



# CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2002



## Interpreting Those Assessments

During the first half of December, Cornwall property owners received mailed notices from the Assessor's Office of their first new assessments in ten years. The letters list both the old assessment and the new one. For many people, the new figures involved modest increases of 10 percent or so. A few lucky dogs got reductions of as much as 8 percent but others stared at jumps as high as 50 or even 100 percent.

The letters offered owners an opportunity to call the Assessor (672-2703) to schedule appointments to discuss their new assessment with Lauren Elliott. She is the consulting appraiser hired by the Board of Selectmen to value every property in town. Elliott said that detailed breakdowns of the new assessment totals for each property would be available at these meetings, or upon request to the Assessor's Office. After such a meeting, or even without one, anyone who disagrees with their new assessment will also be able to file a written notice (for information, call the Town Clerk, 672-2709) and be heard by the three-member Board of Assessment Appeals. This board has the authority to adjust assessments it considers incorrect.

Assessor Barbara Johnson hopes that the hearings and the appeals process will be

completed in time for her to certify a new Grand List by January 31, but because the notice letters were late in going out, this certification may not occur until some time in February.

The new assessments are based on the consulting appraiser's estimate of the market value of each Cornwall property as of October 1, 2001. In large part, these estimates are referenced to actual Cornwall sales that took place in recent years.

As noted in a previous *Chronicle* article, residential property assessments are made up of four numbers: most likely to change from ten years ago is the basic zoning lot value, which for 2001 will normally vary from \$38,500 for lots in one-acre zones to \$42,700 for lots in three-acre zones to \$46,900 for those in five-acre zones. "Excess" acreage over the zoning requirement will continue to be assessed at \$2,100 an acre. Houses and outbuildings will be valued individually, based primarily on size and condition. A factor that may cause your new assessment to be different from your old one is that basic lot values will also reflect more or less desirable locations—from the standpoint of the market. There's no change in the policy on views: if you have a good one, your lot's assessment goes up. Overall, the assessor's target (set by state law) is to arrive at a figure that is 70 per-

cent of what each property would sell for on the open market.

As the *Chronicle* went to press, consulting appraiser Elliott estimated that the overall increase in assessments would be about 15 percent for the Grand List as a whole. Until the exact total taxable amount of the new Grand List is known, it won't be possible to calculate what impact it will have on Cornwall's nominal mill rate. But if your new assessment is more than fifteen percent higher than your old one, chances are good you'll be paying more taxes next year.

—David A. Grossman

## Our Generous Firefighters

Readers may remember that on July 31 last, a truck carrying 46,000 pounds of asphalt lost its brakes coming down Route 128 into West Cornwall and careened into the Housatonic, dangerously close to the Covered Bridge. The operation to pull the truck out of the river was handled by our volunteer fire department, augmented by members of the Falls Village and Sharon departments. And because the operation involved a hazardous spill, the CVFD was permitted to bill the truck's owners for its work. Last month a check arrived from the company's insurer, and after passing on \$5,000 to firefighters in

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## JANUARY 2002

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
		<b>1</b> New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast 9 A.M.—1 P.M. UCC Parish House	<b>2</b> CCS Reopens Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>3</b> Meditation for Mothers Every Thursday 1:15–2:15 P.M. UCC Day Room	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b> Rotary Meeting: CT Wildlife 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Inn (p.4)
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park and Rec. 7:30 P.M. CCS	<b>8</b> Blue Mt. Satsang Every Tuesday 6:30–8 P.M. UCC Day Room Democratic Town Caucus 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4) Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	<b>9</b> Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b> Rotary Meeting: Mohawk's Carol Lugar 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Inn (p.4) Cornwall Association 9:30 A.M. UCC Day Room Family Potluck & Concert 6:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)
<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Blood Pressure Screening 3–4 P.M. UCC Day Room P&Z Special Hearing 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>15</b> Deadline: Feb. <i>Chronicle</i> Copy Republican Town Caucus 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	<b>16</b> Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Film: <i>We're Not Dressing</i> 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	<b>17</b> Bd. of Education 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library VFW Post 9856 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Rotary Meeting: Adrian Lyon, UConn Torrington 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Inn (p.4)
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DAY CCS Closed	<b>22</b> CCS Closed: Teacher Workshop Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS	<b>23</b> Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	<b>24</b> Beach Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> Rotary Meeting: Arthritis 8:15 A.M. Cornwall Inn (p.4) Prose Reading 4 P.M. Library (p.4)
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b> Play Group 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	<b>31</b>		

\*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

the neighboring towns, members of the department voted unanimously to contribute their share of over \$8,000 to the Gary Hepprich Memorial Fund. The fund provides scholarship money to active firemen under 21 and to the children and dependents of all active members. A generous act by a group who already give generously to Cornwall. According to CVFD President Steve Hedden, the fund has accumulated over \$160,000, but he says he won't rest until it reaches a million and a half. Clearly we need to dig deep so the man can get some rest.

—John Miller



### Clarifying School Options

In the wake of the "second thought" referendum canceling the former Building Committee's plans for school expansion at CCS, about 80 Cornwall citizens met on December 19 to continue the search for an answer to school space needs. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway opened the Town Meeting with a motion to use \$62,000 of the still existing school bond money to help defray costs incurred prior to the voters' reversal. This motion passed without opposition and the Town Meeting was adjourned to preliminary reports from the two study groups, the Existing Site and New Site Committees.

Jim Terrall, speaking for the first committee, said that by January 3 he would have Casle's cost re-analysis of the former Building Committee's expansion plans. (Casle is the project management firm hired by the town as an impartial consultant.) He did not express much hope that these figures would be significantly different from the original estimates, but was more hopeful that the next phase—reconfiguring existing school space as proposed by unpaid consultants Suki Hatcher, a CCS teacher, and Cornwall architect Alec Frost—would yield some savings. He also proposed that Casle might suggest some minimal modifications of the present plans that would pare down costs further. Another plus from Casle's work, he expects, will be an itemized cost breakdown that will clarify how the total cost estimate has been come by.

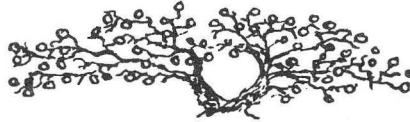
Speaking for the New Site committee, Nancy Calhoun reported on a massive amount of work—numerous meetings, interviews, and visitations to recently built schools as well as obtaining an anonymous \$20,000 grant to her committee to complete its work. Having found an available piece of land next to town-owned Foote Field, the intention of her committee is to use the grant to hire Rhinebeck Architecture and Planning, experienced in school building projects, to draw up a conceptual design of a new school on the Foote site. The subsequent cost estimates, she said, will have more credibility than a simple cost-per-square-foot figure would have. She said she is working on the potential selling of the current school build-

ing and has an agent's encouraging evaluation of its worth in today's market.

Gordon opened the floor to comments and questions, which were both numerous and thoughtful. The rancor sometimes noted over sensitive educational and monetary issues was notably absent.

The time line in moving forward from here calls for both committees to complete their studies by early February, cost figures by Casle on both plans by mid-February, a town hearing to debate the most "winnable" course to take in early March, and a preference referendum issuing from this hearing in mid-March. The appointment of a new building committee awaits a future date. In the meantime the Boards of Education, Finance, and Selectmen expect to be heavily involved with developments.

—Scoville D. Soulé



### Wandering Moose

Recent moose sightings in and around Cornwall gave me an excuse to call Howard Kilpatrick, a Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) biologist who is responsible for the deer, turkey, and moose programs in Connecticut. He confirmed that for the past five years, with the gradual return of farmland to forest, moose have been moving south from Massachusetts and are establishing residency in the Northwest Corner.

This largest member of the deer family is a sight to behold—an ungainly creature with a hump, a large overhanging snout, and a pendant "bell" on his throat. Moreover, the bull moose, with its massive antlers, is huge, standing seven to nine feet tall at the shoulder and weighing more than 1,000 pounds. Yet, for most of the year, the moose is primarily a solitary, docile creature that prefers standing almost up to its neck in swamps, bogs, and lakes eating highly nutritious lily bulbs and other favorite water plants. In winter months when the waters freeze over, it remains nearby browsing on moss, twigs, and saplings.

A moose tends to use the same route over and over as it moves between feeding and resting areas. If one day you come upon a trail in the woods that has been gouged out from repeated use and you can navigate through the overhanging brush without bending over, you may have found a moose trail. If you see a moose nearby, move out of its way. Moose don't gallop or jump but travel (up to 35 mph) with a shuffling gait. They also are excellent swimmers.

Most males stay apart from females except in the fall rutting season. At that time of year, a bull moose on the lookout for a mate can be very aggressive. Fawns, usually one to a cow, are born in early summer and stay with their mothers for two to three years before wandering off to find mates for themselves.

Throughout New England, road signs warning you of the presence of moose nearby

are not uncommon. Collisions involving moose and cars often result in severe damage and injury. Their dark brown coats and long grey legs make it difficult to spot them at night. Also, they are not skittish like deer.

Although the population is too small to warrant a hunting season, Kilpatrick, the DEP biologist, feels that someday he may be obliged to initiate what he calls "moose population management strategies" in the Northwest Corner.

—Carla Bigelow



### Welcome

Mitchell Peter to Anne and Skip Kosciusko  
 Kaylee Eliza to Cassandra Shaw and  
 Kenneth Shufelt, Jr.

### Congratulations

Judith Anne Senzer to Steven Madden  
 Clyde P. Weed to Amy V. Cherhoniak

### Land Transfers

G. Halsted Lovig and Deborah Nardi to Ruth Turner Estate LLC, house and 69.8 acres at 72 Flat Rocks Road for \$750,000.  
 William and Joan J. Lorusso and Donald and Dolores Lorusso to West Hogback LLC, 103 acres on Crooked Esses Road for \$387,500.  
 Laurie Gonthier to Hill Stream LLC, 76 acres on Cook Road for \$335,000.  
 David I. Margolis to Jacqueline Dedell and Ira Shapiro, house and 8.68 acres at 26 Cobble Hill Road for \$1,985,000.  
 David I. Margolis to Building Exchange Company, 4 parcels of land totaling 146.9 acres for \$3,000,000.  
 Frederick P. and Fay A. O'Brien to Gina Maolucci and Gregory Galloway, house and land at 28 Bunker Hill Road for \$200,000.  
 Deborah Benson Covington to John W. and Karen O'Neil, house and 30 acres at 62 River Road for \$200,000.

### Hammering Away

In case you hadn't noticed, Cornwall Village is awash in construction this year, with hammers going in five buildings, some new, some being extensively renovated or rebuilt.

At the United Church of Christ, the new addition on the back is all closed in and weather tight. Construction has stopped for the moment, though, partly because of cash flow, partly because of the need to break through to the church and the Day Room, which will happen next summer when the congregation moves to North Cornwall. Enough has been pledged to finish the church proper, but expansion of the big room in the Parish House is on hold until another \$200,000 is raised.

If all goes well, the librarians will be ensclosed behind a cherry circulation desk by spring in the new library. If you've peeked in,

you'll have seen how beautiful the exposed post and beam construction looks.

Down on Jewell Street, the house that Ed Whitcomb's father built—himself—before World War One is being completely renovated for Daniel Algrant and Elise Pettus, and they plan to move in by late spring.

A few doors up, three buildings were removed from the Marvelwood site, leaving the old Calhoun mansion and the former dining hall. Frank Calhoun's father died in 1947, and the property was taken over by Marvelwood School from the '50s until the early '90s. The dining hall, which originally housed horses, a bowling alley, and a basketball court, is not on the market, nor is the Calhoun mansion, which is now being renovated as a private residence.

The Calhoun barn, built in 1890 and long a place where you went for milk in glass bottles with cream on top, now has a large house inside it instead of hay and cows. It's become something of a tourist attraction. Well over a hundred people—from Phoenix, Albuquerque, West Virginia, England, Florence, New Delhi, and North Ireland, not to mention the Northwest Corner—have signed the "guest book," a yellow pad, with comments like "This barn ROCKS!," "Fabulous!," and "When is the opening party?!" A neighboring Calhoun wrote, "Wonderful views and craftsmanship," but the one I liked best was, "Polly and Frank would be very pleased." The new owners, John and Constance Old, are also very pleased.

—Phyllis Nauts

### More Trees Coming Down

As you drive along Great Hollow and Great Hill Roads from Route 4 you will see that there are many trees marked with a pink ribbon for cutting and you may wonder why. Closer to Clark Road you will see the tree company at work cutting and trimming.



It is to make room for new utility poles which will be 40 to 45 feet high with eight-foot crossarms on top to carry and separate the three additional wires required for three-phase electric power.

C&D Farms, which bought the Clark farm, is building a large stable there for about 50 Frisian horses. The amount of power required to operate the barn with all its equipment, heating, air conditioning, and future needs requires this larger and more cost-effective three-phase supply.

The new utility poles, and the tree work required, affect all the residents along Great Hollow and Great Hill Roads. As of this writing residents have not been notified about the new poles. Not all residents wish to give permission for the removal of their trees and brush which, in many cases, shield them from the road and adjoining properties. Some residents have no problem with the tree removal, and the town itself requires some of the trees to be cut down.

Who will pay for this? Northeast Utilities

## Letters to the Chronicle



BRUCKNER 3, BEAR 0

*There we were, 14 strong, just finishing a fine Thanksgiving dinner at the Goodfriends' house on Great Hill, when excited shouts went up from guests who had never seen a Cornwall black bear before. There one was, enjoying a repast at a bird feeder just outside the window.*

*Doors and windows were opened for a better view and to take photos, when our host started up a Bruckner symphony on the hi-fi. The bear skedaddled, fast—just like two other bears who had visited previously. When I asked our host whether he had ever tried other composers, he said, "Why should I? Bruckner always works."*

—Stephen Senzer

OFF THE WALL AT CCS

*We are the current eighth grade students of CCS. We have strong feelings that our school's present gym is inadequate. To prove our point, we have conducted a study to determine the average stopping distance of an eighth grader running at full speed, and present our information below.*

*In Science our class did several experiments to find our data. We found that after running 25 meters outside at full speed, our average was 5.5 meters per second and the average stopping distance was 2.2 meters. No eighth grader can run this fast in the gym because there is only .76 meters at the ends of the gym playing area to stop before crashing into the wall. This causes an average of four students per day, or a total of 720 students per year, to end up in the nurse's office.*

*The eighth grade hopes that this data will be used to support the struggle to build a new gym. Even though we won't benefit, we think it is*

*only fair that students of the future at CCS receive decent and safe physical education in a full sized gym where they can display their true talents. We must not stay in the past. We have to move forward. But how can we move forward when we have no room to do so?*

8S Homeroom, CCS

*Editors' note: For the benefit of non-metric-minded readers, 25 meters equals 82 feet, 5.5 meters per second equals 18 feet per second, 2.2 meters equals 7.25 feet, and .76 meters equals 2.5 feet.*

TALENT SHOW 2001

*The fourth annual Cornwall Talent Show was a great success, and we owe it to the wonderful partnership of generous ticket buyers and performers. Special thanks to the Benefactors and Patrons who helped underwrite the show.*

*Audiences are always surprised by the diversity of talent in Cornwall, and the willingness of people to give generously of their time and creative verve to make us laugh, sing, relax, and forget about our troubles for a couple of hours. This year 32 volunteered, and enabled us to raise \$6,535 toward the annual operating expenses of the Library, up from \$5,300 last year.*

*Thanks also go to Scott Cady, who hosted the evening; to Richard Griggs, who took care of lighting and audiovisuals; to Amy Worthington-Cady, who handled advance sales; to Pat and Gerry Blakey, who took care of innumerable details; and to the whole board of the Friends of the Library.*

Alexa Venturini, President,  
Friends of the Cornwall Library

has a policy that requires the customer (C&D Farms) to pay in advance the difference between the cost of installing the upgraded electrical service, including costs for tree trimming, and one and one-half times the anticipated annual power bills.

—Celia Senzer

### Counting Our Birds

The annual Christmas Bird Count took place on Sunday, December 16. It was a beautiful day and six of us went out to count in West Cornwall, which is part of the Housatonic Audubon Society area. We turned up only 25 species of birds but were very pleased with two great blue herons, two kingfishers, and three red-bellied woodpeckers, in addition to the usual chickadees, crows, Canada geese, etc.

This year I have reports from Anne Treimann in East Cornwall, for the rest of Cornwall, which is part of the Litchfield Hills

Audubon chapter's area. Forty-three species were found in Cornwall Bridge including two bald eagles, two saw-whet owls, 21 pine siskins, fox sparrows, and a catbird. In East Cornwall there were bufflehead ducks on Hart pond, a mocking bird, and golden-crowned kinglets. We all had bluebirds, cedar waxwings, and quite a few red-tailed hawks.

—Celia Senzer

### A Second Cornwall Fund

The Cornwall Association is establishing a new fund dedicated to "enhancing the quality of life in Cornwall." It will award grants to non-governmental projects in fields such as education, health, the arts, social services, the environment, and recreation.

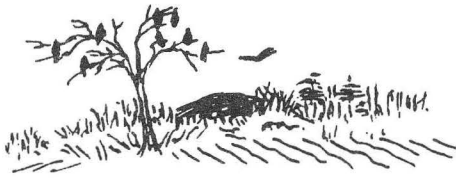
All decisions concerning the fund and the grants it makes will be made by an independent board of directors made up of Cornwall residents and property owners. The board is

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now being established.

This new Cornwall fund joins the already established Town of Cornwall Endowment Fund (see May and June *Chronicles*) which so far has received two contributions totaling \$25,000. Income from this fund's assets can be used by the Board of Selectmen for projects within the town. According to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, a subsidiary fund for the benefit of the Cornwall Consolidated School may be established early this year.

Both funds will operate under the aegis of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, and both funds will soon be publicizing their efforts as they seek contributions and bequests.  
—Stephen Senzer



## Events & Announcements

**Farmers' Market Regulations** will be the subject of a special hearing scheduled by P&Z for 7:30 P.M. at the Town Hall on January 14. The Association of Businesses in Cornwall hopes to sponsor a Farmers' Market on weekends during the warmer months.

**Winter Concert Series:** Chris and Meredith Thompson, acoustic musicians, will perform on Saturday, January 12, at the Town Hall. Nominated "Best Acoustic Act" by the Providence *Phoenix*, they sing and play guitar, flute, and percussion. Potluck supper at 6:30 P.M., music from 7:30 to 9:30 P.M. A free family event for all ages, sponsored by Park and Rec.

**Prose Reading:** Robert Terrall and Ella Clark will read from their own works on January 26, at 4 P.M. in the Town Hall. Robert has written many books, comic pieces, and mysteries, and has appeared in the Cornwall Talent Show, among other venues. Ella was most recently seen in the Talent Show as the Grandmother and Hunter in a Japanese Little Red Riding Hood. She will read about life and death in Cornwall. Sponsored by Friends of the Cornwall Library. Wine, juice, cookies.

## Happy 2002

We wish all our readers a happy and peaceful New Year and remind you to keep your resolutions achievable: e.g., "I will generously support local organizations, especially the *Chronicle*."

**A Republican Caucus** will be held at 7:30 P.M. on Tuesday, January 15, at the Town Hall for the purpose of electing a new Town Committee. Please call Vera Dinneen at 672-6740 if you are interested in becoming a member.



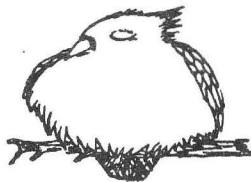
**Movie Night:** On Wednesday, January 16, at 7:30 P.M. at the Town Hall, *We're Not Dressing* will be shown. Bing Crosby is a singing deckhand on a yacht owned by the rich and famous Doris Worthington, played by Carole Lombard. The movie is based on J. M. Barrie's play *The Admirable Crichton* and has several classic Crosby songs. Also in the cast are George Burns and Gracie Allen, Ethel Merman, and Leon Errol. (1934)

**Hammond Beach Commission** will meet on Thursday, January 24, at 7:30 P.M. at the Town Hall. Open to everyone interested in the welfare and operation of Hammond Beach.

**Books Wanted** from Cornwall authors or illustrators, to be sold at the Cornwall Child Center's benefit auction April 28. If you are an author or illustrator and have extra copies in your stash, please call Ann Schillinger (672-6862) or Franny Taliaferro (672-0302).

**Art in Cornwall:** The exhibit of Richard Griggs' dancing sculptures will continue at the Cornwall Library through January 19. From January 22 through Washington's Birthday, February 22, the Library will feature presidential portraits by Cornwall Consolidated School eighth grade students. At the National Iron Bank, Michael Moschen's show of studies for new pieces will continue through January.

**Democratic Town Committee** will hold a caucus at 7:30 P.M. on January 8 at the Town Hall to elect members of the Town Committee. All registered Democrats are invited to attend and to vote. Democrats interested in serving on the committee should call Stephen Senzer at 672-0500.



**Rotary Meeting Speakers for January:** Saturdays at 8:15 A.M., at the Cornwall Inn on Route 7, and open to the public. Continental breakfast \$6. January 5, Peter Piccone, Connecticut State Wildlife Biologist; January 12, Carol Lugar, Mohawk Mountain Ski Center; January 19, Adrian Lyon, Director, University of Connecticut, Torrington; and January 26, John L. Irwin, M.D., on arthritis.

**Advance Flash:** Start composing now for the next Poetry Slam! It's on March 9 at the Town Hall. Call Phyllis Nauts, 672-6608, if you'd like to read your poems.

**2002 Cornwall Community Calendars** are in, free, and can be picked up at Baird's, the Berkshire Country Store, and the Wandering Moose. Proceeds from the sale of advertising on the calendar support the Cornwall Republican Town Committee's Washington Intern Program for high school juniors and seniors.

**UCC Christmas Fair:** The overly warm weather didn't make for much of a Christmas spirit the day of the fair, but despite a somewhat lackluster turnout, the fair netted around \$2,800, the same as last year.



## CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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Here is my tax-deductible contribution of: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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Please mail the *Chronicle* to the out-of-town address above; a \$10 contribution will be appreciated.

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