RNWALL CHRONIC

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MARCH 1998

Library-Selectmen Deal

Striking a long-awaited bargain, the Selectmen and the Cornwall Library Association (CLA) have taken a historic step toward ending their 90-year mutual occupancy of the gray stone building on the Cornwall green. CLA has elected to leave the stone building and seek a Cornwall site on which to build a new library.

In an agreement with CLA made public in mid-February, the selectmen undertook four

- To urge the Board of Finance and the Town Meeting to authorize payment to the Library of \$250,000. This sum would compensate CLA for rights in the buildinggranted under the trust that established CLA—that the group would be giving up.
- To recommend that the Town Meeting authorize payment to CLA of \$17,000 a year for 15 years. These payments are designed to compensate CLA for surrendering long-held rights to have the town shoulder the total cost of maintaining library space in its present building. The annual \$17,000 payment will begin on the day the new library opens to the public.
- To have town lawyers draft revisions to the trust redefining the terms of the town's continuing occupancy of the stone building.
- · To recognize CLA's status as a civic organization that can, in the future, ask the se-

lectmen for additional financial assistance.

CLA accepted a challenge to match the town's principal compensation payment by raising "at least \$250,000 in charitable gifts, donations, and pledges." CLA also committed itself to raise money to acquire a site and build a new library-seeking private donations and a grant from the State Library, among other possibilities. CLA has already raised or received pledges for about \$100,000.

On the question of funds, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway emphasized in an interview that the town's financial contribution should be seen as a matching grant—payable in full only when CLA has put up its share of the funds. "We just want to spark the project," said Ridgway. "The primary financing should be private."

CLA promised to assist the selectmen in bringing the agreement before a Town Meeting-demonstrating the benefits to the community of a "greatly enhanced library and an improved Town Hall."

Ridgway and CLA Board President Audrey Ferman emphasized the significance of the agreement. The agreement, said Ridgway, "commits the town to the proposal in a big way." "The Trustees," said Ferman, "are joining Gordon in getting behind the —Charles Osborne

Hefty Budget Hike Seen

The Board of Selectmen has completed its proposed operating and capital budgets for the fiscal year 1999 beginning July 1. At \$1,420,000, the combined budgets represent a 15.4 percent increase over the current year budgets.

The \$1,025,000 proposed for town operations is an increase of only 1.6 percent over the current year, but capital projects, budgeted at \$395,000, are up 78 percent, because this year's capital budget was deliberately kept low to lessen the impact of a major increase in the Board of Education (BOE) budget.

These budgets represent the dropping of only one shoe. The other shoe—in the form of the BOE budget—has yet to drop. That will happen by March 12 when the BOE presents its budget to the Board of Finance (BOF).

And the education budget is the biggie. In fiscal year 1998 it was \$2,550,000, a figure including debt service on school bonds. School capital projects are set at \$40,000 and these dollars are already in the proposed capital budget.

What's of interest in these budgets? Well, operations are expected to continue much as in the past, with some modest increases in salaries and other costs partially offset by various economies and lowered insurance costs. Additional part-time assistance in the Treasurer's Office and at Park and Rec. is anticipated.

(continued on page 2)

MARCH 1998						
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Art Show, Peter Barrett National Iron Bank through March (p.4)	CCS Computer Lab 6:30–8:30 p.m. (p.4) Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	3 Bd. of Assessment Appeals Hearings 9:30 A.M.– 12:30 P.M. Town Hall Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Hall *	4 Region 1 Chorus (p.4) Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Bd. of Assessment Appeals Hearings 12:30-4 P.M. Town Hall Stretch Exercise Class 5-6:15 P.M. Town Hall Regional Art Show Opening 6:30-8:30 P.M. HVRHS	5 Public Information Meeting on Rte. 4 Cribbing 7:30 P.M. Town Hall (p.3) Paper Making Class 6:30-8:30 P.M. CCS (p.4)	Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Board of Assessment Appeals Hearings 5:30–8 P.M. Town Office	7 Bd. of Assessment Appeals Hearings 9:30 a.m 12:30 p.m. Town Office Basket-Making Class 10 a.m 4 p.m. CCS Art Room (p.4) Film: The Amistad Revolt 5 p.m. Library (p.2)
8 Celebrating Our Amistad History—Adult Class with Peter Hammond 11:30 A.M. UCC Parish House (p.2)	9 CCS Computer Lab 6:30–8:30 p.m. (p.4) P&Z 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	10 Republican Town Comm. 7:30 p.m. CCS Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 p.m. CCS Library	Cub Scout Parents Meeting 7 p.m. UCC Day Room CT Green Party 7:30 p.m. Town Hall 11 Cornwall Play Group 10 a.m. St. Peter's Str. Ex. Class 5-6:15 p.m. Town Hall CCS PTA 7 p.m. CCS Library	Bd. of Education Presents Budget to Bd. of Finance 7:30 p.m. CCS Library	13 Preschooler Story Hour 10 a.m. Library	Park & Rec. Baseball Registration 10–Noon Library (p.4)
15 Deadline for April <i>Chronicle</i> copy	16 Cornwall Library Art Exhib. Designs for the "CT Quarter" through 4/18 (p.4) CCS Computer Lab 6:30—8:30 p.m. (p.4) Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 p.m. HVRHS Library	St. Patrick's Day Bd. of Selectmen 9 a.m. Town Hall	18 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Stretch Exercise Class 5–6:15 P.M. Town Hall	HO Bd. of Ed. 5 p.m. CCS Bd. of Finance (with Bd. of Ed. and Bd. of Selectmen) 7:30 p.m. CCS Library (p.1)	20 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	21 Cornwall Association 4 P.M. Town Hall
22	CCS Computer Lab 6:30–8:30 P.M. (p.4) ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office *	24 Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	25 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Stretch Exercise Class 5–6:15 P.M. Town Hall Corn. Vol. Fire Department 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse	26	Preschooler Story Hour	28 Film: Home to Tibet 7 P.M. Cornubia Hall (p.4)
29	30 CCS Computer Lab 6:30–8:30 p.m. (p.4)	31			services are r Annual Cornw to be held Su Jamie Monaga	Donations of goods and needed for the seventh all Child Center Auction nday, April 26. Contact an (672-4815) or Sarah 6961) by March 31.

(continued from page 1)

The big items in the capital budget are \$100,000 toward the cost of a new pumper for the Cornwall Bridge Firehouse (the balance of about \$75,000 to be paid next year); \$100,000 for roads; \$65,000 to prepare for a mandated property revaluation; and \$40,000 for bridge reconstruction.

Taxpayers might be interested in knowing that all of the budget line items represent upper limits which cannot be exceeded with-

out specific BOF approval.

In finding dollars to pay for budgeted expenditures, the BOF has options besides taxation. Also available are Municipal Reserve Fund savings and a strong general Fund balance reflecting surpluses from previous years.

What's the timetable? Key dates after budget presentations to the BOF are March 19, when the BOF discusses changes with the selectmen and the BOE; April 24 for a public hearing; and May 22 for a Town Meeting vote, after which the BOF will set the mill rate and tell us how much our taxes will change.

—Stephen Senzer

Timber-r-r-r

George Brown, Cornwall's Tree Warden, has reported to the selectmen that 75 trees require removal lest they soon tumble onto roadways all over town. Some of these are maples stricken by old age, many of which are along Cream Hill Road. Others are blighted ash trees.

The selectmen have increased the tree-removal budget from \$3,000 to \$8,000. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway notes that the town crew will be able to deal with some of the work, but most will have to be contracted out. Gordon also says, "Normally, CL&P would have dealt with a percentage of these problem trees because they potentially threaten power lines. However, because of the expense of dealing with their Millstone atomic power plants, they have cut way back

in other areas—like tree clearing."
—Earl Brecher

Amistad in Cornwall

The story of the ship Amistad and its cargo of mutinous black slaves has become an icon of American freedom, a tale told nationally by Steven Spielberg and here in Cornwall by Jeremy Brecher in his film *The Amistad Revolt: All We Want Is Make Us Free.*

Brecher will present his film at a Friends of the Cornwall Library screening on Saturday, March 7, at 5 P.M. at the Library. His film tells the "real story of the Amistad," Brecher said, and the role the incident played in 1839

and later in framing the nation's struggle for human rights and racial justice. In a case argued by former President John Quincy Adams, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Africans should be set free.

At the Library screening Brecher will read a previously unknown letter written by a Cornwall resident who witnessed the Amistad captives' experiences in New Haven. Another local connection is Jill Bryant's great-grandfather, Leonard Bacon, minister of the Center Congregational Church in New Haven, who led efforts to free the African captives.

Brecher is Humanities Scholar-in-Residence at Connecticut Public Television, where his Amistad film appeared in February.

The Brecher film will pair with *Celebrating our Amistad History,* the focus Peter Hammond has chosen for the March 8 morning service at 10 and the adult education session at 11:30 A.M. at the United Church of Christ.

The Amistad affair was widely reported in 1839 and the issues it raised fed the Abolition movement and later missionary activities of the Congregational Church.

--Lisa Lansing Simont

CCS Mastery Tested

Is Cornwall Consolidated School academically competitive with other state schools? Surely, the yearly statewide Mastery Tests which evaluate fourth, sixth and eighth graders in math, writing, and reading should tell the story.

Not entirely, says Principal Bill Oros. Newspaper listings of percentages of students meeting state goals don't indicate the number approaching those goals, missing by one or two points. Nor, among other variables, do they factor in the number of students exempted from taking the tests, a number which certainly affects the percentages of students at goal level or above. (CCS tested 98.2 percent of its students this year as contrasted to the state average of 91.6 percent.)

Bill's take on the Mastery Tests is that they are an excellent tool to alert teachers and par-

ents to which students need extra help and in what areas. In some instances they alert the entire school to a need for more emphasis in a given discipline. Such an instance oc-

curred at CCS in 1994 when only five percent of the fourth graders tested up to state goals. Two years later, now sixth graders, 60 percent of basically the same students

achieved the goals.

One revealing in-school comparison is that of the percentages of goal achievers in a given year in each grade tested. From 1994 through 1997 the eighth grades almost always have had more students reaching the goal in every category than have the fourth and sixth grades. And, indeed, Bill cites one of the strengths of CCS to be "the continuity of teachers"—i.e., teachers teaching the same students at several grade levels, thereby getting to know each student and his or her needs. "The longer we have a student," he contends, "the better a student he or she becomes."

So how did we do in 1997, Mastery Testwise? Ah, yes. Thank you for asking. Right up there with the leaders, actually, particularly in our eighth grade. Easily in the top ten percent overall and state champs in sixth and eighth grade reading.

—Scoville D. Soulé

P&Z Okays Business-Use Change

At its February meeting the Planning and Zoning Commission held a hearing on a proposed amendment relating to businesses located on Route 7 south of Cornwall Bridge in the area formerly designated as an Industrial-Residential Zone. The area, now primarily residential, has been redesignated as an R-3 Residential Zone. However, the proposed amendment was designed to allow existing businesses to continue and to make additions and changes in conformity with specific guidelines pertaining to size, setbacks, and visual and environmental impact.

Two citizens spoke in support of the amendment, and no one in opposition. Commission members voted unanimously to approve the amendment.

The commission continues to develop regulations that will further the objectives of the new Town Plan. Still under discussion are ways to encourage business uses (like "floating zones") throughout the town. Interested citizens are encouraged to attend P&Z meetings and hearings. —Ken Keskinen

Welcome

Jacob Gould Ellen to Ingrid Boyum and David Ellen

Good-bye to Friends

Edward T. Canby Abraham A. Ribicoff David T. Stoddard Gertrude W. Strong

Congratulations

Stephen Sander to Christine MacMaster

Land Transfers

Marc and Marilyn Stewart to Furnace Brook, FLP, house and land at 55 Essex Hill Road for \$200,000.

First National Bank of Litchfield to John D. and Anne G. Coffin, et al., 14.4 acres on Stone Hill Road for

\$66,000.
John F. Green and
Thomas C.

Bechtle to Martin and

Anne Nance, house and 16.8 acres at 87 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike for \$1,025,000.

Grand List Stalls

Assessor Barbara Johnson reports that the Grand List of October 1997 has increased one half of one percent. This is the smallest increase since 1992.

Although there was about \$2,000,000 worth of new building, successful applications for reductions for farm and forest land sliced \$1,000,000 off the total. And the Board

who knew how

to drive in all kinds of

–Helen Blake Smith

weather. Schools then were

never closed due to bad

weather, but that was 58 years

ago, and this is the Space Age.

of Assessment Appeals (BAA), which begins hearing taxpayers' appeals in March, could reduce the Grand List further.

The total 1997 Grand List, before possible BAA reductions, stands at \$177,300,670. This means that if the town were to keep the mill rate at 18.25, the budget could go up only \$17,636 without increasing taxes or drawing on reserves.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

Roadside Repairs

Route 4 will get its west shoulder remodeled this spring when the state Department of Transportation (DOT) at last removes the Depression-era concrete cribbing and replaces it with graded banks.

Representatives from the DOT and the Board of Selectmen will hold a public information meeting on the plans on Thursday, March 5, at 7:30 P.M. at the Town Hall.

The area to be rehabilitated stretches between West Road (at the Local Farm barn) and Cornwall Bridge. Five sections of what now looks like giant crumbling Lincoln Logs will be removed.

Replacing the old cribbing will cost the DOT (not the town) about \$750,000, half what was originally proposed in 1996 when the plan was more elaborate. According to First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, the DOT had planned to line the roadside with concrete retaining walls which he and Selectman Jack Preston felt were not necessary and posed a traffic hazard. Over the past year the selectmen persuaded the DOT to downsize its project.

On the section nearest to West Road, the DOT now plans to use a "stone blanket" of trap rock to hold the hillside in place. Ridgway said vegetation quickly covers this surface. The next four sections along the way to Cornwall Bridge will receive the same treatment, except for two areas where the bank is so steep that a wall will be required.

Ridgway said he and Preston had also persuaded the DOT to examine the roadway for banking angles at the sharper curves. At least one curve will be re-engineered. Route 4 will be open to traffic during these repairs.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

Letters to the Chronicle

EL NIÑO NUDGES NEW ENGLAND

I'm glad that John Miller shouldered the research on the Cornwall-El Niño connection even if his respondents were breezy. Dr. Mel trusts El Niño data, but he does the waffle on global warming. He once told his audience at the Audubon Festival that if you predict tomorrow's weather to be just like today you will be right about 65 percent of the time. But he didn't talk about the oceanographic connection between Cornwall and the distant South American warm current that lurks in the ocean before its fugitive embrace of North America. This happens every four to twelve years and what it does is mess up my sap season. Usually normal sap season for Cornwall is the end of February through March. During the malaise of December, January, and early February the sugar-maker's mind is free of buckets, tubs, evaporators, sugar content, spiles, and the myriad steps of prep work. Then El Niño. The sap is running in January and early February. The maple buds are swelling, the ground frost is gone. What do you do? Tap or hold? In El Niño years you tap because winter is an unkept promise. The buckets go up early even if the weather woodchuck saw his shadow on February 2. Why else would Irv Robbins and Gordon tap so early in February? Why would I tap earlier than ever before? EL NIÑO.

If we judged wrong, what we get is not the tintinnabulation of drops of sap ringing in the pail but the clank of empty buckets banging against the trees in the cold north wind and the sugar microbes of healing doing their little dance in the sap hole.

Everything shuts down, and the relatives who came to help go back home. Ah, normal sap season! Has there ever been one?

—Phil Hart

MORE ON CORBAN HILL

I remember way, way back to 1940–41 when the High School opened, and we were bused up there. The old green bus, driven by Lewis Cartwright, came down Corban Hill every morning and afternoon. It was only a dirt road

then, and seldom plowed out.
[See Ann Peterson's letter in
the February Chronicle.]
The bus made its own
path through the snow.
It had gears, of course, that you
shifted by hand, and a

INVENTION CONVENTION

The event is happening at CCS in March. Upper-grade students must find a problem and design an invention to solve it. They must verify originality. The invention must have a catchy title and an attractive poster advertising the product.

The presentation is an important part of the score. It should include how you solved the problem, and is it safe and easy to use.

The convention is where presentations are brought together and judged. The students with the best inventions will be recognized.

—Ellen V. Hart, fifth grade

BRING BACK THE GRAND TOOTS

Ann Peterson is so right in her letter in the February issue, in which she states that closing Everest Hill Road by blocking it with a chair provided by Clarence Blake "provided excellent sledding for the Cornwall youngsters."

We arrived a little later in Cornwall than Ann, in 1966, and by then Clarence Blake's chair was not in use because the road was kept open year 'round. Keeping it open is the right thing to do. I remember when a tree blocked Great Hollow Road, and the school bus came around by Everest Hill to service the 15 families. We were all pleased that our town repaved the road.

But I, too, miss the grand toots on the best of all sledding runs. Solution: legally do what we used to do: namely, after a good snow, put a new Clarence Blake Memorial Chair to block traffic, and have a scheduled sledding time after school, while the snow plow holds off for a couple of hours. We used to park a station wagon at the bottom and lift the kids back to the top. I'll supply the chair and the hot chocolate.

Long live Cornwall, the nicest town east of San Francisco; long live a paved and plowed Everest Hill Road that can still be used, when the sun comes out after the storm, for sledding.

—Al Waller

Events & Announcements

Cornwall Homeowners who were 65 or older by December 31, 1997, or who are receiving Social Security disability payments, may be eligible for a credit on their property tax. The property must be their principal

residence and their total income, including Social Security, must be less than \$23,100 if single or \$28,300 if married.

Applications may be filed at the Assessor's Office until May 15 and, if approved, will apply to the July tax billing. Once enrolled in the program, a new application is required every two years. Forms have been mailed to homeowners who must reapply this year.

Persons receiving a veteran's exemption may be eligible for an additional exemption if they meet the above income requirements. There is no age requirement for the veteran's exemption. Applications must be filed by October 1 to qualify for the October 1998 Grand List. Application forms are available from the Assessor's Office, which is open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 A.M. to noon, and Wednesdays 1 to 4 P.M.

Region 1 Chorus to Perform: Selected music students from CCS will be singing with the Region 1 Chorus on Wednesday, March 4, in three concerts: at 10 а.м. at the North Canaan Elementary School, at 1:15 р.м. at the Kellogg School in Falls Village, and at 7 P.M. at HVRHS. All are welcome.

Alternatives to Violence Project Workshop: An AVP Community Workshop will be held on the weekend of May 1-3 at the UCC Parish House. It will focus on primary conflict resolution skills. Call the church office, 672-6840, or Peg Keskinen, 672-6486, for more information about AVP or about the workshop.

CCS PTA Fruit Sale: Boxes of mixed fruit and nuts, as well as oranges and grapefruit by the case or half case, are on sale now. Orders are due March 13 for delivery March 19. For information call David Samson, 672-0616.

Food Drive: During March the Youth Group sponsored by UCC will be collecting food and supplies for OWL's Kitchen and the Torrington Community Kitchen. Please place your contributions of non-perishable foods and paper goods in the collection boxes in local stores and businesses. Thank

Paper Making with Nita Colgate will be offered on Thursday, March 5, 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. at CCS. Using 1000year-old techniques to make handmade paper of natural fibers such as corn husks and onion skins, participants will learn to process leaves from their own garden plants into paper. Open to adults or children accompanied by an adult. Fee: \$10 (no charge for children).



Cornwall Trivia: 1

There are only three persons now acting as town officials who were also serving as far back as 1968. Guess who. (Look below for answer.) We hope The Chronicle can match that kind of continuity, but we need your constant support to endure, so please don't forget to keep those checks coming.

Park & Rec. will be sponsoring a number of activities in March:

- Tibetan Film: Home to Tibet, an award-winning film produced and directed by Alan Dater and Lisa Merton, will be shown at Cornubia Hall on Saturday, March 28, at 7 P.M. The film follows the journey of an exiled Tibetan stone mason, Sonam Lama, from his home in Massachusetts to his occupied homeland for the first time since his escape 12 years earlier. Sonam Lama and the film makers will be in attendance and a discussion and refreshments will 🥰 follow. Admission by advance reservation is \$5. Admission at the door is \$6. For reservations or information call Skip Hunt at 672-3171 or Anne Chamberlain at 672-6133.
- Spring Baseball: Registration for T-ball, instructional, minor, and major leagues will be at the Cornwall Library on Saturday, March 14, from 10 A.M. to noon. There is a \$20 fee. Call Sharon Sawicki at 672-2975 for further information.
- Baskets: There will be a basketmaking class on Saturday, March 7, from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. in the CCS art room, where students will make a swing-handle market basket. The skill level is for adult beginners, and there will be a \$20 materials fee. Call Jill Gibbons at 672-0033 for pre-registration and a list of items to bring to the class. There is a limit of 15 students.
- Game Night Canceled: There will be no game night in March.

Political Parties: The Democratic Town Committee met on February 10 to elect officers. Reelected were Stephen Senzer, Chair, and Isabelle Osborne, Treasurer. New officers are Ann Schillinger, Vice-Chair, and Hanna Grossman, Secretary. The Republican Town Committee will elect officers at its March 10 meeting.

Community Input Invited: The United Church of Christ has formed a Capital Projects Committee to explore the needs of the church and its buildings over the next ten years. The two meetinghouses and the parish house are used by many community groups, and the committee would welcome community input.

Contact Paul Baren at 672-6637.

Cornwall Senior Survey responses have been pouring in. If you haven't returned yours, please do so by March 30. If you've misplaced your questionnaire, pick up a replacement at the Town Office or the Library.

Art in Cornwall: At the National Iron Bank during March, Peter Barrett will

be exhibiting pastels and drawings.

At the Cornwall Library, Danielle Mailer's show continues until March 14. From March 16 until

April 18 there will be a show of designs by Cornwall artists for the "tails" side of the proposed "Connecticut Quarter."

The Cornwall Child Center is hoping to offer a full- or part-time summer program for children eight years old and under during July and August. Any parent who is interested should contact Pam Brehm at the Center (672-6989) or Sarah Paul (672-6961) by April 1.

Bus Service Reduced: Bonanza Bus Lines' southbound morning bus will no longer stop anywhere between Canaan and New York City. Travelers wishing to go to New York can get the bus in Canaan, in front of the Canaan Pharmacy, at 9:30 а.м. It is not known if this will change when the summer schedule is released. Complete schedules (effective January 5) are available at Baird's in Cornwall Bridge.

The CCS Computer Lab will be open for community use under PTA sponsorship on Monday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 except on school holidays. Word processing, Internet access, games, business applications, and other uses are all available for a \$3 fee. Individual tutoring, by appointment only, is available at \$15 per hour. More tutors are needed, and will be paid the \$15 fee. For more information contact Cheryl Thibault at 672-0606.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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