CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 29 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2020

2019: The Year in Review

This was a year filled with accomplishments and anniversaries. After a long and slow awakening to alarms about our declining and aging population and our retail apocalypse, steps were taken to address those issues.

The Planning and Zoning Commission spent over a year working on and completing a new town plan, with an emphasis on economic development, housing, and community development, toward a goal of encouraging business and promoting an influx of younger families.

On July 26, an astonishing crowd packed the CCS gym, brushed off any discussion, and overwhelmingly passed a resolution to continue work on a community sewer system in West Cornwall. Most saw this as a vital step toward reestablishing West Cornwall as our center of commerce and tourism. And by year end, the Covered Bridge Electric Bike Rental was doing well; the Union opened as an event and meeting space; and local investors purchased the Pink House with the goal of opening an eatery on that property.

Other achievements included the renovation of the West Cornwall firehouse to accommodate the needs of a larger EMS team and the completion of the restoration of the North Cornwall Meeting House. A monument to the town's Civil War veterans—conceived by Spencer Markow—was dedicated on Veterans Day.

The Little Guild provided the most entertaining event of the year with its Great Country Mutt Show. Hundreds crowded the town green for a show filled with amusing competitions and polite butt sniffing. Cornwall loves dogs.

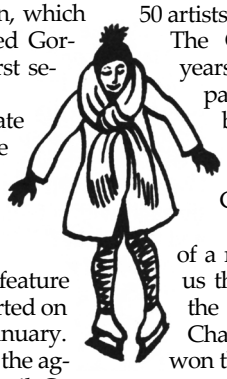
Although interest in local politics continued in a decades-long coma, somehow we muster enough dedicated volunteers to run the town and run it pretty well. Only 39 percent of voters—an all-time low—turned out in the November municipal election, which was mostly uncontested and elected Gordon Ridgway to his 15th term as first selectman.

There were two notable real estate sales in town. The Cornwall Castle sold for $1,600,000 and is currently being restored. A five-bedroom home on Reed Brook Road, built in 2007, sold for $2,725,000.

Animal stories are an essential feature of the *Chronicle*. Roxann Roche reported on her loyal but peevish donkey in January. Jeff Jacobson wrote movingly about the aging of his black lab in February. In April, Carol Schneider reported that mountain lions are back; just ask John Miller. Nora Horan wrote about her two porcupines in May, and Roxana Robinson warned us about snapping turtles in September.

There were three important anniversaries in town. This was the 30th anniversary of the tornado of 1989. The historical society recognized it with an exhibit, and the *Chronicle* published a fascinating first-hand report on the storm by Cilla Mauro in our June issue.

In August, the Rose Algrant Art Show marked its 60th anniversary. The show began in 1959 with nine artists, including Marc Simont and Ruth Gannett. This year more than 50 artists displayed their work.



The Cornwall Library celebrated 150 years with many events, including a party in May, an exhibit of sculptures by Tim Prentice, and a delightful Thanksgiving reading of works by James Thurber, Lewis Gannett, Carl Van Doren, and Laurie Colwin.

This was also the 50th anniversary of a remarkable year, 1969, which gave us the first moon landing, Woodstock, the Manson murders, Vietnam, and Chappaquiddick. In October, the Mets won the World Series in one of the greatest upsets in baseball history, and I closed on a house in Cornwall Village and moved to town with my wife, Audrey, and our four-year-old daughter Emily. —*Ed Ferman*

JANUARY 2020

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: ◆ **Mondays: Mat Squad,** 6:30 pm UCC ◆ **Tuesdays: Pilates,** 8:30–9:30 am Library; **Zumba,** 5:30–6:30 pm Library ◆ **Wednesdays: Tai Chi,** 5–7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064; **Tai-Chi,** 5–5:30 pm and **Qui-Gong,** 6–6:30 pm UCC; **Stitch 'n Spin,** 7:15–8:30 pm UCC ◆ **Thursdays: Pilates,** 8:30–9:30 am Library; **Meditation,** 4–5 pm call Debra 672-0229; **Zumba,** 5:30–6:30 pm Library; **Mah Jongg,** 7–9 pm Library call 672-6874 ◆ **Fridays: Yoga,** 8:30–10 am Library; **Toddler Play Group,** 10:30–11:30 am Library ◆ **Saturdays: Ice Skating,** 7–8 pm Hotchkiss			**1** NEW YEAR'S DAY ◆ Library Closed ◆ New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 am–Noon UCC Parish House	**2** ☾ 1stQ	**3**	**4** ◆ Watercolor Landscapes Course begins 10 am–Noon Library ◆ Winter Film Series *Milk* 4 pm Library ◆ Community Country Dance 7 pm Town Hall
5	**6** ◆ What's the Word? Group 11 am Library	**7** ◆ Republican Town Comm. Caucus 7 pm Town Hall ◆ Inland Wetlands & Watercourses 7 pm Town Office Bldg	**8** ◆ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	**9** ◆ Cornwall Conservation Commission 10:30 am Library	**10** ○ FULL	**11** ◆ Catherine Noren Artist Reception 5 pm Library
12 ◆ Democratic Town Comm. Caucus 1 pm Library	**13** ◆ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon–1 pm UCC Day Room ◆ Park & Recreation 7:30 pm Town Office Bldg.	**14** ◆ Monthly Senior Lunch Noon UCC Parish House ◆ WC Waste Water Comm. 5 pm Town Hall ◆ P&Z Comm. 7 pm Library Restaurant Permit Public Hearing 7 pm Library ◆ HRC 7:30 pm CCS	**15** ◆ **Deadline: February *Chronicle* Copy** ◆ Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS Library	**16** ◆ Board of Finance 7 pm Town Hall	**17** ☽ 4thQ	**18** ◆ Information Session on New Library System 2 pm ◆ Winter Films Series *Duck Soup* 4 pm Library
19 ◆ Magaly Ohika Opening 11:30 am UCC Parish House	**20**	**21** ◆ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	**22**	**23**	**24** ● NEW	**25** ◆ Breakfast for a Cause First Seating 8:30 am, Second 9:30 am, Third Seating 10:30 am UCC Parish House ◆ Robert Burns Night 7:30–8:30 pm Library
26	**27** ◆ Voting Rights Series Women's Suffrage 5:30 pm Library ◆ ZBA* 7 pm Library	**28** ◆ Coffee, Confections, etc. 9 am UCC Parish House ◆ SVNA Wellness Clinic 10 am UCC Parish House ◆ SVNA Talk on Fall Prevention 10 am UCC ◆ Economic Develpment Commission 7:30 pm The Union	**29**	**30**	**31**	**Every Week This Month:** ◆ **Sundays: Yoga,** 9–10:30 am Library; **Meditation,** 1 pm call Debra 672-0229; **ASW Method Mat Class,** 1–3 pm Library

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updates, visit www.cornwallchronicle.org

Weather or Not?

The readings went up all day on July 21, from the time the sun rose at 5:37 A.M. They reached their peak a few minutes before 6 P.M. when the thermometer hit 96.1°F. This was the warmest moment of the year recorded by weather station KCTEASTC2 on Mohawk Mountain, exactly six months after January 21, when it had tracked the lowest air temperature of 2019 at -9.4°F.

Meteorological data like this (plus humidity, precipitation, and wind speed) is collected constantly and can be found online at http://api.wunderground.com/personal-weather-station/dashboard?ID=KCTEASTC2. What the information does not provide is a change in attitude towards Cornwall by number crunchers, such as the website bestplaces.net. They run a so-called "comfort index" and malign Cornwall "as one of the least comfortable places in Connecticut," which must be news to our "summer people" who do appreciate temperatures such as 74.7°F (average in July 2019) or 69.5°F (average in August 2019).

Those numbers are rising, mind you. 2019 saw one of the hottest Julys on record in much of New England, which affirmed a report of the Climate System Research Center at the University of Massachusetts Amherst from 2016. It had said that "the annual mean temperature in Connecticut has already increased by about 3°F since 1895—faster than the rise in global mean temperature," with a significant uptick since 1993, exceeding "the 20th-century average every year."

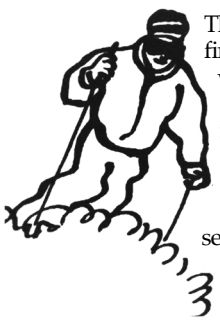
This will probably not slow down. The UMass scientists project that New England will warm much more rapidly than the globe as a whole and any other United States region.

Even the *Farmers' Almanac*, whose predictions are only correct about half of the time, seems to agree. This is its take on 2020 for the region: "Winter will be milder than normal, on average, with above-normal precipitation and near-or-below-normal snowfall…April and May will have above-normal temperatures. Summer temperatures will be hotter than normal, with the hottest periods in mid-June, mid- to-late-July, and early August."

Real results will be provided later. Dutifully reported by KCTEASTC2.

—Juergen Kalwa

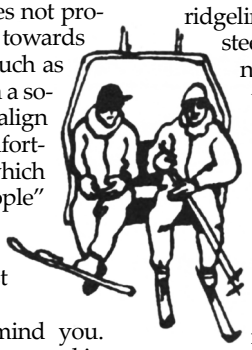
Last Bow at P&Z



Those of us who were at the final public hearing on Cornwall's town plan last November were also at the final meeting led by longtime P&Z chair David Colbert. Retiring from P&Z service after 19 years, seven as board chair, Colbert recently reflected on his long tenure.

"I remember when I was first elected chair being asked what my platform was," he recalled. "I said, 'get people excited about serving on P&Z and include members of the public who attend the meetings.'" He said that it can be hard to control meetings when you do that, but it helps the process, "Everyone who comes feels strongly, wants to be heard, and they don't have to win the day," he added.

The first of Colbert's accomplishments took place around the year 2000. With a strong economy, P&Z was looking for ways to control development while preserving the rural character of our town. Colbert hit upon ridgeline protection as a way to limit the steepness of the slope upon which new homes could be built. No other towns had done this; there was no similar regulation in place in our region. With little sense of what was needed to make his idea come to life, a regulation was drafted, passed into law with no controversy, and remains on the books to this day.



Colbert encountered a different reality several years later when trying to balance development against preserving Cornwall's open space. This time it took several years, over 15 meetings, and the invaluable help of our town planner Tom McGowan to write, revise, and rewrite regulations that would require developers of subdivisions to contribute to public spaces. Once passed, these regulations were rarely enforced. Two more years of revisions were necessary before the measure finally passed in a form that the commission felt comfortable enforcing.

Colbert was quick to emphasize the different roles played by Planning & Zoning and the Zoning Board of Appeals. Despite some beginner's luck, he points out, "Regs are notoriously difficult to write and get passed." As for enforcement, "If someone is not happy and seeks recourse, the Zoning Board of Appeals serves as second opinion."

And over Colbert's tenure plenty of people have sought second opinions. One that came to Colbert's mind was the issue of establishing a place in town for composting Sweet Peat. "From a P&Z perspective it was easy, we said go ahead, there was nothing in the regs that disallowed what they were doing," Colbert said. Landowners appealed and lost, ultimately costing the town money and creating unhappy neighbors.

Another controversy that continues simmering to this day concerns short-term house rentals, such as Airbnb. P&Z has been asked several times over the years to regulate the practice, but the commission has consistently determined that no regs exist and has refused to create such regs. P&Z looked to the state and neighboring towns for precedent and, finding none, decided to formally and indefinitely table the issue.

Remaining modest to a fault, Colbert refuses to highlight his legacy or accomplishments, instead noting his appreciation for the process that gives voice to community concerns and maintains the unique quality of life in Cornwall.

—Bob Meyers

Welcome

Mason Paul Hurlburt
to Regina and Jonathan Hurlburt

Good-bye to Friends

Phyllis Wojan
Anne (Pandy) Bevans

Land Transfers

Kristin Baker and Samuel D. Kusack to Elizabeth Paley and Brian Martin, 12.623 acres of land with all improvements thereon at 256 Dibble Hill Road, for $685,000.

Eugene S. Flamm and Susan Flamm, Trustees of the Eugene S. Flamm and Susan Flamm Revocable Trust, to Alison Marie Schweizer and William Emmanuel Schweizer, 37 acres of land with all buildings and improvements thereon at 413 Town Street, for $1,250,000.

Jennifer Fuller to Carl Shea and Saadia Khan, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 55 Essex Hill Road, for $350,000.

Q&A with the King of the Castle

I recently caught up with Russell Barton, new owner of the legendary Hidden Valley Estate (aka "The Castle") at 61 Castle Road in West Cornwall.

Q: How long have you been in the real estate business?

A: 40 years.

Q: What attracted you to the Castle?

A: I like unusual properties.

Q: What's the most unusual aspect of living in a 16-room, 8,412-square-foot home with 10 baths?

A: The façade is actually the most unusual. The inside is what you make it and we've made it our home.

Q: Any surprises renovating a grand chateau built between 1921–1924?

A: There was some mold, but that's expected after being abandoned for years.

Q: How does Cornwall compare with the other places you have lived?

A: It's my second time owning in Cornwall. I love the country feel, beautiful mountains, and the people are wonderful. They are always friendly and helpful.

Q: Your driveway is said to be a mile long. Who plows it?

A: I do. It's the easiest driveway I've ever plowed. You just go straight!

Q: Come spring, who will mow the grass?

A: I will.

Q: You own well over 200 acres. How much of the property have you actually seen?

A: I already know every blade of grass!

Q: Do you treat your wife any differently

now that she is a queen?

A: She's always been my queen.

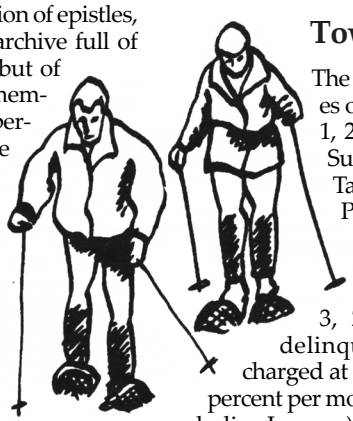
Previously sold in 2001 for $5,925,000, 61 Castle Road was bought by Russell Barton and Susi Stone last summer for $1,600,000, placing it fourth on the grand list of property in Cornwall. —*Bob Meyers*

Pastels and Epistles

The first words were written by David Grossman and published on July 1, 2007: "I would appreciate seeing the advocates of repealing the approval of the CCS addition explain their position on this discussion page… We need debate on this important matter before we vote." The post made light of a new local public forum with room to talk about important issues. The most intense at the time was the addition to the school, a controversial pocketbook affair.

Over time, the Cornwall Community Network evolved. It drew more than 400 members, most of them participating passively as "lurkers." Those who contributed created a treasure trove of over 35,000 messages. This last November they were in danger of being erased, when the host company announced out of the blue it would kick CCN and all other groups to the curb. Fortunately, the Cornwall Association's website committee got involved and transferred everything to a safe harbor with a new address: CornwallCommunityNetwork@groups.io.

And so, all members can still dive into this huge and unfiltered collection of epistles, quips, and repartees. It is an archive full of sightings, not just of animals, but of exotic characters, as well. Remember "Mike Donner," the only person ever expelled from the group? Or a woman from France who wrote in to applaud "madam Lazlo's photos and Pastels de Madame Sybil Perry" and show serious interest in actor Sam Waterston ("I know he lives in Cornwall"). She later came to visit and was greeted by French-speaking local chevaliers like Hendon Chubb. He, by the way, had written message #2, in which he asked participants to adhere to a "plea for civility." Which is not too difficult to follow, if you start with what network administrator Casey Cook requested when CCN went back into full gear: "We ask that members continue to sign their posts" by stating their full name. Courtesy 101. —*Juergen Kalwa*



CVFD Monthly Counts and Winter Safety Tips

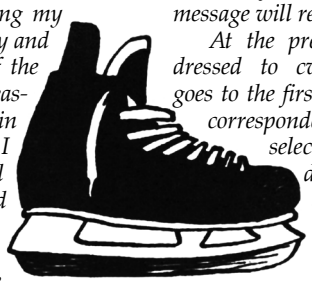
4 false alarms
3 motor vehicle accidents
1 deer on Cream Hill Lake
17 emergency medical calls

CVFD Safety Tips: In winter, always have sand, a warm blanket, flashlight, water, and extra batteries in your car. Stay away from downed trees and power lines and remember, storms are a great time to stay home and enjoy time with family.

Letters to the Chronicle

E-BIKING CORNWALL'S HILLS

Do you remember when you learned how to ride a bike? Someone was running along giving you a push? That's what the new electric bikes feel like all the time. I was visiting my mother and I rented one for the day and happily biked along the shores of the Housatonic River Road and then easily climbed over Music Mountain Road and Cream Hill Road! Later I pedaled by the dramatic waterfall on the Housatonic River Road north of Falls Village and wove through pastures and farms. Bob Ensign has fixed up the old cafe building with knotty pine walls, a propane fireplace, a choice of bikes, helmets, and even gloves and coffee and energy bars (in case you come back hungry and cold). The hills of Connecticut used to seem daunting to me but with an E bike they are no big deal! —*Olga von Ziegesar (Anne Zinsser's daughter)*



REACHING OUR SELECTMEN

I was delighted to hear our Board of Selectmen express a united commitment to improved communication and transparency in how it conducts its business. I would like to suggest an easy, no cost initial step…create a single email address so that citizens can be assured that when they write to the Board of Selectmen their message will reach ALL their elected selectmen.

At the present time, correspondence addressed to cwlselectmen@optonline.net only goes to the first selectman and he decides what correspondence will be shared with the other selectmen. I believe that this email address is misleading and that most citizens using it assume that their emails are reaching ALL their selectmen.

The previous Board of Selectmen rejected a request to make this address deliverable to all or create a new one that would end this misleading situation. I hope that this newly constituted board will act to make direct and open communication not only possible but more likely by remedying this problem. At the present time, if you want to be sure your messages or questions reach all BOS members you must also send your emails to Marina Kotchoubey (mkotchoubey@gmail.com) and Priscilla Pavel (priscilla@bainrealestate.com)

—*Joanne P. Wojtusiak*

Town Taxes Are Due

The second half payment of taxes on the Grand List of October 1, 2018 is due January 1, 2020. Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are also due at this time. Payments must be postmarked by February 3, 2020 to avoid interest. Any tax bills not paid by February 3, 2020 will be considered delinquent, and interest will be charged at the rate of one-and-one-half percent per month and fraction thereof (including January). This means that even if you pay on February 4th 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.

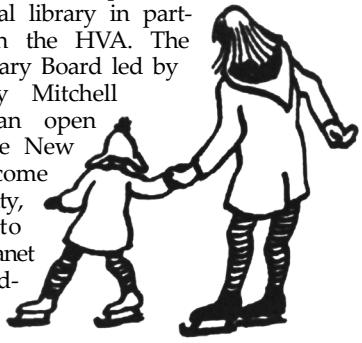
Taxes may be paid at the Tax Office on Mondays from 1–4 P.M. and on Wednesdays from 9–12 P.M. and 1–4 P.M., or sent to: Cornwall Tax Collector, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. Payments can also be made by credit card or e-check by visiting www.cornwallct.org, but there is a 2.95% charge for this service. —*Jean D. Bouteiller, CCMC,Tax Collector*

Cornwall Briefs

• **Light up my Night:** A Christmas shout-out to Fred Scoville and Jim LaPorta for installing solar-powered lights on the tree on the Cornwall Bridge green. Now our dark winter nights will be brighter.

• **The following appointments** have been made by the Board of Selectmen: Debra Tyler to the Cornwall Grange Trust Fund Advisory Committee; Heidi Cunnick, Nancy Berry, Richard Griggs, Betty Spence, and Ivan Miller to the Cream Hill Lake Study Group; Bianka Griggs, Arnon Fischer, Lee Pryor, and Richard Bramley to the Economic Development Commission; Roger Kane, Bill Hurlburt, Steve Hedden, Andrew MacDavid, and Debby Bennett (full members), and Peter Demy (alternate) to the Inland Wetland and Water Courses Agency; Kimberly Sullivan to the NW Regional Mental Health Board; John Sanders, Johan Winsser, and Shanna Robinson to the Park & Rec Commission; Jim Terrall (alternate) to P&Z; Fred Scoville III as tree warden and Bruce Bennett as assistant tree warden; and Bob Ensign to the Western Tourism District. Volunteers are wanted to fill other remaining vacancies.

• **Inquiring Minds Wish to Know** about the "Union:" Located in what was Todd Piker's pottery shop across from the Wish House, the space has been created with the Hughes Library and will serve as a community gathering and shared workplace, as well as an environmental library in partnership with the HVA. The Hughes Library Board led by Chair Libby Mitchell will host an open house in the New Year to welcome the community, according to Vice-Chair Janet Carlson Sanders.



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• **The Pantry Needs Replenishing**. Over the last month, the Cornwall Pantry has welcomed two new families, seen families with two incomes reduced to one, and, in one case, no income. Food and clothing items are needed and can be brought to the UCC Day Room. You can also donate via Amazon by searching for the Cornwall Pantry Wish List—items ship directly to the town hall. Tax-deductible financial contributions are also greatly appreciated, made out to: Cornwall Food and Fuel Fund, PO Box 97, Cornwall CT 06753. Questions? Call 672-2603.

• **Town Hall Players' Generosity**. Jane Prentice recently checked in and let us know that the Town Hall Players have made a donation of $1,500 to the Cornwall Food and Fuel Bank that was raised at the door of their recent variety show. This and every generous donation make a big impact. Kudos.

—Bob Meyers

Events & Announcements

For updates, changes, and additions, check the online calendar at cornwallchronicle. org or cornwallct.org (it is the same calendar). And for reminders, see the *Chronicle* Facebook page.

New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast will be held in the UCC Parish House, 9 A.M. to noon. Buttermilk pancakes, sausage, Cornwall maple syrup, etc. Donations benefit the UCC medical loan equipment fund.

At the Cornwall Library

The library will be closed January 1.

On Saturday, January 4, at 4 P.M. the Winter Film Series begins with *Milk*, 2009 Academy Award winner. Suggested donation is $5 per person.

Collette Hurst will begin a watercolor landscapes class on January 4: four sessions from 10 A.M. to noon on consecutive Saturdays. All levels welcome, supply list provided prior to class. $100. Register in advance at library.

Director Margaret Haske will describe the new library system and take your questions on Saturday, January 18, at 2 P.M.

The Winter Film Series continues on January 18 at 4 P.M. with *Duck Soup*, the 1933 Marx Brothers classic of wacky slapstick comedy. Suggested donation $5 per person.

Robert Burns Night will be held on Saturday, January 25, 7:30 to 8:30 P.M. Celebrate with tastings of scotch, shortbread, and haggis. Space is limited. $10/person.

On Monday, January 27, at 5:30 P.M., the voting rights series with historian Peter Vermilyea continues. This month's topic: The Women's Suffrage Movement.

Ice Skating Saturdays in January from 7 to 8 P.M. at Hotchkiss School Mars Athletic Center. Bring skates and a hat or helmet.

A Community Country Dance will be held Saturday, January 4, at town hall at 7 P.M. with caller Bob Livingston and Betsy's Band. If you play an instrument and want to join in, call 671-7945 or email debra@motherhouse.us. All ages welcome. Donation suggested.

What's the Word? Next meeting is Monday, January 6, at 11 A.M. at the library. (And the word is...COLOR.) Contact Connie Steuerwalt at 672-2861 or csteuerwalt@gmail.com with questions.

Cornwall Republican Town Committee will hold a caucus for electing members on Tuesday, January 7, at 7 P.M. in the town hall. For registered Cornwall Republicans.

Art in Cornwall

At the library, show of new photographs by Catherine Noren titled "Angels in the Architecture." Opening reception on Saturday, January 11, at 5 P.M.

At the UCC Parish House, an exhibit of mixed media works by Magaly Ohika—"The Silence of Peace"—from January 19 until March 15 with an opening reception Sunday, January 19, at 11:30 A.M. The show may be viewed Monday to Friday from 9 A.M. to 1 P.M., Sundays from 10 A.M. to noon or by appointment with the artist (248-1806).

Through the month of January the Toll House Gallery in West Cornwall will continue to showcase works by Lennart Swede Ahrstrom, Don Bracken, and Ian Ingersoll.

Robert Adzema's watercolors of Cornwall Covered Bridge and Barns continues at the Souterrain Gallery through January 20.

Cornwall Democratic Town Committee will hold a caucus Sunday, January 12, at 1 P.M. at the library to select DTC members for 2020.

Senior Events

Tuesday, January 14, at noon, Park and Rec monthly luncheon, UCC Parish House. RSVP to Jen at prcornwall@gmail.com or call/text 480-0600, $8.

Tuesday, January 28, at 9 A.M., Morning Coffee, Confections & Conversations, UCC Parish House, free.

Tuesday, January 28, 10 A.M. SVNA Talk about fall prevention. Blood pressure readings. No cost. UCC Parish House.

Public meeting for special restaurant permit in barn behind 417 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike, formerly known as the Pink House in West Cornwall at P&Z meeting on Tuesday, January 14, at 7 P.M. in the library.

Breakfast For a Cause Saturday, January 25, to benefit the Pine Ridge Reservation at UCC. Three seatings beginning at 8:30 A.M. RSVP to office@uccincornwall.org to attend.

The Vision Thing in 2020

Though there are many things we may view with less than 20/20 clarity, one thing is crystal clear about the coming presidential election year: the *Chronicle* will be there to sharpen the local picture. Don't be myopic…Contribute today and keep us out of the red (and free of the blues).

CORNWALL CHRONICLE
cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH
Erica Prud'homme, Illustrations
Bob Meyers and *Juergen Kalwa,* Editors
Paul De Angelis and *Cara Weigold,* Facebook Posts

NEXT MONTH
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CIRCULATION *Hunt Williams, Nan* and *John Bevans*

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