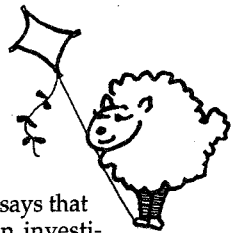


CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11 : NUMBER 2 MARCH 2001



Easing the Tax Burden

A \$3.8 million addition is planned for our school, and taxes will go up. Is there a problem, and if so, is relief (apart from antacids) in sight for stressed taxpayers? The narrow margin of victory in the school vote suggests that many of Cornwall's 800 households will find it difficult to shoulder the additional tax burden.

Moreover, at its meeting on February 15, the Board of Finance projected that, in order to meet rising high school costs and the cost of the new CCS addition, taxes would rise at a rate of about 10 percent per year for the next five years, for a total jump of 50 percent over and above the usual tax increases to meet municipal needs.

The problem of determining a fair policy for taxation is difficult in Cornwall when nearly 25 percent of the townspeople pay at least 8 percent of their income in property taxes (some even up to 20 percent), while others pay a small fraction of that percentage. In June of last year, 90 households in Cornwall applied for and received a total of \$10,000 in fuel assistance from the state. Other residents needed help to pay for food, medicine, clothing, and other social services. Cornwall's budget does not provide for these programs.

Perhaps our diverse population requires a different approach to taxation. In Salisbury, a tax abatement program has been in place

for five years. Anyone whose taxes exceed 8 percent of personal income (from all sources) is eligible for a tax deferment. Twelve residents make use of the program. State statute allows for any town to have a similar program, which requires that the deferred taxes be paid (plus 6 percent interest) when the property is sold or the taxpayer dies. Increases in the mill rate to accommodate the shortfall would be offset by similar decreases when the deferred taxes are paid.

Such a tax abatement program does not exist in Cornwall. Although the state provides abatement for some of the elderly, the disabled, and veterans, the town itself has not yet put any local options for relief into place. Homeowners may have to rely on private plans, including the use of reverse mortgages.

In other states, various relief programs are already in effect. Vermont offers a 100 percent tax credit on state taxes to those whose property taxes exceed 5 percent of their income. Some states offer partial credit, while others assess personal property at different rates, just as Cornwall offers different tax rates on farms and woodland properties. The idea of a graduated income tax was set up decades ago, but it appears that such a tax, now in effect in many states, will not soon happen in Connecticut.

Gordon Ridgway, deep in budget con-

cerns for the coming year, says that the selectmen have begun investigating the various possibilities for tax relief. "There are no silver bullets, and there is no magic out there," he states unequivocally. "This is an issue which is complicated by the constraints of state statutes and procedures. However, we do have it on our agenda."

Roberta Willis, our recently elected Representative, reports from Hartford that "there are inequities, and the ways to resolve them are not obvious or easy." Willis may be new, but she is not hesitant about taking a stand. When she uses Cornwall as her prime example of how little support some towns receive from the state, Willis says she is met by disbelieving stares from other legislators. "One of my goals is to see that Cornwall gets a fair share from Hartford. There has to be a way of raising funds based on a person's ability to pay, not by an unfair property tax."

Board of Finance member David Grossman says that a positive step now would be for the selectmen to appoint a special committee to study the issue and report back to the town. —Biffie Dahl Estabrook

The Heart as Metaphor

On Valentine's Day at CCS, 19 members of the community were honored by "Heart of the Community" awards presented at a party given by Susan Vanicky's third-grade class.

(continued on page 2)

MARCH 2001

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 Invention Convention 1-4 P.M. CCS (p.4) School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	2 Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Square and Contra Dance 8 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.4)	3 
4	5  Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Park and Rec. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	6 Blue Mountain Satsang 6:30-8 P.M. Every Tuesday UCC Day Room Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office*	7 Play Group Every Wed. 10-11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Soup and Video, Noon, UCC Day Room	8 Bd. of Finance, Special Meeting on School Budget 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	9  Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library Park and Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W.C. Firehouse (p.3)	10
11	12 Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	13 Democratic Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	14 Soup and Video, Noon, UCC Day Room Friends of the Library 1 P.M. Cornwall Library	15 Deadline: April Chronicle Copy Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	16  Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	17 St. PATRICK'S DAY
18 LaCasa Project Information Meeting 3 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.3)	19 Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	20  Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall School Building Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	21 Soup and Video, Noon, UCC Day Room Film, <i>Alexander's Ragtime</i> Band 7:30 P.M. Cornwall Library	22	23 Preschool-K Story Hour 10 A.M. Library	24  Cornwall Association 9 A.M. UCC Day Room <i>Lincoln Seen and Heard</i> 8 P.M. Hotchkiss School (p.4)
25	26 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office	27	28 Soup and Video, Noon, UCC Day Room Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 7:30 P.M. W.C. Firehouse	29 Red Cross Blood Drive 2-6:45 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.4)	30 Park and Rec. Game Night 7-9 P.M. W.C. Firehouse (p.3)	31 Bottle and Can Drive 9 A.M.-1 P.M. UCC Parish House (p.4) Benefit Wine Tasting 3-5 P.M. Cornwall Inn (p.4) April 1 Benefit Arts Festival, UCC (p.3)

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

For additions and updating, visit www.cornwallct.org

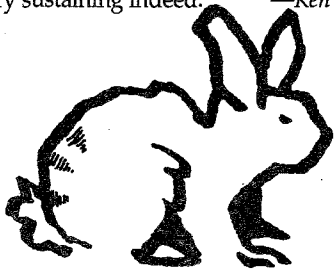
(continued from page 1)

Each student had chosen a person who helps "make Cornwall a better place." Those persons in turn were asked to name two more "important people." As a result, more than 50 were cited in the reports posted in the hall. Students introduced their personal honorees and presented them with a special heart valentine which said, "In grateful appreciation for all that you do for the community."

The third-graders used the opportunity to develop interview, research, and writing skills, and to learn more about how the heart of their community was sustained by the many veins and arteries represented by those who served the community in ways large and small, and how, in turn, the heart of the town sustained its inhabitants.

What were the honorees going to do with their colorful, lacy, home-made valentines? Barb Gold was going to put hers on her refrigerator, and Gordon Ridgway was (appropriately enough) posting his heart in his sugar house.

After the hearts were taken care of, the needs of the stomach were met at a table laden with cookies, cupcakes, crackers, and juice. Very sustaining indeed. —Ken Keskinen



Our Representatives at Work

Cornwall voters elected Andrew Roraback to the State Senate and Roberta Willis to the Assembly by generous margins, a strong indication of confidence and support. Interviews with them recently showed that the voters' confidence is justified.

Both are involved with committee work that they consider important. Roraback now serves on the Government and Elections Committee, the Judiciary Committee, the Executive and Legislative Nominating Committee, and the Regulations Review Committee. Willis serves on committees dealing with education and the environment and is on the Select Committee on Children—all areas which she knows and cares much about and to which she can contribute in significant ways. The challenge for a newcomer, Willis says, is to learn everything quickly—from regulations and procedures to the acronyms of the many state agencies. "This is hardly the part-time job it's supposed to be," Willis concludes. However, it is clear that she is finding satisfaction in the challenges and the associations with colleagues.

Even with all their duties, both of our representatives keep in mind the special needs and interests of towns in the Northwest Corner, ranging from education issues to tower placements and Indian land claims and how to resolve the Sharon Hospital crisis. Willis has introduced a bill concerning the fair pricing

of prescription drugs, with help for those who have no drug benefits.

Willis and Roraback regularly confer with each other. In the near future, they plan to hold meetings with constituents in the towns in their districts, just as their predecessors have done. Both encourage their constituents to be in touch with them. Roraback's phone number is (800) 842-1421. Willis can be reached at (800) 842-1902. E-mail is especially encouraged—for Roraback at andrew.roraback@po.state.ct.us and for Willis at roberta.willis@po.state.ct.us.

Andrew Roraback continues his informal weekday morning meetings from 8 to 8:30 at the Goshen "Goshenette." If you plan on dropping in, give his Hartford number a call first. It's clear that both of our representatives want to be in touch with the people they serve. Now we need to do our part. —Ken Keskinen

A Carnival of Animals

In his beautifully composed statistical portrait of the *Cornwall Chronicle* (see tenth-anniversary insert in the February issue) Bob Potter unaccountably failed to quantify the editors' long-running love affair with animal stories. The first—an eyewitness account of an osprey struggling to gain altitude after grabbing a large fish out of the Housatonic—appeared in the very first issue, in February 1991. Over the next ten years there were 103 more items about mountain lions, bears, black flies, and other non-human creatures, not counting routine announcements about dog licenses and the winners of the annual cow plop lottery.

To begin with, there were ten items about mountain lions, nine about bears, six about deer, and two about skunks. (Animal Control Officer Rick Stone checks skunks for rabies—he says—by holding their tails down firmly, and looking them in the eye.) There have been three items about mice (Phyllis Wojan has or had 450 laboratory specimens), three about wolves, three about raccoons, and three about turtles, including advice on how to help a turtle cross the road. There have been four items about bats, and four about beavers, two about coyotes, three about squirrels—two regular and one flying.

There were 23 stories and letters about birds, including a poem by Larry Pool about the brain cells of chickadees, advice from Marc Simont on how to cook a mourning dove, and the adventures of Princess, an engaging but larcenous crow that was eventually committed to a minimum-security facility at the Sharon Audubon Society. There were two items about cows, two about horses, seven about dogs (including those Labs on Popple Swamp Road that act in movies and TV commercials). There have been two stories about a monster (suggested name "Creamie") said to be living in Cream Hill Lake, and there have been single items about foxes, zebra mussels, an ox-in-training, pigs, a bobcat, a fisher, an ermine, a watersnake, and an elephant (a guest at Polly Calhoun's 80th birthday party).

Finally, there have been seven items about

ticks, black flies, and other bugs. One reader wrote in to say that the best way to ward off black flies while gardening is to set your hat on fire. —Alicia Eaton and Spencer Klaw

Good-bye to a Friend

Robert T. Beers

Congratulations

Gary Cruse to Kalyn Muff

Land Transfers

Karam S. Kalsi to Jane Dorfman, house and land on Pierce Lane for \$255,500.

Joseph S. Marangio to G. Halsted Loving and Deborah Nardi, house and 69.8 acres on Crooked Esses Road for \$351,000.

Margaret G. Longwell to Frances Brandon-Farrow, 6.17 acres at Town Street and Yelping Hill Road for \$65,000.

Zoe K. Nierenberg et al. to Kevin M. Foley and Donna J. Silbert, 21.4 acres and improvements at Gray Road and Town Street for \$275,000.

Clark Property— Latest Word

On January 8, Planning and Zoning received a letter on behalf of C&D Farms, new owner of the Clark property in East Cornwall. It offered a change in the original proposal of last September to close Clark Road and convert it into a private street. The letter was intended to speed up action on C&D's proposal by reducing the number of parcels on that road, which would then reduce the number of existing and future building lots. P&Z has no objections to the new proposal.

Before an application to close a road in town goes to the voters, P&Z must examine the possibility of development. Cornwall ordinances do not allow any private road to serve as a common driveway for more than two lots. C&D's property on Mohawk Roads was actually purchased as five separate parcels. In September, P&Z had tabled action on the discontinuance until it had reviewed and clarified all the ordinances regulating driveways. Now Carlos and Diane Dominguez, the owners, propose merging two pairs of those parcels, reducing four to two, and promising to access their remaining lot from the public portion of Clark Road. C&D offered to deed the town a portion of that lot for a hammerhead turnaround, and to construct it; there would be no expenses to the town from closing the road. Even if the private section of Clark Road were gated, non-vehicular access to that road would still be allowed, up to the sharp curve where the State Park ends. Watch the *Chronicle* for notice of the Town Meeting for the public vote on closing Clark Road.

—Ann Schillinger



This Land is Whose Land?

The legitimacy of the Schaghticoke tribal claims, as reported in the February *Chronicle*, remains unsettled.

Decisions on such matters are made by the U. S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, bypassing local and state authorities with their specific restrictions on land use. Adding to the confusion is the need to determine who has the authority to speak and act for the tribes. As yet, Kent's attorney has not been able to get a copy of the Tribal Nation's petition for federal recognition.

Now Senator Christopher Dodd has asked for a delay in such tribal recognitions in order to make sure that the process is handled with care and deliberation, a task apparently difficult to manage with an understaffed Bureau of Indian Affairs. Dodd has become convinced that "the federal-tribal process is, frankly, broken, and needs a total overhaul."

Whether a casino will appear in the Housatonic Meadows State Park or on the Housatonic River south of Kent School—or whether the Tribe will swap such options for a casino in Bridgeport or whether any significant changes occur at all remains to be seen. But the process will be slowed down by the need to be thorough, fair, and legal.

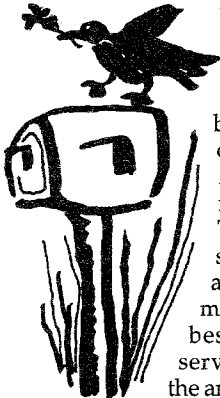
—Ken Keskinen

Events & Announcements

Park & Rec: Game Nights will be held at the West Cornwall Firehouse on two Friday evenings, March 9 and March 30, 7 to 9 P.M. Players of all ages are invited to bring their favorite board games or use those provided. For further information call Skip Kosciusko, 672-3169.

The Firehouse Skating Rink is open daily from 8 A.M. to 6 P.M. Headgear is required. Skaters who have not already done so are reminded to fill out a waiver/release form (found in the mailbox under the sign), and mail it to the address on the form.

Celebrate Spring! On Sunday afternoon, April 1, there will be a gala two-part Arts Festival at UCC, in celebration of Cornwall artists and Northwest Corner musicians. A concert at 3 P.M. will feature the Ram Miles



band Miles of Swing, the award-winning HVRHS jazz band, and our own CCS jazz band. Following the concert, there will be an Art Show and Auction in the Parish House. The art works will be sold at silent and live auctions, and refreshments from Cornwall's best kitchens will be served. Preview time for the art is 2 to 3 P.M. the day of

Letters to the Chronicle

NEWS FROM 06753

Cornwall has a new Postmaster with an old familiar face. I would like to thank all my loyal customers, friends, and co-workers for all of their support and help. Without all of you I could not have realized my dream of the last eight years of becoming Postmaster of Cornwall. Thank you, one and all.

—Caleen (Cookie) Degreenia

BUILDING HOMES IN MEXICO

Many Cornwallians have shown interest in the La Casa Project. Now we need to know just who is going to be part of the group leaving for Mexico during the last week of June. (The exact date will be set later.) We will have an informational meeting on March 18 at 3 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Our cut-off date for you to volunteer is April 1. Don't call on April 2!

If you need information before the meeting on March 18, call Jim Whiteside at 672-6018 or Jerry Blakey at 672-6516.

Our goal this year is to raise \$12,000 so that three families will have safe homes. Watch for our fund-raising events later this spring, and thanks to our best supporter, the *Chronicle*.

—Jerry Blakey

SNOWY OWL

On February 9, I saw what I believe to be a rare Snowy Owl on Dibble Hill Road just a few feet into my driveway. It was a medium, all-white owl with dark brown specks. Very beautiful. The Audubon Society will be trying to verify this sighting over the next few weeks. Snowy Owls are not usually seen this far south, so if anyone does spot one, please call Audubon.

—Ira Barkoff

AMPLIFICATION

The report in the February issue on the Cornwall Library's ground-breaking plans need some amplification. Part of the deal when we accepted the state grant was to accept the lowest, credible, responsible bid from contractors. That's as it should be. I guess my point in the interview was that the Library now doesn't have to accept an all-or-nothing low bid from a general contractor who would do the whole job. Castle Construction breaks the job up into more than a dozen biddable pieces. We must accept the lowest bid on each of these. The probability of the Library being disadvantaged by a difficult low bidder is spread out this way. All the eggs are not in one general contractor's basket.

—Lisa Lansing Simont

the event. Proceeds from the Festival will fund the Jubilee School trip to Cornwall in June. Free child care for children under 7 will be offered during both concert and art show. Register by calling Julie Beers, 567-4845. Suggested donation for the concert is \$12 for



WINTER TALES OF COTTONTAILS

The midnight scream of utter terror—
Was it real, or dreamer's error?
I leapt from bed, my bones a-clatter
To find out what, what was the matter.
There on the crest of new fallen snow,
No signs of woe, just moon's chill glow.

But daylight told a story clear:
The scream was one of desperate fear,
Rabbit track to tuft of fur,
Snow around it all a-blur,
Print of wing to left and right,
Each feather etched in snowy white,
The soundless swoop of owl on high,
And scream of creature soon to die
Explain the horror of that night—
The rabbit's cry of dreadful fright.

Another time, another yarn
Of owl oft seen on garden barn
Who keeps his watch by night and day
For tasty meals that come his way.

That morning on the snow out there
I saw a sight that made me stare:
A rabbit's head, alone and dead,
With ears erect, surprise in eyes,
Its body gone, no trace at all,
Save speck of blood and snowy sprawl.

Ah me, I thought, what skill, precision—
The surgeon of that neat incision.

—Larry Pool, M.D.

Fellow, American College of Surgeons

TIMES OF THE SIGNS

As I write this on January 26, I can see from my door a sign tacked to a nearby telephone pole pointing out for me the way to "Free Range Xmas Trees." In case I miss that one, and am desirous of doing a bit of belated pre-Christmas shopping, there are other signs around town to lead me to this entrepreneur. I think this is a glaring example of why such freeloader advertising should be discouraged. Couldn't the Town Crew remove signs of this sort like they would a road-kill possum? They're illegal. A weekend tag sale? Sure, if the sign is down by Monday.

—Matthew Collins

ages 12 and over; kids under 12, free. No admission charge for the art show and reception. For more information and concert reservations, call Peg Keskinen, 672-6486 anytime, or Pat Blakey at the church office, 672-6840 weekday mornings.

Housing Information: The Cornwall Housing Corporation announces the election of four new board members: Jim Levy, Jeanne Russo, Scott Cady, and Anne Petracek.

This year, for the first time, the Northwest Regional Housing Council will have a room for a special exhibit at the Annual Trade Fair held at HVRHS on Sunday, March 18, from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. The Council exhibit will include displays of area affordable housing efforts, including the CHC, along with the opportunity for prospective home buyers to discuss financing options with representatives from area banks.

Tax Credits/Exemptions: Cornwall homeowners who were 65 or older by December 31, 2000, or who are receiving Social Security disability payments, may be eligible for credit on their property tax. The property must be their principal residence and total income, including Social Security, must be less than \$24,000 for a single person or \$30,000 for a married couple.

Applications may be filed in the Assessor's Office until May 15. If approved, credits will apply to July billings. Once on the program, beneficiaries must reapply every two years. Forms have been mailed to homeowners who must reapply this year.

Persons currently 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 additional exemption. Application period runs until October 1 for inclusion on the October 1, 2001 Grand List. Application forms are available from the Assessor's Office, open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9 A.M. to noon, and Wednesdays, 1 to 4 P.M.

Benefit Auction for the Cornwall Child Center will be held on Sunday afternoon, April 29, at the Cornwall Consolidated School. Silent auction will be at 1:30 P.M. and live auction at 3 P.M. Anyone who has items, services, or ideas to contribute, please contact Emilie Pryor, 672-4226, or Jean Vitalis, 672-6880. Deadline date for the catalogue is Saturday, April 7.

Bob Beers

Bob was known as Moneybags in this space. He served three terms as our First Selectman and was the *Chronicle's* treasurer since its beginning. He wasn't a big talker, but he was such a steady and assured presence that we thought he'd go on forever. He died last month at the age of 87 and left a large empty space in a lot of places.

A Square and Contra Dance will be held on Friday, March 2, at 8 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. Music and calling will be by David Paton and his band. All ages are welcome. Please wear soft-soled shoes. Admission is \$5 at the door.

Invention Convention: This bi-annual CCS event will be open to the public free of charge on Thursday, March 1, 1 to 4 P.M. Ninety-one students have identified, described, and solved problems from home, school, travel, and the marketplace using scientific methods. On view will be fascinating and innovative inventions created by students in grades five through eight.

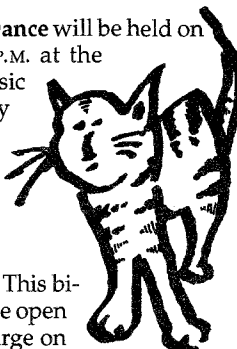
Lincoln Seen and Heard: March 24, at 8 P.M. at Hotchkiss, a benefit for the Library by Sam Waterston, promises to sell out. Tickets are \$30 for the event plus reception. Call Amy Cady, 672-0233.

The Cornwall Website encourages Cornwall businesses to provide listings to be posted on the Business page of the site. Small home-operated businesses such as lawn and snow plowing services, firewood suppliers, furniture refinishers, antique dealers, B and Bs, professional/personal services, and the like may benefit from a listing.

Please check the Business page for current examples. Listings are to be brief, with name, address, telephone, and a one-line identification of services/products offered. If you have your own website, provide its address and it will be linked to your listing. Use the Contact button to send an E-mail with your information to our Webmaster, or mail it to P.O. Box 292, West Cornwall, CT 06796.

A Red Cross Blood Drive will take place on March 29 from 2 to 6:45 P.M. at the UCC Parish House. New donors are especially welcome. Please call the church office, 672-6840 or (800) GIVE LIFE for an appointment. Walk-ins are welcome.

Date Clearinghouse: Cornwallians scheduling public or private events who wish to avoid a date conflict may call Anne Baren at 672-6637. Anne puts together the calendars for the *Chronicle* and the Cornwall website and is a good source of information about future public events.



Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Erica Prud'homme's show of watercolors, *Bodyscapes*, will continue through March 3. Beginning March 5, the Library will host the popular 4th annual show of CCS students' work. This exhibit will continue through April 14.

At the National Iron Bank, Lee Rogers will show black and white, color, and hand-colored photographs of Connecticut landscapes through the end of April.

We Got It Wrong: Last month's *Chronicle* erroneously reported that the Cornwall Library had received a \$2,500 grant from the Hartford Area Foundation for Public Giving. In fact, the grant was from the Torrington Area Foundation.

Bottle and Can Drive: "Drop In and Drop Off" your returnables to support the Girl Scouts of Cornwall. Saturday, March 31, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the UCC Parish House.



Extras for Kids Benefit: The Cornwall Inn will open its doors on Saturday, March 31, from 3 to 5 P.M. to host Cornwall Extras for Kids' annual wine and beer tasting presented by Richard Bramley of the Cornwall Bridge Package Store. Luscious hors d'oeuvres will accompany Richard's selections of white and red wines and unique beers. Tickets are \$15 per person, to benefit Extras' mission of providing funding for extracurricular activities for children who might not otherwise be able to afford them.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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