



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 25 : NUMBER 11 DECEMBER 2015



## Questions Linger About Rental Regs

The tangled matter of accommodations for visitors to Cornwall took another step forward in November. The Marcin/Hampton family, owners of the Cornwall Inn, last summer urged the town's Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) to consider regulating short-term rentals, such as those arranged on Airbnb, because the inn's business was being harmed.

Zoning Enforcement Officer Karen Nelson studied the complaint and concluded that nothing in P&Z regulations limited the length of time a family dwelling could be rented out; no zoning regulations were being violated.

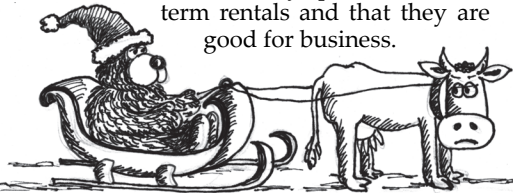
The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) on November 5 reversed Nelson's decision and then voted to limit the rental use of family dwellings to no less than 30 days. On the advice of town attorney Perley Grimes, who was present at the special meeting on November 5, ZBA first had to decide that the Nelson decision was incorrect, and must be reversed before it could make any determination. The vote to reverse was 6-0. (Video of the meeting can be found at [cornwallct.org](http://cornwallct.org).)

Cornwall's P&Z regulations do not address the rental of local homes. Attorney

Grimes concluded that anything that is not specifically addressed in the regulations is not permitted. ZBA has the authority to counter P&Z silence with its own determination if it finds that such use is customary. ZBA can request that P&Z take up the issue of short-term rentals.

Discussion centered on what the "customary" use of dwellings means in Cornwall. Alternate Joanne Wojtusiak said that she knows of several houses in Cornwall that are rented during the holiday season and that there is a large market for such rentals. Member Priscilla Pavel stated that she knew of houses on Yelping Hill that are rented for two-week periods.

Member Nancy Calhoun stated she believes that short-term rentals (with the Internet being available to arrange transient, short-term stays) change the character of Cornwall and change the residential neighborhood. Ms. Wojtusiak questioned what enforcement would be if ZBA voted to limit short-term rentals. She took the position that Cornwall has always permitted short-term rentals and that they are good for business.



Ms. Calhoun made a motion that the board finds that the rental of a dwelling for a period of time not less than a month is an accessory use in Cornwall, in accordance with the advice of attorney Grimes. Amy Worthington-Cady seconded the motion. The motion passed by a 4-2 vote with members Pavel and Betty Spence voting against it. Ms. Wojtusiak, as an alternate, could not vote.

The ZBA stated that its use of "customary" was not based on any hard data as no such study had been made to its knowledge. ZBA further requested that P&Z look into short-term rentals and regulate them as it sees fit.

Nelson said in an interview with the *Chronicle* that what ZBA did was to make a determination. The matter of enforcement is within the jurisdiction of Planning and Zoning. Only P&Z has the authority to make regulations and the process to do so is defined in state statute. — *The Editors*

## Long-Time Town Employee to Leave

Jill Gibbons, Cornwall's social services director since 1982, has taken a full-time job in fiber arts up in Massachusetts starting

(continued on page 2)

## DECEMBER 2015

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
<b>Every Week This Month:</b> <b>Mondays:</b> Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ <b>Wednesdays:</b> Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064 ♦ <b>Thursdays:</b> Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; <b>Toddler Play Group,</b> 10:30-11:30 am Library;		<b>1</b> ♦ Inland Wetlands 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> ♦ UCC Christmas Fair 9:30 am-3 pm ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
<b>6</b> ♦ Advent Vespers 7 pm NC Meeting House	<b>7</b> ♦ Region 1 BOE 6 pm HVHRS Room 133	<b>8</b> ♦ Eco. Dev. Comm. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm ♦ Wandering Moose ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS	<b>9</b> ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1-5:45 pm UCC ♦ Septic Info Meeting 7 pm Town Hall	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> ♦ Christmas Pageant Rehearsal 5:30 pm UCC	<b>12</b> ♦ Gingerbread Cookie Decorating ♦ Seniors' Holiday Tea 2-4 pm Library ♦ Christmas Pageant 7:30 pm UCC
<b>13</b> ♦ Snow Date for Christmas Pageant 4 pm	<b>14</b> ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC ♦ ZBA* 7:30 pm Library ♦ Park & Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>15</b> ♦ <b>Deadline:</b> <b>January Chronicle Copy</b> ♦ Healthcare Enrollment 2-6 pm Library ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	<b>16</b> ♦ Board of Ed 4 pm CCS Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm CCS Library	<b>17</b> ♦ CCC 6:30 pm Town Hall	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> ♦ Candlelight Service 5 pm and 8 pm North Cornwall Meeting House	<b>25 CHRISTMAS</b>	<b>26</b> ♦ Tom Walker Reading 4 pm NC Meeting House
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> ♦ Cornwall Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>Every Week This Month:</b> <b>Thursdays:</b> Meditation, 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; <b>Mah Jongg,</b> 7-9 pm Library call 672-6874; <b>Adult Volleyball,</b> 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ <b>Fridays:</b> Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library ♦ <b>Sundays:</b> Yoga 9-10:30 am Library; <b>Meditation,</b> 1 pm call Debra 672-0229	

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

January 1. Cornwall now needs an experienced social services director to start in January and be able to transition with Jill in December. Anyone interested, or who knows someone who might be, should contact the selectmen's office at 672-4959 for further details.

—The Editors

## Tidings Of Joy

Denny Frost and I sat over tea and scones, and memories of the UCC Christmas Pageant flowed. "Dody Prentice started it, probably in the late 1930s, and my wife, Charlotte, took over the reins from her. She was the director for 40 years, and loved it."

Denny was one of the three kings for many years. He remembers waiting for his cue downstairs with the shepherds. One of them grabbed Thalia Scoville's knitted pink hat and put it on Denny's head at the last minute. "It became a tradition for me to wear it, even though it didn't look at all like something that would have been worn in those days."

Once the floodgates are opened it's hard to stop the flow of reminiscences. Tradition is a great equalizer in a community, and the United Church of Christ has established a wonderful custom with its annual Christmas Pageant. Through world wars, deaths, bad weather, and the inevitable changes that life brings, the pageant has gone on.

Jane Prentice, director for the last 10 years, recalls that people used to ask her if they could be part of the pageant. "Last year I called 33 guys before I could find one king. Believe me, I understand. Life is very busy."

She added, "I'm not a very sentimental person. But every year the pageant is magical. The music, the lighting, the children and grown-ups all being together; there's just something about it...it can bring me to tears."

Zjeke Hermann began doing the pageant in 1960. He was thwarted by mumps his first year of being a "little shepherd," but became an older shepherd for many years after that. He finally graduated to being a king when he was 19.

"It was a wonderful family of performers," Zjeke said. "The costumes from the Prentice family's trunks were gorgeous. I remember Fritz Bruehl as having such a deep voice it just filled the church and was truly royal sounding."

Pat Hare remembers when his father, Monty Hare, brought two live sheep to the pageant just to add a little authenticity. "Of course the sheep had never been in church before, so there was quite a bit of chaos. We were cleaning up little black 'coffee beans' for some time."

Tim Prentice, whose mother, Dody, started the pageant, remembers the costume trunks with reverence. "My mother came

from Canada, and her family was very theatrical. We had these trunks in the attic for some time, and when my mother put the pageant together the trunks came out. They were filled with costumes of all kinds, and to this day are used to dress the shepherds and kings and Joseph and Mary." The king trunk especially oozes with memories of famous kings through the years: Doug Carlson, Fritz Bruehl, Zjeke Hermann, Tim Prentice, Jim Whiteside, Denny Frost, and many others.

Tim also remembers his time as a king. "When I arrived at the church I was told I was Balthazar. Balthazar is the king who sings a certain verse of the 'We Three Kings' carol as he walks down the aisle. When Jim Whiteside showed up he said he was Balthazar. I've always felt guilty that I remained Balthazar and Jim had to take another king part. He forgot the words and I've always blamed myself."

Jim well remembers this episode, "Yup. Halfway down the aisle I just forgot every word, so I made them up as I went along. No one seemed to notice, except Tim Prentice."

Even though times have changed a bit, the show will go on. We all know the story, but every year the pageant brings it back to life.

Said Jane Prentice: "Maybe this year we should think about having a live donkey on stage with everyone. Just a thought."

—Jane Bean

## Steeple Fix Simpler Than Expected

The campaign to preserve the lovely North Cornwall Meeting House seems to be near the finish line. Donors to the Friends group and to the UCC have been generous. Anything more that comes in will be matched 100 percent up to \$50,000 by an anonymous gift.

The United Church of Christ, owners of the Town Street building, learned after a structural survey that the steeple will only need to be stabilized, not completely rebuilt. According to a report from Ginny Potter, chair of the UCC preservation committee, the steeple only needs some tie rods and rot repair to keep it from increasing its "slight lean to the west." It had been feared that the whole thing would have to be lifted off and reconstructed on the ground.

The work will be done over the spring and summer of 2016 along with other repairs to seal the building from future water damage. The exterior will be scraped and painted and the handicapped ramp will be replaced. Interior work will be done in 2017.

The UCC will use funds secured for the project by the town from the state's Small Town Economic Assistance Program, as well as funds raised by church members and the Friends campaign. —Lisa L. Simont

## Welcome

Jack Peters Lewis to Nathanael Lewis and Chelsea Bardot Lewis

## Land Transfers

Richard A. and Kathleen M. Duke to Brian N. O'Neil, property with house and all other improvements thereon at 96 Cemetery Hill Road, for \$210,000.

Rosalie R. Furniss to Richard H. and Stacey L. Dolan, land with buildings and improvements thereon at 163 Cornwall Hollow Road, for \$500,000.

## Mohawk State Forest Opens for Hunting

In October the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) announced the opening of two new areas for hunting in Mohawk State Forest.

One is in Cornwall, some 126 acres near Clark Pond off Great Hill Road, which is open for bow hunting deer and turkey only. The second area is a parcel of 329 acres near Eli Bunker Road, open to firearms hunting as usual on state lands; archery for deer and turkey is allowed before November 18 and between December 23 and the end of the year.

I called Cornwall hunters Jim Vanicky and Jean Boutellier to get their reactions to the new hunting grounds. They didn't seem terribly excited, possibly because they are fortunate enough to be able to hunt on private land.

The bow hunting area near Clark Road could get crowded with hunters from all over Connecticut who have permits. The only restriction on the number of hunters in an area designated for bow hunting is the availability of parking.

For shotgun hunting on the Eli Bunker Road parcel, only 15 permits are issued so you can reasonably expect to encounter not more than 14 other hunters.

What to shoot is the next problem. The number of deer appears greatly reduced. DEEP has not done population research since 2013 so there is no definite information on the decline in deer population. DEEP has, however, been studying fawn survival rates, critical to the renewal of the herd. Of the 19 fawns studied, six survived (32 percent). Sixty-nine percent of the remainder died from predation and 31 percent from other causes. So the herds are not being renewed at a natural rate.

DEEP will study the deer population as a whole again in the 2016 to 2017 season. For more information find the "Deer Population Study" at [ct.gov/deep](http://ct.gov/deep).

As other hunters from Cornwall take advantage of the newly opened areas in the coming months, I hope that, like Jim Vanicky, they will consider just taking bucks. The does are needed for reproduction.

## Letters to the Chronicle

### THE STEWARD'S HOUSE A HISTORIC LANDMARK?

My residence, the Steward's House of the Foreign Mission School (FMS), known as The Commons in Cornwall Village, (a.k.a. 14 Bolton Hill Road), has been nominated to the National Historic Landmark Program of the U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Dr. Carolyn Frank of Brown University and her students have researched, compiled, and submitted remarkable documentation about the house, which includes some incredible Cornwall history and that of a young nation. Interestingly, the nomination is for the Asiatic and Pacific Islanders' historic contributions to the U.S.

Recently the house was visited by Mary Kathryn Nagel, a direct descendent of Sarah Northrup, the steward's daughter, and John Ridge, an illustrious FMS student and son of a Cherokee chief, who attended alongside many

Asian and Pacific Islanders. Mary Kathryn is a Washington attorney in an all-Indian law firm representing native issues, and is also a successful playwright who has received a commission for a new play about her Foreign Mission School ancestors.

In early November Cathy Binkowski's fourth-grade CCS class came to the FMS Steward's House to sit in front of the fire that cooked the meals for the early students and hear of events that began around that fireplace: a love affair, racism, betrayal, illegal presidential actions, forced removal, known as the Trail of Tears, and assassinations.

History lives.

— Ben Gray

### LAURELS FOR ANNIE GRANT

Cornwall Consolidated School needs your help! We are collecting letters, or short notes of thanks, for the recently retired Mrs. Anne

Grant. Mrs. Grant was a teacher at Cornwall Consolidated School for 40 years. She has made a lasting impact on many former students, and will be greatly missed by the teachers at Cornwall Consolidated School and Region One.

If you are a former student, colleague, or parent of a child who was taught by Mrs. Grant and would like to join us in celebrating her 40 years of teaching at CCS, we invite you to send a note of appreciation or thanks to:

Cornwall Consolidated School  
c/o Thank You Mrs. Grant  
5 Cream Hill Road  
West Cornwall, CT 06796

All letters will be delivered to Mrs. Grant in a special keepsake box. Please have your letters sent by January 4, 2016.

Thank you.

—Linda Massucci, CCS Reading Teacher  
Alicia Simonetti-Shpur, CCS Music Teacher

Meanwhile think of Jim sitting with his bow in his chair halfway up a tree waiting patiently for the big buck to pass and availing himself of new technology playing solitaire on his iPhone. —Celia Senzer

## The Election

Every two years we vote for a variety of local candidates and then many retire to the UCC Parish House to slurp a variety of delicious homemade soups.

It happened again last month when slightly more than half of Cornwall's registered voters cast ballots at town hall. First Selectmen Gordon Ridgway easily won a 12<sup>th</sup> two-year term and will be rejoined on the Board of Selectmen by incumbents Richard Bramley and Heidi Kearns.

Other incumbent winners included three nominated by both parties: Town Clerk Vera Dinneen, Treasurer John Green, and Tax Collector Jean Bouteiller.

Tom Levine and Tracy Gray were reelected to the Board of Education. They will be joined by the new member Catherine Hosterman. John LaPorta and Jack Preston are back on the Board of Finance, along with new member Lisa Lansing Simont. Joe Pryor and Darilyn Woods were elected to alternate positions on that board.

James LaPorta returns to Planning and Zoning and will be joined by newly elected Peter Kalmes. Nancy Calhoun and Betty Spence were returned to the Zoning Board of Appeals, as were Tom Juliano, Johan Winsser, John Sanders, Rocco Botto, and Elizabeth Mitchell to the Park and Recreation Commission.

And finally an interesting turn involving the Board of Assessment Appeals: Paul De Angelis, Pam Longwell, and Karen Bartomioli were elected to that board. But De Angelis stepped aside and on November 17 the Board of Selectmen voted incumbent

chair Roger Kane back on the board.

Now for those delish zuppas: clam chowder and corn chowder by Pat Blakey; chili by chili specialist Pastor Micki; ginger squash by Lori Welles; mulligatawny by Jill Bryant; and roasted tomato by Margaret Kane. Peg Keskinen made brownies and Tracy Gray baked up the Bundt cakes.

The luncheon was organized as usual by Pat and Jerry Blakey who reported that donations to the Cornwall Food & Fuel Bank totaled \$575.

—John Miller



**Editor's Note:** The *Chronicle* has learned of a major mix up in the Parish House kitchen at the time the serving crock pots were replenished. Somehow the corn chowder was poured into the clam chowder (or vice versa) but the new combination drew rave reviews and will be duly noted for next year when we vote and slurp again.

## Cornwall Briefs

•**New Director:** The Cornwall Historical Society has alertly turned the misfortune of curator Raechel Guest's departure into the promise of a new director. In less than a month of searching CHS found Jamie E.O.

Cantoni, Cornwall native and daughter of Barbara Herbst, the town's finance director. Jamie comes with real creds, such as a library degree from Simmons and a resumé which includes the Massachusetts and the Maine historical societies. Board President Karen Doebelin said Jamie has all the right stuff for Cornwall: "Her enthusiasm and desire to engage the public really sealed the deal." Look for an exhibit on Cornwall's Writers and Artists next summer, the first with Jamie's stamp on it.

•**Trinity Church** Wall Street has put its plans to sell the West Cornwall retreat center on hold for the moment. A new rector was installed in 2014 and a re-examination of the church's interest in the property began soon after. The Conservation Trust has successfully separated 317 acres from the original parcel, but the retreat center itself was a harder sell. Suitor after suitor couldn't come up to the mark and the church is believed to be mulling a retreat facility for the site. What goes around comes around perhaps?

•**The Covered Bridge**, sometime dance hall, dining room, and state highway, will be out of commission for about a week in the warm months of 2017, according to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. Work needs to be done on the underpinnings as well as the bridge deck, one of the only examples of wooden roadway in the state highway system. Stay tuned on that one.

•**The sidewalk** to nowhere, as some are calling it, is really nothing like that bridge in Alaska. For one thing our new paved way goes from the Wandering Moose to the West Cornwall Pottery Store, two important destinations in Cornwall. They just aren't very far apart, that's all.

•**Northeast Lumber**, victim early this year of a devastating fire, has assured the selectmen that its lumber business is still open and eager for customers. No word yet on

(continued on page 4)

(continued from page 3)

plans to rebuild. The briefer has heard a rumor that the "for sale" sign in front of the lumber yard might be a step in the negotiations with Northeast's insurers to establish a value for the property.

• **Another dig** for Cornwall's past could be in the works. Former state archeologist Nick Bellantoni was spotted on a gloomy November day setting out little orange flags and radar scanning an area on the town green for traces of Foreign Mission School structures. He was also looking for the foundation of the First Congregational Church which was on the green before being relocated to its present site. The scans will be analyzed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service. More on that next year.

• **U.S. Bike Route 7**, the creation of the Western New England Greenway, is planned to go from Norwalk to the Canadian border up there in Vermont. As of last month it will officially go through Cornwall. The Board of Selectmen inked an agreement which brings the trail up Route 7 from Kent to Cornwall Bridge, over the cement bridge to the Sharon side, and up to West Cornwall Village via the big red bridge. The way out will be up unpaved River Road along the Housatonic. Good opportunities here for local businesses.

—Lisa L. Simont

### Events & Announcements

#### Art in Cornwall

All the following exhibits will continue through the end of the year: at the Cornwall Library, John Perry's exhibition of collages "Sightings"; at the Souterrain Gallery, Magaly Ohika's exhibit "Art Evolves"; at the National Iron Bank, Laura Kendrick's artwork; and at the Toll House (Ian Ingersoll's shop), works of Curtis Hanson, Daniel Murray, and Peter Kirkiles.

#### United Church of Christ

**Christmas Fair:** Saturday, December 5, 9:30 A.M. to 3 P.M.

**Christmas Pageant:** Calling all angels, shepherds, and neighbors! The pageant will be on Saturday, December 12, at 7:30 P.M. (snow date Sunday, December 13, at 4 P.M.) at UCC Village Meeting House on Bolton Hill Road. Traditional readings and carols will culminate with the giving of "white gifts." Please bring a toy wrapped in white paper to donate to children in need. Cocoa and doughnuts will follow in the Parish House. Those interested **MUST** be at the rehearsal at the church at 5:30 P.M. on

Friday, December 11, or call Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

**Cornwall Community Contra Dance:** Come jingle your bells on Saturday, December 5, at 7 P.M. at the Cornwall Town Hall. Live old-time music by Still, the Homegrown Band with calling by Fern Bradley. All dances taught, no partner necessary, left feet welcome. Donation requested to pay the caller. For more information go to Motherhouse.us or call Jane P. at 672-6101.

**Advent Vespers** will be celebrated by the Chapel of All Saints at the candlelit North Cornwall Meeting House on Sunday, December 6, at 7 P.M. Cantus Excelsus will sing. All are welcome.

**Senior Luncheon** Tuesday, December 8, 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose. A three-course meal and stellar company at a great price. No reservations necessary.

**A Red Cross Blood Drive** will be held in the UCC Parish House from 1 to 5:45 P.M. on Wednesday, December 9. Please consider giving the gift of blood during this holiday season. For an appointment call 800-733-2767 or visit redcrossblood.org.

**West Cornwall Septic System:** There will be an informational meeting about West Cornwall's septic options on Wednesday, December 9, at 7 P.M. at the town hall. The selectmen will hear from Gorman + York, the town's economic development consultants, about possibilities for changing the current septic tank situation.

**Cornwall Committee for Seniors** invites all to a seasonal tea on Saturday, December 12, at 2 P.M. at the Cornwall Library. Music will be provided, possibly by a children's choir. Call Margaret Haske for more information at 672-6874.

**The Cornwall Historical Society** will host a gingerbread cookie decorating party on Saturday, December 12, from 2 to 4 P.M. Baker Susan Saccardi will provide homemade gingerbread cookies and decorations. Participants provide the creativity. The party is also an opportunity to meet the society's new executive director/curator, Jamie Cantoni. This event is open to all ages and is free, but does require an RSVP to info@cornwallhistoricalsociety.org.

**Free Blood Pressure Clinic** on Monday, December 14, from noon to 1 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. For information contact VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

**Healthcare Enrollment:** Pharmacies of West Cornwall will offer free counseling to

find a plan that works medically and financially for Cornwall residents. A sign-up event will be held at the library on Tuesday, December 15, between 2 and 6 P.M. Call 672-0043, ext. 114, to make an appointment. Look at [pharmacares.org](http://pharmacares.org) for the checklist of what to bring.

**A Food Drive** hosted by National Iron Bank will benefit the Cornwall Food Pantry. Non-perishable food items, paper goods, coffee, detergent, band aids, plastic bags, personal hygiene products, cleaning supplies—all donations are welcome and appreciated at National Iron Bank in Cornwall Bridge. Collections will run through December 18.

#### At the Cornwall Library

On Boxing Day, December 26 at 4 P.M., Tom Walker will read from Marcel Pagnol's "Memories of Childhood" at the North Cornwall Meeting House. Free, donations are welcome.

The library will close at noon on December 24 and will be open from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M. on Saturday, December 26.

**Candlelight Services** will be held on Christmas Eve, December 24, at 5 and 8 P.M. at the North Cornwall Meeting House. All are welcome.

**The New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast** will be held, as it is every year, in the UCC Parish House, 9 A.M. to noon. Buttermilk pancakes, sausage, Cornwall maple syrup, orange juice, coffee, cocoa, and tea will be on tap. Donations will benefit the church outreach programs. Everyone is welcome.

**The Berkshire Country Store** will be taken over by Cornwall residents Paul and Karen Bartomioli in 2016. Their lease starts January 1 and the store will open with a new name as soon thereafter as possible.

### CORNWALL CHRONICLE [cornwallchronicle.org](http://cornwallchronicle.org)

#### THIS MONTH

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