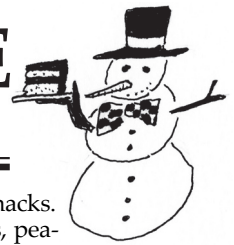




CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 25 : NUMBER 12 JANUARY 2016



A Few Words About 2015

Just 15 days into the new year on a cold, wintry night, the lumberyard in Cornwall Bridge was destroyed by a fire said to be perhaps the worst in our town's history. Most of our firefighters and emergency personnel were on the scene through the night, as were men and women from 21 fire companies as far away as New Milford and Dover Plains. Our intrepid fire marshal Stan McMillan was unable to pinpoint the exact cause. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway quoted the owner as saying he planned to rebuild, but late in the summer a "for sale" sign went up.

On a much lighter side we saluted our wonderful animal shelter, the Little Guild of St. Francis, noting that it is the largest "no kill" facility in northwest Connecticut and has adopted out more than 500 dogs and cats over the past two years.

The spring thaw brought us a very sad animal story involving goats, as many as 70 found dead and about as many emaciated at a barn on Hautboy Hill rented by Butterfield Farm. Multiple visits by state authorities found dead animals, unsanitary conditions, and inadequate feed.

At Cornwall Consolidated School, grades five through eight put on a super performance of *The Lion King* that had many

cheering their singing and dancing off-spring.

And over in the village, the Cornwall Historical Society had a fabulous year with its "Moo" exhibition that followed last year's on Cornwall in the Civil War. The society was awarded a place in the state's Standout for Excellence Program.

How many of you were taken in by Annie Kosciusko's April Foolery about the Covered Bridge being raised from 10 feet, 11 inches to 14 feet, 6 inches to accommodate trailer truck traffic?

And we should mention Cornwall daughter Devon Root, who took an eight-week leave from the Sharon Hospital ER to treat Ebola patients in Sierra Leone.

Becky Hurlburt stepped down twice, first as chair of the Board of Education, replaced by Tom Levine, and then as director of Park and Rec, replaced there by Sydney Ormsby of Torrington.

It was a very harsh winter, but good things can result, such as a great sap season that resulted in gallons of tasty syrup by major sap collectors at the Ridgway, Hart,

and Hedden maple shacks. Local growers of apples, peaches, and pears also reported bumper crops.

Another bad fire hit our town on the night of April 12 when lightning struck a tree and then somehow tunneled its way to the historic house owned by Kate and Doug Green at 344 Cream Hill Road, burning it badly. The building dated to 1868, and had been previously owned by literary critic Lewis Gannett and his artist wife, Ruth, and briefly by Whoopi Goldberg.

Ginia Gold became the fifth generation of Golds to lead the Memorial Day ceremony decorating the graves of veterans at the North Cornwall Cemetery on Rattlesnake Road. She succeeded her dad, Charlie, who passed away in January. Some of us still around remember when Charlie took over from his dad, Ted.

A few words about the Cornwall Conservation Trust's banner year. It purchased from Trinity Wall Street 300 acres running south along the Housatonic out of West Cornwall, and created a bunch of walking trails in greater Cornwall.

And then, in the middle of the summer, came the town's salute to its 275th anniversary (1740-2015). It was a multi-day celebration that opened with a Grumbling Gryphons' performance of James Thurber's

(continued on page 2)



JANUARY 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library; Karate, 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064 ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library; Toddler Play Group , 10:30-11:30 am Library; Meditation , 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229; Mah Jongg , 7-9 pm Library call 672-6874; Adult Volleyball , 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9-10:30 am Library; Meditation , 1 pm call Debra 672-0229					1	2
					♦ Pancake Breakfast 9 am-Noon UCC	♦ 3-D Printer Demonstration & Reception 2 pm Library ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	♦ Region 1 Board of Ed 6:30 pm HVRHS - Rm. 133	♦ Inland Wetlands 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall		♦ The World of Opera Woman's Society 10 am Library		♦ Author Talk & Reading Janice Nimura 5 pm Library
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
♦ Democratic Caucus 3 pm Library	♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC ♦ Jill Gibbons Party 2-3:30 pm Library ♦ Park and Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	♦ Economic Dev. 9 am Town Hall ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ P&Z 7 pm Library ♦ HRC 7:30 pm CCS			♦ Deadline: February Chronicle Copy	♦ Artist Reception M.H. Burke Quilt Show 5 pm Library ♦ Ice Skating 7-8 pm Schmidt Rink
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
	MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. DAY	♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	♦ Bd of Education 4:15 pm CCS Library ♦ Bd of Finance 7:30 pm Town Hall	♦ Cornwall Conservation Comm. 7 pm Library		♦ P&Z Planning Meeting 10 am Town Hall ♦ Oriental Rugs Talk Kristen Bedell 5 pm Library ♦ Ice Skating 7-8 pm Schmidt Rink
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
♦ Precious Treasures (Archives) 1:30 pm Historical Society	♦ Deadline to Change Political Party Affiliation ♦ ZBA* 7 pm Library	♦ Committee for Seniors 7 pm Library				♦ Ice Skating 7-8 pm Schmidt Rink ♦ Movie: <i>It Should Happen to You</i> 7:30 pm Library
31						

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallchronicle.org

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The *Thirteen Clocks*, music by Still, the Homegrown Band, a terrific and innovative parade with a formal ceremony featuring Dave Cadwell as master of ceremonies and speeches by Sen. Richard Blumenthal and our own Richard Schlesinger, plus a delicious dinner for all highlighted by barbecued ribs smoked lovingly by ribmaster Dan Evans. Later days featured a river regatta sponsored by the Housatonic Valley Association, and a dance in the Covered Bridge.

We had a local election in November and First Selectman Gordon Ridgway was returned for a 13th term.

The biggest "issue" of the year was a controversy over the Cornwall homes listed as short-term rentals on sites like Airbnb. The Cornwall Inn and the Hitching Post Motel said it was hurting their businesses.

And finally there was the sold-out performance at the UCC in a fundraiser for the library by actress-author Lena Dunham and her mom, Laurie Simmons. The audience was charmed by Lena who was gracious on stage and afterward at the library signing her book for a long line of people.

—John Miller

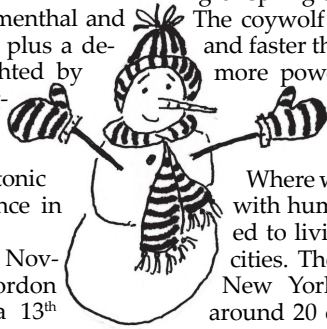
PS: Before year's end we had a new sidewalk in West Cornwall and a finished cell tower off Popple Swamp Road.

Coywolves Among Us

It has been a long time since wolves roamed the hills of Cornwall, but do not think they have entirely disappeared. A super predator has taken their place—the coywolf, or as it is also called, the Eastern coyote.

Coywolves were not originally found in Connecticut. They were first reported here in the 1950s, and for the first decade or so they were only found in the Northwest Corner. Coywolves obviously knew the best place to live in Connecticut! Now coywolves are found all over the state, and estimates put their number in the thousands.

One marked thing about the coywolf is that it is considerably larger than the Western coyote. At first the larger size of the Eastern coyote was thought to be due to the more northern latitudes it lived in, but recent research has shown the Eastern coyote is big because it has interbred with wolves. The interbreeding goes back several hundred years, to when settlers first arrived on the East Coast of America. The dense forests abounded with both deer and wolves. As they cleared the forests and brought in cattle and sheep, the wolves and settlers clashed, and inevitably wolves were steadily wiped out in what is now New England. The wolves retreated north, and fortunately they are now recovering in the Algonquin National Park in Canada.



With the wolves no longer a major threat, coyotes moved in from the West. The remaining wolves, with fewer mates, appear to have bred with coyotes. Generally when animal species interbreed, the resulting offspring are less hardy and vigorous. The coywolf is an exception. It is bigger and faster than a coyote, has a wider and more powerful jaw, and with a pack instinct from its wolf side, is capable of taking down prey as big as a moose.

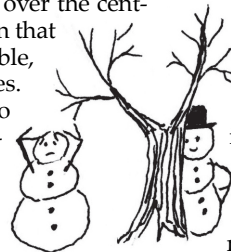
Where wolves shy away from contact with humans, coywolves have adapted to living close to humans, even in cities. The Gotham Coyote Project in New York City estimates there are around 20 coywolves living in the city. Biologist Javier Monzon studied the DNA of 437 coywolves in ten northeastern states plus Ontario and found that on average, their genetic makeup was 25 percent wolf, 10 percent dog, and the remaining 65 percent coyote.

Some nights, the coywolves' distinctive cry can be heard on Bald Mountain above Cornwall Bridge. Where wolves generally have a deep pitch when they howl, and coyotes variously yip-howl in a higher pitch, the sounds made by coywolves are all over the place, and have been likened to the music of jazz musicians. It is easy to be tricked into mistaking the call improvisations of just one or two coywolves for those of a large pack of coywolves!

So are coywolves dangerous? Recorded attacks on human are extremely rare, although a hiker was killed by two coyotes on the Skyline Trail in Cape Breton Park, Nova Scotia in October 2009. The coywolf is indeed more aggressive than the Western coyote, but even so, coywolves do not appear to want to tangle with humans. Domestic pets are another matter though, and there have been numerous reports of coywolves killing cats and dogs, so it is not a good idea to leave a pet outside without keeping an eye on it.

Nature is fascinating! Like the coyotes, humans have been evolving over the centuries. Coywolves have shown that they are incredibly adaptable, and are magnificent creatures. Hopefully we will be able to continue co-existing comfortably with them in our shared Northwest Corner of Connecticut.

—Terry Burke



Meet Cornwall's New Historian

Cornwall is home for Jamie Cantoni, the new executive director and curator of the Cornwall Historical Society. Jamie is a Housatonic Valley Regional High School graduate who found her passion for preserving history as an honors history student at Western Connecticut State University (WCSU). She also has a master's

in library and information science from Simmons College.

One of her first jobs was as a part-time researcher at the Maine Historical Society. When she returned to Connecticut, she worked for the *Republican American* and as an archivist at WCSU.

Jamie's goal for the society is to make the collections more visible to the public. She describes archiving as being the essential part of collections, just as "our spine is a reflection of our personal health." She envisages more outreach to schools, inviting researchers, and cataloging books as part of her exciting new position.

—Raymonde Burke

Land Transfers

Sandra Lea Johnson Sandmeyer and Ralph W. Sandmeyer, Jr., Trustees, to Harold D. McMillan, land with all buildings thereon at 37 Kent Road, for \$300,000.

Nancy Lay Cebik and Susan Lay Thomas to William H and Kathy A. Lyon, vacant land on Dudleytown Road, for \$150,000.

Hector and Helen Migliacci to Virginia A. Gold and Christina M. Danforth, land with dwelling and improvements thereon at 24 Todd Hill Road, for \$220,000.

Denise M. Heeter to Dean Diamond, land with improvements thereon at 277 Sharon Goshen Turnpike, for \$160,000.

Scott and Susan Harris, Richard and Jean Calsada and Thomas and Nancy Kowalski to Terry Michelle Shipp, Trustee, land with buildings thereon at 26 Brook Road, for \$130,000.

Elizabeth F. and Christopher L. Pope to Cornwall Conservation Trust, 12.093 acres on Popple Swamp Road.

Questions Linger about Short-Term Rentals

It is not up to us at the *Chronicle* to tell you which stories deserve your attention. Yet the debate over whether and how to regulate short-term rentals in Cornwall is roiling our community and threatens to do so in the months to come.

Quick review: As we reported last month, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) voted on November 5 to interpret "common and customary use" in Cornwall as limited to rentals of single-family dwellings for 30 days or more. The ZBA's vote overruled Zoning Enforcement Officer Karen Nelson's earlier conclusion that nothing in the P&Z regulations prohibited shorter-term rentals, such as those commonly listed on Airbnb. The ZBA also requested that the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) consider reviewing the regulations for clarity.

Letters to the Chronicle

Fast forward to a packed library at the monthly P&Z meeting on Tuesday, December 8. Though the agenda clearly stated there would be no open discussion, 28 people showed up, including the three selectmen and Stacey Marcin and Mark Hampson, the owners of the Cornwall Inn who originally raised the issue.

At the meeting, it took nearly five minutes just to read the names of people who had written to the P&Z about the ZBA's vote, including one letter with 140 signatures. (Letters and video of the meeting are available on CornwallCT.org). Most were responding to the ZBA's November vote. The common theme was a strong wish for the P&Z to protect homeowners' rights to rent their homes however they see fit, citing such practice as already "customary and common" usage in Cornwall.

There was no resolution at the December P&Z meeting, though the committee seemed to indicate it will take up the issue and consider possible regulation. It also decided there would be no immediate enforcement of restrictions against shorter-than-30-day rentals.

Before the next meeting, town planning consultant Tom McGowan will look into possible options, including looking at what other towns in Connecticut are doing, and present them at the next P&Z meeting on Tuesday, January 12, at 7 P.M. Residents are encouraged to weigh in by letter or email before then. Stay tuned. —Kerry Donahue



Plumbing West Cornwall's Septic Limits

On an almost balmy evening on Wednesday, December 9, 35 Cornwallians gathered in the town hall to listen to economic development consultants Goman + York present a five-phase plan for Cornwall to address septic and water issues in West Cornwall.

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway started by giving the background to the current situation, saying the lack of a developed septic system in West Cornwall is limiting the town's ability to expand current businesses or create new ones.

Ridgway then passed around a map of property boundaries in West Cornwall. This map showed the status of 14 septic systems as "good" and 46 septic systems indicating "concerns," which means there is no data available on them.

A question from the audience asked whether there was solid data on the septic

OMISSIONS IN CHRONICLE ARTICLE

We, the undersigned members of the ZBA, feel your article on the issue of rentals in Cornwall and the ZBA's decision was unclear in certain instances and that there were a number of omissions in the reporting.

Attorney Grimes was not interpreting when he "concluded" that anything that is not specifically addressed in the regulations is not permitted. He was restating the Planning and Zoning regulations themselves, "Uses of land or structures not clearly permitted in the various zones are prohibited." (3.2)

Attorney Grimes said our decision could also be based on what is "common or customary" usage in Cornwall. The majority felt that over one month, summer and year-long rentals were indeed common usage, but due to the growth of internet sites, the dramatic increase of short-term or transient rentals was a recent occurrence. It was noted, as well, that the State of Connecticut defines rental as over 30 days.

In the meeting, points were made that this was a "change of use to a business in a residential zone." We were not trying to prohibit rentals under 30 days, but to require a special permit, like B&Bs, which require owner occupancy, and take into account safety, parking, septic, number of rooms, and property values.

While you quoted and named those voting in the minority, you failed to quote and name all those in the majority: Chairman Don Bardot, Amy Cady, Nancy Calhoun, and Ann Schillinger all voted for the motion to restrict

rentals to over 30 days. The ZBA recommended that P&Z look at the issue of rentals in its entirety, and not on an appeal.

We think it only fair in reporting a controversial issue to present both sides, and not highlight the minority vote point of view.

Don Bardot, Chair
Ann Schillinger
Nancy Calhoun
Amy Cady



LEARNING FROM THE COWS

In 2012, we saw a request in the Chronicle from Debra Tyler at Local Farm; she sought "sponsors" of her cows. She was getting out of the milk production business and intended to focus on her summer camps and workshops, and Local Farm would not be able to support the herd if it wasn't selling milk. This was the answer to my prayers: we wanted to get to know farm animals, but there was no way we could swing it on our own. My son Tim is a great animal lover, and I knew that time on a farm is invaluable for children of all ages. So we sponsored one—and later two—oxen at Debra's farm. Tim is learning to train and care for Sherlock and Simeon and their friends. Debra and Margaret have been calm and encouraging and have been incredibly flexible about our weekly visits. As a result, Tim has learned so much: what it takes to control a 600 pound animal (love and a firm voice mostly); that a newborn calf looks just like a fawn; and that what you teach an animal as a calf will be remembered forever. I am sure you can't learn all this in every Connecticut town! Thanks, Cornwall. —Karen Doeblin

systems and wells. That's where a newly formed septic study group will come in. It is tasked with exploring the limitations of the septic in West Cornwall. The members, David Dolinsky, Richard Griggs, Ian Ingersoll, Libby Mitchell, Priscilla Pavel, Todd Piker, Jack Preston, Josh Tyson, and Joanne Wojtusiak, will work with the Torrington Area Health District and other experts in advising the Board of Selectmen and the town on ways to solve what has become a serious and expensive problem.

—Terry Burke

Tax Collector Notice

Pursuant to Section 12-145 of the Connecticut General Statutes, notice is hereby given to the taxpayers of the TOWN OF CORNWALL that the second half payment on the Grand List of October 1, 2014 is due January 1, 2016.

Supplemental Motor Vehicle Taxes are also due January 1, 2016, according to Section 12-71b for vehicles registered after October 1, 2014 and prior to August 1, 2015.

If tax payment is not paid on or before

February 1, 2016, said tax will become delinquent as of that date and subject to interest at the rate of ONE AND ONE-HALF percent per month or fraction thereof from January 1, 2016 until tax is paid. The minimum interest charge is \$2.00.

Taxes may be paid at the Town Office on Mondays from 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. and on Wednesdays from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. and 1:00 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. or sent by mail, addressed to: Cornwall Tax Collector, P.O. Box 97, Cornwall, CT 06753. Payments can also be paid by credit card or e-check by visiting the following website, www.cornwallct.org. There is an additional charge for this service.

—Jean D. Bouteiller, CCMC, Tax Collector

Cornwall Briefs

•Cell phone service may soon be available in the form of a router from the local cable company. This was the word from the selectmen's office that indicated cell towers—we have a new one off Bell Road—may soon become obsolete. No word on the cost.

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(continued from page 3)



•By the time you read this column, Cornwall should have a new social services director to replace Jill Gibbons who is leaving the job after 32 years of stellar service to the town. As of mid-December (when the Chronicle goes to press), the

Board of Selectmen had interviewed nine candidates.

•Finally, if you'd like to receive a monthly email from Town Hall about the comings and goings of Cornwall, you can do so by emailing cwselectmen@optonline.net. It's a new service being offered to residents.

—John Miller

Party Registration for Primary Voting

Don't miss your opportunity to vote in the presidential primary. If you wish to vote in the primary (April 26) you must be registered in a major party. To change from one party to another, there is a 30-day wait period. Therefore, January 25 is the deadline to change your party enrollment for voting eligibility in the primary. Unaffiliated voters have until April 25 at noon to enroll in a party.

—Cara Weigold and Jayne Ridgway, Registrars of Voters



Events & Announcements

The New Year's Day Pancake Breakfast will be held in the UCC Parish House from 9 A.M. to noon. This year's donations will contribute to the Torrington Community Soup Kitchen.

At the Cornwall Library

A 3-D printer demonstration and reception will be held on January 2 at 2 P.M.

Author talk and reading by Janice Nimura, author of *Daughters of the Samurai*, is scheduled for January 9 at 5 P.M.

Kristen Bedell will talk about oriental rugs on January 23 at 5 P.M.

Anniversary of Generosity

With this issue the *Chronicle* completes 25 years of monthly publication, supported by your contributions only. Keep them coming in the new year!

The first of the classic movie series, 1954's *It Should Happen to You* starring Judy Holliday, will be shown on January 30 at 7:30 P.M. \$5 per person is the suggested donation.

Cornwall Community Dance: Saturday, January 2, at 7 P.M. at the town hall. Caller Bob Livingston, with live old-time music by Still, the Homegrown Band. For more information go to motherhouse.us.

Art in Cornwall

At the Souterrain Gallery: Magaly Ohika's exhibit "Art Evolves," through January 3.

At the Cornwall Library: Artist reception for Maddie Hare Burke's quilt show on January 16, from 5 to 7 P.M. The show runs January 12 until March 16. Burke, a fabric artist who grew up in Cornwall, specializes in contemporary quilts.

The Cornwall Woman's Society meeting explores the world of opera on Thursday, January 7, at 10 A.M. at the library. Travel to Germany for a morning with mezzo-soprano Janet Walker.

Democratic Caucus will be at the Cornwall Library on Sunday, January 10, at 3 P.M. It is a state requirement to make any changes to our Democratic Town Committee slate. All registered Democrats are welcome.

Goodbye Party for Jill Gibbons: Monday, January 11, from 2 to 3:30 P.M. at the town hall. All are welcome to come celebrate social services director Jill Gibbons.

Senior Events:

Free Blood Pressure Clinic: Monday, January 11, noon to 1 P.M. at the UCC. For more information: VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

Senior Luncheon on Tuesday, January 12, from 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose. No reservations necessary.

Park and Rec

Free ice skating at the Schmidt Rink, Hotchkiss School, will be offered for eight consecutive Saturdays from 7 to 8 P.M. starting January 16.

Join a trip to the 35th annual state Flower & Garden Show in February (the show runs February 18 to 21). Contact Sydney Ormsby at prcornwall@gmail.com or 860-672-4071.



The Planning and Zoning Commission will hold a special meeting on Saturday, January 23, 10 A.M. (snow date Saturday, January 30), at the town hall to review the progress of planning in Cornwall. This meeting will offer all commissions and groups working towards making Cornwall a better place the opportunity to share accomplishments and goals.



Learn how to preserve your family letters, papers, and photographs with Connecticut State Archivist Lizette Pelletier at the Cornwall Historical Society (7 Pine Street) on January 24, at 1:30 P.M. Participants are welcome to bring their own papers, etc. Free and open to the public. Donations welcome.

The Cornwall Child Center is now accepting donations of \$50 or more for its fundraising auction in May. Contact brianacornwallchildcenter.org.

Amplification

The December fundraising letter for the *Chronicle* failed to specifically credit Tom and Margaret Bevans as the founders of the paper. They had the idea for a Cornwall newspaper, designed it, and brought out the first issue. Spencer and Bobbie Klaw and other Cornwallians began soon after. Also, in the same issue, we failed to credit Adam Van Doren for his drawing of a fisherman.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

Cindy Kirk, Illustrations
Terry and Raymond Burke and Kerry Donahue, Editors

NEXT MONTH

Paul De Angelis, Elisabeth Kaestner, and Jim Fishman, Editors
paul@abouttown.us, ekstudio@optonline.net, or jfishman@law.pace.edu

MANAGING EDITOR Ruth Epstein

CALENDAR EDITOR Chris Gyorsok
calendar@cornwallchronicle.org

CIRCULATION Nan and John Bevans

Denny Frost

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