



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 8 : NUMBER 10 NOVEMBER 1998



Almost Election Day

Like it or not, Election Day is very close—this Tuesday, November 3. Voting will be from 6 A.M. until 8 P.M. at the Town Hall.

There is certainly good reason to vote in the two Congressional races if you feel strongly, pro or con, on the Clinton impeachment proceedings. Your choices are incumbent Democrat Christopher Dodd and Republican Gary Franks for the U. S. Senate, and, in the 6th Congressional District, incumbent Republican Nancy Johnson versus Democrat Charlotte Koskoff. (It's their third go-around.)

Elsewhere on the ballot: Governor and Lieutenant Governor, incumbent Republicans John Rowland and Jodi Rell versus Democrats Barbara Kennelly and Joseph Courtney; State Senator, incumbent Republican Adela Eads versus Democrat Roderick Wyant III; State Representative, Republican incumbent Andrew Roraback, unopposed; Secretary of the State, Republican Ben Andrews versus Democrat Susan Bysiewicz; Treasurer, Republican Paul Sylvester versus Democrat Denise Nappier; Comptroller, incumbent Democrat Nancy Wyman versus Republican Christopher Scalzo; Attorney General, incumbent Democrat Richard Blumenthal versus Republican Santa Mendoza; County Sheriff, Republican Rich-

ard Zaharek against Democrat Richard Levy.

Locally, Democrat Margaret Cooley is running unopposed for another term as Judge of Probate, and Republican Lisa Cruse and Democrat Jayne Ridgway will be re-elected as our very capable Registrars of Voters.

—John Miller

More Phone Tower Talk

The notice was short and the demands preposterous. That, anyway, was the reaction of First Selectman Gordon Ridgway to the package he got from A. T. & T. in late September. It requested his comments on six possible sites for 50- to 80-foot cellular phone towers along the Housatonic valley in Cornwall, mostly in Cornwall Bridge. The company wanted Ridgway's response within 72 hours for presentation at an October 1 meeting of the Connecticut Siting Council. The Council, whose powers override local government jurisdiction, is charged with deciding on the number, location, and size of any phone towers that get built.

Ridgway found time to fire off a stinging response, addressed to Siting Council Executive Director Joel Rinebold. To begin with, Ridgway wrote, the Housatonic valley "is of great environmental importance to its residents as well as to the rest of the State of Connecticut. Any degradation of that fragile en-

vironment will be opposed."

Ridgway also questioned the need for more wireless phone towers in the area. He noted that public safety agencies and town road crews already have reliable radio communications. "No resident," wrote Ridgway, "ever approached my office requesting better cellular service." Ridgway's letter cites an independent test run by First Selectman Bob Moeller of Sharon, where a 150-foot tower has been proposed for a site on Herb Road. Moeller, says Ridgway, drove from Cornwall Bridge on Route 4 to his Sharon office, maintaining a cellular phone conversation all the way.

Ridgway feels A. T. & T. is at odds with its own site investigation. One 80-foot tower is proposed for the Cornwall Bridge Fire House, where insufficient land is available for maintenance. Two sites are on private property whose owners have not granted permission for towers. Two tower sites are in or near State Forest land, some acquired under laws that intended no such use.

Finally, Ridgway recalls an unsettling phone conversation with the company lawyer who submitted requests. The company, said the attorney, "was not really interested in pursuing these valley sites, but they were being investigated at the request of the siting council." According to Phil Hart of Cornwall, who is following the issue closely as a member of the Housatonic River Commission,

(continued on page 2)

NOVEMBER 1998

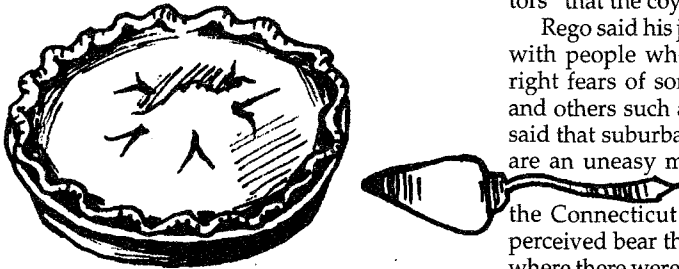
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 Hedgerows Upstairs Gallery Art Show Scott Zuckerman Watercolors through November	2 National Iron Bank Art Show Ellen Moon Watercolors through November Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	3 ELECTION DAY Vote 6 A.M. to 8 P.M. Town Hall (see above) Parent/Teacher Conferences 1:15-7:15 P.M. CCS (p.4) Park & Rec. 7:30 P.M. Town Office	4 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Parent/Teacher Conferences 1:15-7:15 P.M. CCS (p.4) Stretch Exercise 5-6:15 P.M. Town Hall Inland Wetlands Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	5 Parent/Teacher Conferences 1:15-7:15 P.M. CCS (p.4) Swing Dance Class 7 P.M. CCS (p.4)	6 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library Fun & Games 7-9 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse (p.4)	7
8	9 Cornwall Library Art Show Paul Sakren Oil Paintings 11/9-12/5 P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	10 Skating Salisbury School Rink 6-7 P.M. (p.4) Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library Dem. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. Town Hall Repub. Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS	11 VETERANS DAY Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5-6:15 P.M. Town Hall CCS PTA 7 P.M. CCS Library	12 Swing Dance Class 7 P.M. CCS (p.4) Green Party 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	13 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library Public Hearing on Cornwall Town Plan 7:30 P.M. CCS (p.4)	14
15 Deadline for December Chronicle Copy	16 Region 1 Bd. of Education 7 P.M. HVRHS Library	17 Bd. of Selectmen 9 A.M. Town Hall Senior Club Discussion of Probate Issues and Estate Planning 2 P.M. Town Hall (p.4) 	18 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5-6:15 P.M. Town Hall	19 Bd. of Ed. 5 P.M. CCS Lib. Swing Dance Class 7 P.M. CCS (p.4) Bd. of Fin. 7:30 P.M. CCS Lib.	20 Preschooler Story Hour 10 A.M. Cornwall Library	21 Cornwall Assn. 4 P.M. Town Hall
22	23 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Office*	24 	25 Cornwall Play Group 10 A.M. St. Peter's Church Stretch Exercise 5-6:15 P.M. Town Hall Cornwall Fire Dept. 8 P.M. West Cornwall Firehouse	26 THANKSGIVING DAY 	27 The Cornwall Talent Show 7:30-9 P.M. UCC (see insert)	28
29	30					

*Check at Town Office

(continued from page 1)

"A. T. & T. just wants to show the Council it has alternatives to the Sharon site on Herb Road that they really want." Hart figures that tower would be visible from his home on Cherry Hill.

Through November 9, the Council will study public comments on the Herb Road site and make its decision later in the month. (See Letters, p. 3.) —Charles Osborne



Animal Comeback

People in Cornwall talk a lot about animals, notably beaver, bears, and coyotes. The main reason for this buzz is that these animals, among others, have been very active over the last 50 years returning to the Northwest corner of Connecticut.

Fittingly, this was the topic chosen for a talk at the annual meeting of the Cornwall Conservation Trust on October 4. The speaker was Paul Rego, staff wildlife naturalist with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The background of his theme: the reforestation of the region following 300 years of cutting and clearing. By the late 19th century, 78 percent of Connecticut was farmland.

Beaver, classic woodland denizens, are perhaps the most dramatic beneficiaries of the reforestation process. By the 1840s, beaver were gone, killed outright by farmers or by the loss of their forest habitat. They were reintroduced in 1914 in very small numbers. The population grew slowly at first; in the early 1950s, there were only 120 beaver in all of Connecticut. That was enough to generate the first complaints. Today, Rego said, 6,000 beaver make their home in the state, generating several hundred complaints a year.

One of the good things beaver do is create wetlands, which control flooding and provide wildlife habitat. Black bears are drawn to wetlands—primarily for the green shoots they need in spring following their winter lay up. The dense forests of early colonial times fostered great numbers of bears, which roamed Hartford's Main Street, according to Rego. There was talk in Goshen in the early 1700s of the day a bunch of hunters bagged 17 bears apiece.

By 1840, there were no resident bears in Connecticut. There would be none until 1980. Through the next decade, more and more sows were seen with cubs, the presence of young indicating that the females had denned—taken up residence—in the state. Today, the Northwest corner is what Rego calls the "core" of the bear population. As some in Cornwall know, bears like to trash bee hives and bird feeders, and are capable of

killing sheep and goats. But attacks on humans, Rego says, "are very rare."

Shy of humans, coyotes seem rare, certainly unfamiliar, though they have been in the region for four decades. Beginning in the 1930s, coyotes spread north and east of the Mississippi River. The coyotes' spread occurred, Rego said, in response to the decline of the wolf and the mountain lion; there was "a job opening" for "middling large predators" that the coyotes could fill.

Rego said his job at DEP is largely dealing with people who have complaints or outright fears of some or all of these animals, and others such as the red and gray fox. He said that suburban culture and wild animals are an uneasy mix, and he even knows of people who are leaving the Connecticut northwest because of the perceived bear threat. Rego cited East Lyme, where there were recently 65 cases of missing cats, all popularly attributed to coyotes, which are far from numerous in that part of the state.

There are other folks, Rego says, who insist on the presence hereabouts of mountain lions. Not so, said the naturalist. There is no documentation, no tracks, and most notable, the complete absence of a sure-fire modern-age animal identifier: road kill.

—Charles Osborne

Many Bucks for Books

Even with the rain (or perhaps because of it?), this year's Columbus Day weekend book sale netted \$2,087 for the Cornwall Library.

Success is owed to more than 40 volunteers who did the planning and phone calling; sorting, pricing, selling, and packing up of books; moved heavy boxes and tables, made banners, flyers, and signs (for inside and out); and produced the publicity that brought in people from as far away as Springfield, Massachusetts and the shores of the Hudson River. The Book Sale is an annual event of the Friends of the Cornwall Library, and this year the proceeds will help support the Library's current budget.

—Anne Baren



Welcome

Angus Lee Algrant to Elise Pettus and Daniel Algrant

Good-bye to a Friend

Esther M. Palmer

Congratulations

Kenneth MacLean, Jr. to Stephanie Elizabeth Mashek

Steven P. Thibault to Oligia Da Cruz Mendes

Land Transfers

David G. and Sarah F. Hubby to Ronald S. and Nancy J. Lacko, 11.6 acres on Pierce Lane for \$75,000.

Davis F. Stearns to Mark R. and John R. Jones, house and 13.4 acres on Town Street for \$255,000.

Franklyn G. Kesl to Brian and Diana Johnson, house and 5 acres at 12 Hickory Lane for \$135,000.

Howard and Nancy Andrews to Lawrence N. Van Valkenburgh, house and 2 acres on Scoville Road for \$250,000.

Melissa Lee Andrews to Lawrence N. Van Valkenburgh 22.5 acres on Cream Hill and Rattlesnake Roads for \$127,500.

Lawrence N. Van Valkenburgh to Melissa Lee Andrews, house and 2 acres on Scoville Road for \$127,500.

L & B Industries, Inc. to Michael F. and Marie M. Savan, house and 10 acres at 210 Warren Hill Road for \$190,000.

Duncan P. and Alexandra McClelland and Nicholas McClelland to Yelping Hill Assoc., Inc., house at 16 McClelland Road for \$162,500.

Sarah M. Paul to Robert Rosenblum, house and 5.5 acres, at 187 Town Street for \$305,000.

James Taylor to George A. Boyle and Marianne Pirotta, 98 acres on Kent Road for \$375,000.

Donald F. and Joyce K. Pequignot to R. Drew and Carol S. Ohmen, house and .71 acres at 141 Kent Road for \$150,000.



An Unfair Tax System

David Grossman, increasingly acknowledged as an expert on Cornwall statistics, has once again produced a most useful and revealing report. This time he explains our property tax system and points out some apparent inequities. Given the inflammatory nature of the issue and its direct effects on everyone's pocketbook, many Cornwallians may want to pick up a copy of the report at the Town Office (price \$1).

The report highlights three fundamental problems with Cornwall's property tax:

- About four-fifths of the town's revenues comes from this one source;
- This is the original "flat tax," paid by every residential property owner at a uniform mill rate regardless of the income or total wealth of the owner.

- The methods used to administer the 1992-93 property reassessment for Cornwall seem to have shifted the tax burden onto about half of the roughly 620 resident households. As a result, in Grossman's view, "one in four Cornwall households—generally those with the lowest incomes—has been required to allocate over ten percent of annual



Letters to the Chronicle



CORNWALL CUP CHANGES HANDS

I'd like to express my sincere thanks to everyone who participated in the 1998 Cornwall Cup softball games. You helped make this one of the best events we've sponsored. Everyone was in good spirits as Cornwall Village arrived to have their team photo taken—with several dozen pairs of crutches! Team captains, Jerry Blakey, Dave Cadwell, and Bill Dinneen, did a great job organizing their players and bolstering the spirit of friendly competition.

Cornwall's Extras for Kids provided a fabulous bubble tub, and Park and Rec. set up a crafts table, which gave the younger children something fun to do. Delicious hot dogs were cooked by Sue Williamson and Dot Sandmeyer to benefit the Little League, and the CCS eighth grade was there with hats and cotton candy.

In the end Cornwall Village prevailed, defeating last year's champions, Cornwall Bridge, 10 to 8. (Perhaps it was those crutches...)

—Jill Gibbons, Chairman, Cornwall Drug & Alcohol Abuse Prevention Council

ANOTHER GERMAN VETERAN

The Cornwall Cemetery contains the remains of a German World War I Iron Cross recipient, Anton Ruettiger, whose ashes are buried near the Town Street entrance up the hill.

Grandpa gave me his medals and put together the medals and the strip of ribbons above it some years before he died. He died at the age of 100.

Grandpa was prouder of his Bavarian Cross with Crown than of the Iron Cross.

—Lynn Erna R. Niebergall

TOWERING PROBLEMS

It is still unknown how many cellular phone transmission towers between Cornwall Bridge and Kent will poke their dish-eyed heads above the western horizon or march up the river corridor. A 190-foot Litchfield County Dispatch tower between Ellsworth Hill and West Cornwall has already been approved, and A. T. & T. will share that tower. The Sharon Herb Road hearings conducted by the Connecticut Siting Council are now over. These hearings were contentious, long, and bitter and focused on disagreements over telecommunication coverage

needed on Route 7, and the additional coverage needed to supplement Mohawk and South Kent towers already cleared or existing. There were also disagreements over the number of towers needed and tower heights.

At present the Siting Council, local governments, and concerned citizens stand between the telecommunications companies and our pristine river corridor and mountains as the companies battle to extract dollars out of this "market." At the hearing A. T. & T. presented six Cornwall sites along Route 7 that could serve their transmission needs. None of these sites are, in fact, available, but the 1996 Telecommunications Act is clear. The companies have a right to adequate coverage one way or another. According to a letter from U. S. Representative Nancy Johnson, J. R. 3844, which would give local governments more clout in these matters, will not get out of committee this year.

The Siting Council will receive post-hearing public comments on the Herb Road tower through November 9 and will render a decision on that project by November 29. Send comments to: Joel Rinebold, Docket 185, Connecticut Siting Council, 10 Franklin Square, New Britain, CT 06051.

—Philip W. Hart

GOOD DEAL ALL AROUND

A happy ending to at least part of a long, dreary story has been written with the recent sale by James Taylor of 98 acres on Route 7 in Cornwall Bridge. We can all rejoice that Taylor never went through with his threat to mine gravel from his property. What is really worth celebrating is the easement on the land that is a condition of the transaction. Placed there with the support of the Housatonic Valley Association, the easement will ensure that the property will never be developed or mined, and will remain open farmland. Also part of the transaction are measures taken to protect the scenic views from Route 7, the Appalachian Trail, and the Housatonic River. The new owners, George Boyle and Marianne Pirotta, have totally appropriate plans for their property: a horse boarding, training, and riding operation.

—Charles Osborne

A CORNWALL CLAIM TO FAME

In reply to Paul Baren's letter about an epithet for Cornwall (September Chronicle), I suggest, "Cornwall, the home of Abraham Ribicoff."

When he retired, he and Mrs. Ribicoff purchased a house at the top of Warren Hill in Cornwall. The town held a welcoming ceremony in their honor at the Cornwall Library. The Ribicoffs maintained that residence until the Senator died, earlier this year.

Senator Ribicoff is buried in our Cornwall Cemetery. A handsome monument marks his hillside grave, a granite bench, inscribed as follows:

Abraham A. Ribicoff
served his state and his nation
Judge, State Legislator,
U. S. Congressman,
Governor, Secretary of H. E. W.
and U. S. Senator
1910-1998

—Ann Peterson

MOST PHOTOGRAPHED?

How about "Cornwall—home of the most photographed bridge in Connecticut"...politically correct, nonpartisan, not too much of a mouthful, and might even encourage tourism!
—(signature illegible)

WORD FROM A SISTER TOWN

I just returned from the Road Runner Café, where I sat quietly and read my latest copy of the Chronicle (which I read cover to cover every issue). Corrales, New Mexico, where I now live, has many things in common with the Cornwalls: artistic talent, community spirit, concern about land use, farm fresh produce, a recycling center, a lively Fourth of July Pet Parade (complete with llamas, goats, horses, iguanas, and ducks).

And there are some differences: adobe architecture, road runners dashing across roadways, the smell of roasting green chili in the air, and huge cottonwood trees down in the bosque next to the Rio Grande.

I am glad there are towns like Corrales and Cornwall. ¡Saludos a todos!

—Carey McDonald

income to pay real property taxes." Moreover, one in two households pays at least five or six percent of income in property taxes. It is notable that for one in four households with the highest income, the tax falls to four percent of that income or less.

What's to be done? One reaction might be "sock it to the rich." But it's not that simple. Remember that property taxes are based on property values, not income or wealth. Also, many with higher incomes own large, valuable properties, paying relatively high taxes (measured in dollars). Significantly, many older, well-to-do residents (as well as most part-time residents and all non-resident

landowners), make no demands on the town's most expensive service—education. Though this spreads the burden a bit, Grossman argues that even so the system is unfair.

All the same, there is no short-run way of changing the laws that force the towns to rely almost exclusively on property taxes. In his report, Grossman probes some possibilities to be explored over time at the state level. The report also specifies ways the town

could redistribute the tax burden somewhat from lower-valued residential properties, making the system fairer without overall loss of town revenue.

—Hector Prud'homme

False Alarms, Etc.

With winter approaching, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway called the Chronicle recently to pass along some advice on home fires, trash burning, and kindred activities.

(continued on page 4)

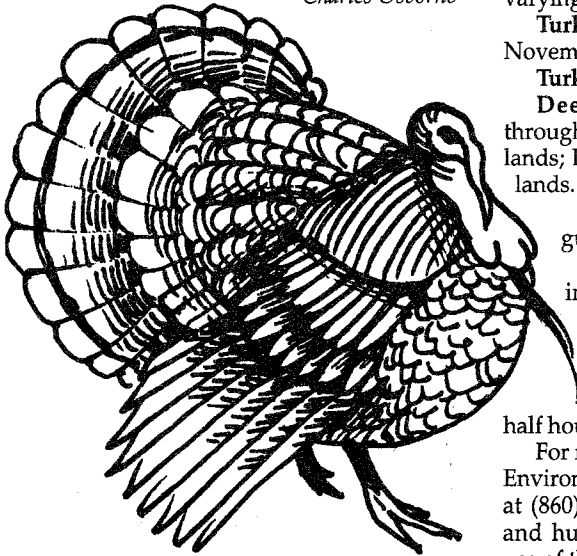


He emphasized that householders should clean chimneys and check that fire alarms are in working order. He also reminded us that a permit from the selectmen is needed to burn brush.

Maintaining fire alarms is particularly important, Ridgway said, because of the risk of false alarms. These carry obvious dangers, particularly a "cry wolf" reaction that can put the alarm owner's property at even greater risk. If owners are going to be absent, they should designate a "keyholder" who is alerted by the alarm system and can go to the property and help firefighters enter the house.

The selectmen are considering an ordinance, to be passed by a town meeting, that would penalize false alarms.

—Charles Osborne



Hearing on Town Plan

For the past year, P&Z has been working diligently on a revision of the Cornwall Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The revised plan will now be presented at a public hearing on November 13 at 7:30 P.M. at the Cornwall Consolidated School.

The plan, which is mandated by state statutes, is required to show P&Z's recommendations for the most desirable use of land for residential, recreational, commercial, and other purposes, as well as for the most desirable density of population in the several parts of the town.

Work on this plan revision was started in 1997. Through a series of open meetings, townspeople expressed their views regarding the future of the community and helped create overall goals for the Town Plan. Subcommittees studied implementation of those goals, and regularly scheduled P&Z meet-

ings along with special open Saturday sessions provided opportunities for all citizens to share their opinions and offer recommendations.

Using all of this input, P&Z, with the assistance of their professional town planner, formulated the plan which will now be presented for discussion and comment at the public hearing. Copies of the more-than-25-page plan will be available in advance at the Town Office and the Library.

—Stephen Senzer

Hunters, Hikers, Bikers

Fall is well established; we should be aware of each other as we enjoy the woods.

Small Game season: Species and dates vary. Open now and through December for varying species.

Turkey season—archery: Open through November 17, and December 23–31.

Turkey season—firearms: Completed.

Deer season—archery: Open now through November 17 on state and private lands; December 23–31 on state and private lands.

Deer season—firearms: Use of shotgun, rifle, and muzzleloader vary.

Sundays: No hunting; no hunting implements in the field.

Hours: In general (some exceptions), a half hour before sunrise to sunset for deer and turkey; for small game, a half hour before sunrise to a half hour after sunset.

For more information, call Department of Environmental Protection Wildlife Division at (860) 424-3011. Hikers, mountain bikers, and hunters should respect one another's use of the outdoors; pack your trash out.

—Jim Levy

Events & Announcements

Parent/Teacher Conferences, including kindergarten, will be held November 3, 4, and 5, between 1:15 and 7:15 P.M. Parents must call the school to make an appointment. On Parent/Teacher Conference days, A.M./P.M. Kindergarten will be a combined class in the morning with dismissal at 11:20. The rest of the school will be dismissed at 1 P.M. After school appointments may also be made for the following week.

Time to Sharpen Your Ice Skates: Park & Rec.'s Tuesday night skating begins on November 10 at the Salisbury School rink, from 6 to 7 P.M. Suggested donation \$2 per person; family, \$5 maximum. Soft hats are required. The program will run through the first week of March.

The Cornwall Child Center, in order to accommodate working parents, will continue to be open 7:30 A.M. to 5:30 P.M. through June, including school vacation days. For enrollment call Pam Brehm, Director, 672-6989.

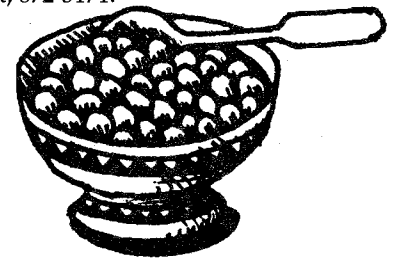
The Cornwall Senior Club will present a discussion of probate issues, estate planning, and end-of-life decisions, featuring Probate Judge Margaret Cooley and Attorney Amy Schuchat. Join us for an informative afternoon on Tuesday, November 17 at 2 P.M. in the Town Hall.

Fun & Games at the West Cornwall Firehouse. Four Friday evenings from 7–9: November 6, December 4, January 8, and February 5. Bring your favorite games or use ours. We'll have refreshments, too. Sponsored by Park & Rec. Check with Skip Kosciusko (672-3169) if weather is threatening.

CCS 8th Grade Fund-raiser: Swing dance classes, instructed by Dance-Comp LLC, will be given at CCS every Thursday (except Thanksgiving) from October 22 through December 17, 7 to 8:15 P.M. Cost is \$6 per class, with a discount for pre-registering. Requirements: bring a partner.

Art in Cornwall: At the National Iron Bank, Ellen Moon will be exhibiting watercolors beginning November 2. From November 9 to December 5, Paul Sakren will be showing oil paintings at the Cornwall Library. Opening on November 1 at the Hedgerows upstairs gallery will be a show of Scott Zuckerman's paintings of wildlife.

Dancing and Potluck: Park & Rec. will sponsor a Holiday Dance Party and potluck supper at CCS on December 4 from 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. Music by The Caribbean Beach Bums. For more information call Skip Hunt, 672-3171.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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