Mr. Ridgway, the father of Elizabeth, one of her classmates. "We need to talk to him," replied Billie Jo and after a pause added, "and we need to talk to Bush."

The drained water was knee-deep in three acres of Hedgerows Farm fields and it completely spoiled the hay. "There was no warning, and if the calves had been down there they could have been swept downstream," Dan Cain said. And what had been the beaver pond looked brown and desolate, and the stench was appalling.

Many Cornwallians who since May had been watching two families of hooded mergansers and a family of wood ducks were concerned. The ducks were not old enough to fly. Where were they and had they survived the violent destruction of their habitat?

The beavers had created a beautiful pond in the low-lying fields owned by Lawrence Van Valkenburgh, who was very happy with their work. But the water was running over the road and something had to be done. The First Selectman, in consultation with the Chairman of the Inland Wetlands Agency and the head of the Town Crew agreed that the Town Crew would "rake a little off the beaver dam every day until it was down half way," and, "after a couple of days, let it down completely so they could install a device to control the level of the water," Ridgway told me. But, unfortunately, that wasn't the way it happened. Instead, all the pond water rushed out in a few hours.

The good news is that most, if not all, of the mergansers survived and have been seen sitting forlornly in the few square feet of deep water that remain. The best news is that now they are old enough to fly and can escape predators and move on to better feeding

areas. Meanwhile the great blue herons, solitary sandpipers, killdeer, and assorted flycatchers have moved in.

Beavers are a problem all over Connecticut, and the Department of Environmental Protection has literature and plans to help solve the problems.

Cornwall needs an overall plan for maintenance of beaver dams and ponds that will control the depth of the water, prevent property damage, and allow the beavers to live in peace. They create beautiful habitats for themselves and many plants, birds, mammals, fish, and frogs that we all enjoy.

—Celia Senzer

Flight of the Bumblebee

Act I: 373 Town Street. Two cats eye the bumblebee that has dropped to the floor below the window. I slide a *Chronicle* Thank You card under it and carry the insect outside into the cool May afternoon. Once on the picnic table, it struggles across to a crack and dives in, leaving only its legs and abdomen in view. There it stays for twenty four hours, motionless except when breathed upon. Not a betting woman, I bet my neighbor that this bee will die.

He touches its hind leg with the end of a pencil and thinks he sees it flinch. "Five dollars says it'll live," he says.

"You're on," I say.

He eases the bee carefully into a small cardboard box and takes it home to 336 Town Street.

Act II: 336 Town Street. By the next morning it hasn't moved. When creatures come to the expiration date (unlike people, who make a big fuss), they curl up in a quiet corner and wait for the lights to go out. But I have five dollars on the line.

Bumblebees love Andromeda bushes, and though the blooms had almost dried up, I snip off a sprig and put it in the box. To my amazement the bumblebee staggers forward and puts its head into what had once been a juicy blossom. Then, once more, it is very, very still.

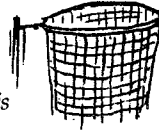
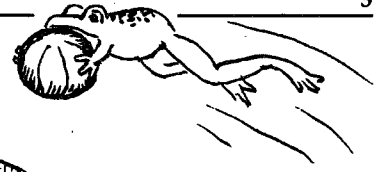
Observing plant and insect expiring together, and thinking of the meaningful poem I will write, I am interrupted by a whiff of wild azalea. I cut off four fresh blossoms and put them in the box. The heady fragrance inside the tiny space has an intoxicating effect. The bumblebee's wings, which had been neatly folded on its back, give a short BZZT! With more and longer BZZZZTs the bumble-

bee becomes airborne, crashes once or twice against the sides of the box, and then spirals elegantly upwards. It is last seen making a bumblebee line for the azalea bush, thereby putting five dollars in my pocket.

(The money was the least of it.)

—Ella Clark and
Marc Simont

Letters to the Chronicle



CCS BUILDING PROJECT: CON

The petition questioning the school renovation comes from a grass-roots effort. No group is responsible; there is no chair, no spokesperson. No meetings were held. Two hundred and thirty-five people voted against building a \$4,700,000 school addition. Eighty signed the original petition which circulated by word of mouth, from neighbor to neighbor.

Underlying reasons for the addition have changed from those originally stated. A projected tax increase of 18.5 percent over five years was amended to 50 percent. Also, the building committee based the needs of the school on a projected enrollment increase to 250 students. Board of Education figures now show a 35 percent decrease in enrollment to 128 in 10 years. These substantial changes merit reconsideration by the voters.

The ground swell of support for a re-vote comes from a large number of townspeople who will be seriously hurt by the 50 percent increase in taxes. Those who earn less will have to spend up to 30 percent of their income. Those least able to pay will suffer the most. Fairness necessitates a re-vote. No one is anti-education. Nevertheless, many people reject an over-sized and disproportionate expansion that could cause a change in the very nature of Cornwall by forcing out lower-income residents.

—Biffie Dahl Estabrook

CCS BUILDING PROJECT: PRO

Most in Cornwall are familiar with the work of the CCS Building Committee. Study, advice, and planning gave us a strong sense of what should be done—and will be, voters willing. Cost and need were brakes and gas pedal on the road to completion, and we are now \$280,000 down the road of planning, engineering, and drawings. The question was never what the school and town could get along without. The question was what should the town provide into the foreseeable future to meet existing shortcomings and future programs. What must be done

for a burgeoning music program which has outgrown its space? Does the school need a gym large enough for Region One games, large enough so that during P. E. classes some don't have to sit out, large enough for Park and Rec.? Do we want a safer parking lot, community emergency facilities, a modern science room? The answer to many of these questions did not depend on enrollment projections, up or down, which in any case are only estimates. On December 2, 2000, the public said "yes" and approved a budget.

The progress of this project has been reported in five newspapers. Meetings have been posted and open. Citizens, parents, town officials, teachers, the principal, and town boards have participated, a kind of pushing, pulling, holding back, pruning, and refining which have resulted in the present plan. But it does cost money.

The committee takes the plan to Hartford on October 9 and the new facility will be open for classes in September, 2003. Voters willing.

—Philip Hart, Annie Kosciusko
Building Committee Co-Chairs

THAT TUITION TAX

The proposal of a "tuition tax" to pay for Cornwall's public school suggests that maybe some of us need a refresher course on the whole troublesome and expensive notion of "public" education. The idea, as laid out by Thomas Jefferson and others, was never to provide some sort of consumer service to families with kids, in order to help them get good jobs or be "competitive." Rather the community undertakes to educate its children so that they will know enough to judge their leaders and govern themselves. Archaic as this may sound, the argument for public schooling is that a well-educated citizenry is a boon to the entire community.

—Michael Pollan

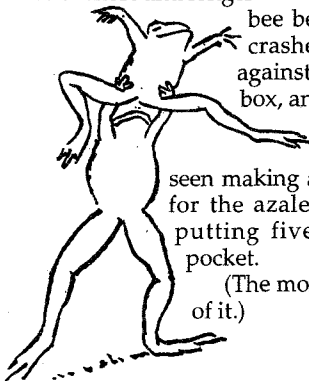
Events & Announcements

Tag Sale: On Saturday, August 11, from 9 A.M. to 2 P.M., St. Bridget's Church will hold its Annual Tag Sale on the grounds of the church in Cornwall Bridge. Featured will be attic treasures, baked goods, clothes, a farmer's market, and dealers offering a variety of goods. Refreshments will be available through the day. Dealer space may be reserved by calling Sandi at 672-6716.

Community Calendar Deadline: The last day that birthday and anniversary dates will be accepted for the Republican Town Committee's Community Calendar will be August 15. The calendar will be free this year. Call K. C. Baird at 672-2773 or stop at Baird's.

Folk Art at the Historical Society: A collection of Mary Sams' entertaining bird houses, whirligigs, and more will be on display from August 18 through Labor Day. The Cornwall Historical Society's hours are Tuesdays, 1 to 3 P.M., and Saturdays, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M.

Fiddling on the Green: Park & Rec. is sponsoring a concert on the Village Green on Saturday, August 18. Bring a blanket to sit on, a picnic dinner, and your dancing shoes for a concert of high-spirited fiddling by Barebones & Wildflowers. Picnic area open at 6 P.M., music from 7 to 10 P.M. Free. For more information please call Park & Rec. at 672-4070.



Referendum Rules: In the August 11 referendum on the CCS building project, (Town Hall, noon to 8 P.M.) voting machines will be used and absentee ballots are available.

However, the process for obtaining absentee ballots is different from that of a regular election. The Town Clerk *cannot mail applications or ballots*. You must apply in person or appoint a designee. The designee must be a member of your family or one of our Registrars of Voters—Jayne Ridgway (672-0279) or Virginia B. Potter (672-6191). Also, the Town Clerk's Office will be open from 9 A.M. to 11 A.M. Sunday, August 5, to hand out applications and ballots. Until August 9, voters may obtain ballots from the Town Clerk and vote immediately while there.

Another point to clarify is who is eligible to vote. Connecticut State Statute 7-6 says those who may vote at referenda are: 1) "Any person who is an elector in the Town." This means your name appears as a voter on the registration list kept current by the Registrars. Persons not already registered to vote may do so up to Thursday before the referendum. 2) "Any citizen of the age of eighteen or more who, jointly or severally, is liable to the town for taxes assessed against him on an assessment of not less than \$1,000 on the Grand List of 2000." This needs some explanation. First, non-electoral property owners (whether of autos or real estate) must show proof of citizenship before they can vote (or have it on file with the Town Clerk from previous referenda); a birth certificate, passport, or naturalization papers will do. Second, if your property is listed on the Grand List in one name, only the person listed may vote. Also, companies cannot vote because they aren't persons. Third, if you purchased property in town after October 1, 2000, your name does not appear on the Grand List of 2000, and you will not be able to vote in this referendum unless you become a registered voter.

If you have any questions, please contact the Town Clerk's Office at 672-2709.



Heating Up

That's town politics we're talking about, not the weather. The *Chronicle* will keep you updated on the school fracas, the upcoming municipal elections, and anything else that pops up to disturb our usual serenity. But don't forget that we need your continued support to keep publishing. So please send a small (or large) check if you haven't done so recently.

3rd Annual Interfaith Service, started on the tenth anniversary of the 1989 tornado, will take place on Sunday, August 5, at 10 A.M. on the Town Green. The service, with music, will draw from the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Quaker traditions. Refreshments following the service will be available on the Green.



Juggling Workshop: On Wednesday, August 8, 7 to 8 P.M., the Cornwall Library will present a hands-on workshop by the partners of "Positive Energy," introducing children and their parents to juggling with balls, flower sticks, and diabolos. Step-by-step instructions and demonstrations.

Wadsworth Atheneum Curator Talks: On Friday evening, August 24, at 8 P.M., the Friends of the Library will present Tom Denenberg, Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Tom, who started as a volunteer at the Cornwall Historical Society, will talk about his career as a curator. After the talk, the Coffin family will host a reception to meet Tom and enjoy refreshments. As this event is to benefit the endowment fund for the new Cornwall Library, a donation of \$10 for the talk and \$10 for the reception is requested.

Rose Algrant Art Show: Contrary to the report in the July *Chronicle*, commissions from the show this year (August 3-5) will be donated to the Clifton Read Rental Assistance Fund. This fund, which offers rental assistance in emergency situations, is financed by private donations and administered by the Cornwall Housing Corp.

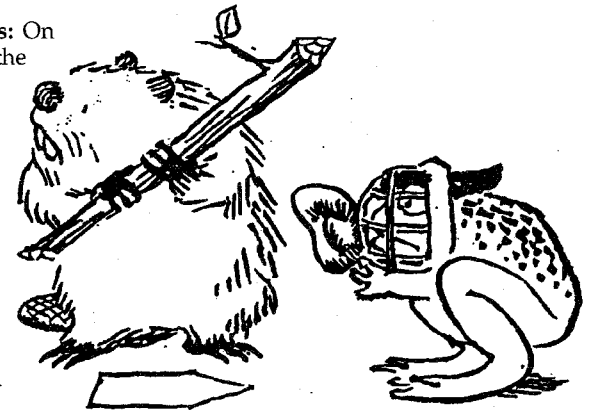
Rummage \$\$\$: The final figure is not yet in, but the yield from this year's rummage sale was about \$20,000.

Come Say Good-bye to Art: There will be a farewell party for Art Breaon on the Village Green from 3 to 5 P.M. on August 5. Please bring beverages and/or appetizers.

Chamber Music at Cream Hill Lake: The Cream Hill Lake Association invites all to come Saturday evening, August 4, at 7:30 P.M., to hear the musicians of the Musicorda Chamber Music Institute. Bring chairs and please be prompt. Hear great music and have some cookies while you chat with the musicians after the concert.

Art in Cornwall: Through August 25, David Colbert will show photographs of people and landscapes at the Cornwall Library. Starting August 27, the library will feature a show of watercolors, mainly exotic flowers, by Jano Fairservis. At the National Iron Bank, the August artist of the month will be Joe Brien.

Cell Tower Meeting: For all those concerned about the proposed cell tower on Popple Swamp Road and other future sites in Cornwall, there will be an informal meeting on Saturday, August 4, at 7:30 P.M. in Town Hall. For further information please call Bianca La Porta at 672-0089. (See story, page 1.)



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CORNWALL CHRONICLE
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 E-MAIL: spenbarb@discovernet.net
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