

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 11 : NUMBER 9 OCTOBER 2001

CCS Project: Part 2

In the month following the August 11 vote to terminate the \$4.7 million school addition, the Board of Selectmen moved quickly to fashion a framework for a new plan. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway said he hoped the framework would "lay out an orderly process, explore all options, allow input from all sides, and build broad support."

The first reaction to the vote was at the Board's August 21 meeting, where PTA President Pat Bramley and others argued for getting the plan back on track with modifications. Building Committee co-chair Phil Hart said, "It's hard to deal with the opponents since they have no alternatives and disagree among themselves," but went on to say he had no objection to adding opponents to a new committee.

His co-chair, Annie Kosciusko, expressed her disappointment with the selectmen's lack of support during the second vote. "We're middle managers, appointed and charged by you, and we heard nothing from you but silence."

Gordon defended his position. "I see myself as a facilitator, not a promoter," he said. "And it would have been hard for me a find a compromise now had I taken sides."

Meanwhile, on the Cornwall Community Network, the thinking ranged from outside-

September 11, 2001

September 11 was a day unlike any other in Cornwall. The national tragedy had immediate and lasting impact here. Overcome by disbelief and grief, many people stopped their daily activites and tried to understand the new grim reality. The sense of loss was acute due to the ties of family and friends in New York and Washington, as well as the clear and savage disregard for innocent human beings.

Now, less than two days after the attack, some signs of the change are beginning to appear here. A well-attended ecumenical prayer service was held. The local response to emergency supply and blood drives has been excellent. The Selectmen's Office is the town's clearinghouse for information about the relief efforts. Members of our fire department have volunteered to go to New York if needed. Bonds of family and friends have been reaffirmed. We stand united as Americans to work hard so that these tragedies are not repeated. Above all the victims remain in our prayers. -Gordon Ridgway September 13, 2001

the-box to off-the-planet. Among the more down-to-earth ideas was one floated by Annie

Kosciusko and Nancy Calhoun to build a brand-new school on a different site while selling CCS "for two to three million as a senior facility, netting a far bigger bang for the buck." Even assuming such a sale (a huge assumption) one wonders about the political legs of a plan that would cost more than the one just defeated.

Others proposed a massive private fundraising campaign, and David Grossman pledged \$1,000 contingent on reaching a total of \$1 million. So far there have been no signs of even one of the thousand similar pledges needed to achieve the goal.

Despite the lack of response on the network to both ideas, the Board of Selectmen took them seriously enough to announce at its September 4 meeting that it would form and charge two study groups to investigate them. A third study group would consider a new plan or revise the old one at the existing site, probably with a more specific charge.

Most attention has been drawn to the sitestudy group, which would consist of some members of the old Building Committee along with several new people. Biffie Dahl Estabrook called a press conference (the first ever in Cornwall?) at which she asked that half this group be anti-project voters, and in-

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OCTOBER 2001

		U	OBEK 2	4UU1		(continued on page 2
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	Bd. of Selectmen 7:30 p.m. Town Hall Park and Rec. 7:30 p.m. CCS Agricultural Comm. 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	2 Voter Registration 9 A.M1 P.M. Town Hall (p.4) Blue Mt. Satsang Every Tuesday 6:30-8 P.M. UCC Day Room Inland Wetlands 7:30 P.M. Town Office	3 Play Group Every Wednesday 10–11:30 A.M. St. Peter's Church Dem. Town Comm 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	4	Absentee Ballots Now Available Town Clerk (p.4)	6 Library Book Sale 8:30 a.m4 p.m. Library (p.4) House Tour 11 a.m4 p.m. (p.4)
7 Library Book Sale 9 A.M.– Noon Library (p.4) Park and Rec. Hay Ride 2–3 P.M. CCS (p.4)	8 COLUMBUS DAY, OBSERVED Blood Pressure Screening 3-4 P.M. UCC Parish House	Housatonic River Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS P&Z 7:30 P.M. Town Hall	10 Voter Registration 1–5 р.м. Town Hall (р.4)	11	Preschool–K Story Hour 10–11 a.m. Cornwall Library	13
14 Horse Show Gunn Brook Farm (p.4) Cornwall Conservation Trust Annual Meeting 3 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	15 Deadline: November Chronicle Copy Region One Bd. of Ed. 7 P.M. HVRHS Republican Town Comm. 7:30 P.M. CCS Library	Bd. of Selectmen 9 a.m. Town Hall 60-Plus Wellness Screening 9:30 a.m4 p.m. UCC Parish House (p.4)	17	Bd. of Education 5 p.m. CCS Library Bd. of Finance 7:30 p.m. CCS Library VFW 7:30 p.m. W. C. Firehouse	Preschool–K Story Hour 10–11 a.m. Cornwall Library	20 Rotary Club Meeting: Sen. Andrew Rorabach 8 a.m. Cornwall Inn. Open to Public Cornwall Association 9:30 a.m. Town Hall Voter Registration 10 a.m.—2 p.m. Town Hall (p.4)
21	22 ZBA 7:30 P.M. Town Hall*	Voter Registration 9 A.M. –8 P.M. Town Hall (p.4)	24 Green Party 7:30 p.m. Town Hall	25	Preschool-K Story Hour 10-11 A.M. Cornwall Library Red Cross Blood Drive 1-6:45 P.M. UCC Parish House Annual Town Meeting 7:30 P.M. CCS Gym	27 Hazardous Waste Day (p.4) Open Rotary Meeting 8 A.M. Cornwall Inn Park and Rec. Halloween Party 2–3 P.M. CCS (p.4) Dance 7–10 P.M. CCS (p.4)
28 DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME ENDS Ursala McCafferty Reception & Book Signing 2-4 P.M. Hughes Memorial Library (p.4) GOP Candidates' Social Wandering Moose, 4-6 P.M. (p.4)		30 Flu Shots 10 A.M.—Noon UCC Parish House (p.4)	31 HALLOWEEN Cornwall Vol. Fire Dept. 8 P.M. W. C. Firehouse			

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troduced Josie Whitney as her choice for one new member. Josie said that she had an open mind, but called the defeated project "a Taj Mahal that Cornwall doesn't need."

In other important components of the new CCS framework, the selectmen voted to exercise the option on the purchase of 4.2 acres surrounding the school and announced a community roundtable in late September, to be followed by the selection and charge to the three study groups.

On September 6, the selectman met with the Board of Education and asked the BOE to prioritize the educational needs for the project and investigate the option of building a middle school. "It's not worth considering," said BOE chair Katherine Gannett. "It's more expensive and would offer Cornwall less control." Region One Assistant Superintendent Patricia Chamberlain agreed that a middle school would not be a cost-effective solution given the number of pupils in our area; she also said that the consensus among educators is that middle schools were no longer even considered desirable.

When the discussion turned to a possible scaled back addition, Gordon was asked if he had a figure in his head for a new plan. "About one million less than the old," he replied. Barbara Gold said, "I worry about a project that is driven by some arbitrary cap rather than educa-



ing? Roger Kane, a member of the old Building Committee and candidate for first selectman, thinks we are headed for a third referendum on a scaled back plan. "I think it can be downsized successfully, and I want to continue to work on it," he said.

How would that vote go? Most town leaders feel that a solid majority will support some kind of project. But a plan that does not differ substantially from the old one will not satisfy the voters who killed it. And one that is scaled back too far will begin to lose some original supporters. And so it is not yet clear if we are moving toward some sort of consensus or another close vote.

Gordon Ridgway feels that the project will require more new elements than a simple scaling back, but he was optimistic. "I think we can come up with a project that costs less, is phased in, will be approved by the BOE—and that it will pass."—Ed Ferman

A Challenge for Ridgway

Roger Kane, a retired civil engineer and Cornwall resident for 25 years, announced his candidacy for first selectman at a September news conference. Kane will offer the first challenge to Gordon Ridgway since 1995, when the incumbent defeated Ray Augustyn. Ridgway, a Democrat, is running for a sixth term.

Kane, an independent nominated on the Republican line, is a member of the original School Building Committee. He also serves on the Board of Assessment Appeals and the Inland Wetlands Agency.

The challenger feels that Ridgway's long tenure may have reduced his enthusiasm. In a flyer mailed to the town, Kane ranked the first selectman's accessibility "as a key priority for the people of Cornwall"; Kane promised to be available outside office hours as well as during the normal business day.

Kane's flyer highlights support for small business. Ridgway, who says he hasn't yet begun his campaign, points out that the Planning & Zoning Commission controls the fortunes of small business, and promises to work closely with P&Z. Cornwall, Ridgway says, already has among the most small businesses of any of the state's rural towns.

On the dominant town issue, Kane supports "the concept of school expansion." However, he realizes the need for "a downsized plan on the present site." Ridgway, looking ahead, says he is working toward a new plan that "satisfies school needs for fewer dollars." (See "CCS Project: Part 2," page 1.)

—Charles Osborne

A Blue Ribbon Fair

The Tenth Annual Agricultural Fair was blessed with superb weather and diligent work of the Agricultural Advisory Commission. Children spent the day in the hay maze. Everyone enjoyed the taste of just-prepared ice cream, maple sugar, butter, and cider.

Sixty-six people vied for ribbons. Top ribbon winners were Isaac Pollan, Kathleen Cain, and the gardener's guru, Hector Prud'homme, who won the most ribbons. Garden Produce had 50 entries, Baked Goods had two. Betsey Preston of West Cornwall won the \$1,000 Cow Chip Raffle.

—Cilla Mauro

Images From The Past

On November 1, the Cornwall Historical Society will publish Cornwall in Pictures: A Visual Reminiscence 1868-1941, with text by Jeremy Brecher, Cornwall resident and Connecticut historian. The book, with a hardcover cloth binding and 224 pages, contains more than 400 images. Most are photographs from the Cornwall Historical Society's extensive collection. There are also posters, drawings, and other art. Finally, the book contains several maps, including a foldout of the whole town. Cornwall in Pictures was made possible, in part, by a grant from the Connecticut Humanities Council, and through the generosity of private donors. The book, available in mid-October, will be for sale at \$25.

The volume's period begins with the town's earliest known photographic images, from right after the Civil War. It ends on the eve of World War II, which changed Cornwall—and the nation—so profoundly.

Cornwall's beginnings were a story of harsh winters and brute labor. Though Cornwall was to grow and prosper, this gritty quality underlay people's lives. Long after the bitter hardship of the early years, a certain roughness continued to temper the substantial joys and rewards of life in Cornwall.

This rough feeling is certainly strong in the extensive (2,000 images) collection of photographs held by the Cornwall Historical Society. In this revealing volume, the Society has assembled some of the best of these photographs—and others—from the transitional era of dirt roads, horses, and oxen, and, later, a few cars and trucks.

Cornwall in Pictures is not only images. In his introduction and in essays that lead off each chapter, Jeremy Brecher establishes the historical context for the pictures and suggests the character of Cornwall's many venues. He points out, for instance, that New England's industrial revolution had its beginnings not in Connecticut's larger cities but in the Northwest Corner, including Cornwall, where shear manufacturing and iron production were among the earliest and most persistent of industries. Hills denuded of timber for charcoal to make iron are a constant background in the book's pictures.

To place a pre-publication order for *Cornwall in Pictures*, write to the Cornwall Historical Society, c/o Maureen Prentice, 7 Pine Street, Cornwall CT 06753. Or call Maureen (672-0135), Charles Osborne (672-6296), or Alec Frost (672-1113). —*Charles Osborne*

Good-bye to a Friend

Edward Pelletier

Welcome

Hope Aubrey Claire to Karolene and Clay Carlson

Kaitlyn Laurel to Yvonne and Martin Buckley

Land Transfers

Susan P. and Peter J. Bernard to Oscar Shamamian and Llewellyn H. Sinkler, house and land on Cream Hill Road for \$372,500.

John J. Kaelin to Joseph Bowery, 3 acres on River Road for \$5,250.

Ralph Scoville to James C. Stemm, half interest in 23 acres on River Road for \$13,000.

Benedetto Hayman and Gallucci Assoc. to Susan E. Reinhardt, 5.3 acres on Johnson Road for \$40,000.

Dennis M. and Margaret Voutas Donegan to Elisabeth A. Mason and Paul H. Cohen, 216 Furnace Brook Road for \$220,000.

Dennis M. and Margaret Voutas Donegan to Ian C. and Mary K. Elwell, 4.92 acres on Furnace Brook Road for \$5,000.

Cheryl L. Cuddy to Frank H. Bailey, 1 acre and building at 11 Furnace Brook Road for \$195,000.

"Civility, PLEASE!"

It certainly is a brand new medium—at least as a forum for town discussion, and in a town like Cornwall, still small, and still rural. Can anyone imagine a town meeting with three moderators instead of just one? Actually, these moderators (David Grossman, Lazlo Gyorsok, and Norma Lake) take turns enforcing rules against personal attacks, profanity and obscenity, and even pornography. Signing a full real name is also a rule.

To be sure, there hasn't been any pornography—at least that anyone could identify. Buthold on, folks—there have been some personal attacks and, yes, use of the F word.

Well! Be that as it may, this entire scenario is more or less a reality for more than 100 members of the Cornwall Community Network, which went up on July 11, a month before the referendum that stopped the school expansion project. The group has posted more than 400 e-mail communications on the network's message board. Anyone can join at no cost (see page 4, September *Chronicle*).

Many exchanges, both before and after the August 11 vote, showed good sense. Annie Kosciusko, co-chair of the original Building Committee, stressed the committee's concentration not only on current costs but on the question, "What happens in 10 years?" Teviot Fairservis asserted, "The assumption that all local taxpayers are able to meet increased obligation needs research..." In another vein, Fairservis, a cat fancier, reported a stray feline in need of a good home (later found).

But powerful emotions often went beyond these restrained expressions. A mailing opposing the school plan aroused the suspicions of Hendon Chubb, a proponent and frequent network participant. Chubb condemned the mailing because it was unsigned, and accused Biffie Estabrook, a leading opponent, of distributing an illegal mailing. Estabrook denied the allegation and demanded an apology. (None was forthcoming.)

Chubb and Estabrook tangled again about an event at the Cream Hill Lake Association, where Chubb alleged that Estabrook took down pro-expansion posters. Biffie admitted taking them down, but only because their proselytizing tone shattered club members' calm and repose. "Have you no manners?" she asked Chubb (online). Somehow in the flurry of Network comment on this exchange Chubb and Estabrook acquired new nicknames—"the Biffster" and "Hendim."

Moderator Grossman deplored the tendency of messages to "degenerate from argument to accusation." He entreated, "Civility, PLEASE!"

Thirteen contentious messages later, on the eve of the referendum, Hendon Chubb pointed out that the moderators had lightened their hand of late, ignoring threats of violence (for example); Chubb wondered whether all this wasn't simply free speech. Why even bother to have moderators?

Grossman defended the moderators' role, but admitted their grip had slackened, partly as the Network members gained experience.

Grossman reckoned without the appearance, after the school plan had been stopped, of a newcomer, John Miller. Responding heatedly to a suggestion involving private donations to

Letters to the Chronicle

LET'S HEAR IT FOR CELL PHONES

I know that some people are concerned about possible health risks from cell towers if erected in Cornwall. With the tragedy at the World Trade Center and the use of cell phones by so many people both from the hijacked planes and buried in the debris, it is hard to argue against their usefulness. I believe that properly placed towers, away from residences, should be encouraged rather than demonized. This part of the state suffers from many gaps in cell phone service and in the case of an accident on the road or other emergencies the lack of service can result in delayed assistance or none at all. It is sometimes also important to communicate for business or personal reasons. Cell phones have become important assets. —Paul H. Baren

TRAFFIC AND SPACE AT CCS

As school opened last month, the Board of Selectmen met with principal Peter Coope to discuss the issue of traffic at the school. Issues that had been addressed in the spring by placing an orange cone in Cream Hill Road to slow traffic, and marking out a crosswalk between the school and the cross-street parking area, had to be examined again in light of the referendum stopping expansion plans for the building. First Selectman Ridgway suggested four immediate steps to deal with traffic concerns. A gate will be placed in the dirt parking area across from the school to block through traffic from Route 128. A dedicated walkway will be created from the cross-street parking area all the way to the handicap parking area at the entrance to the school. A traffic monitor/crossing guard will be hired to work for a half hour both in the morning and the afternoon when children and parents and vehicles
are circulating. New curbing will be installed at the
intersection of Cream Hill
Road and 128 to slow traffic approaching the school.
At the same meeting
with Principal Coope the
use of space in the
school was looked at.

The selectmen had heard complaints that homeroom periods and even some classes were being held in the hallways due to lack of teaching space. This is not and has never been the case, said Mr. Coope. In the lower grades it has been true that volunteer tutors will work on reading, for instance, one on one with a child while sitting outside a classroom, and it is also true that an out-of-classroom space has been built with benches and table at the end of one hall. The selectmen were assured that while conditions at the school remain cramped, and some upper grade classes do not meet every day in the same classroom, nevertheless all classes are conducted inside classrooms. -Earl Brecher, Selectman

NAME THAT POEM?

Over all these years, this is my very first letter to you, and I hope you can help me!

For reasons which I could not possibly explain with any brevity, but which are personally very meaningful to me, I am hoping that among your many loyal readers there is one who will recognize the following few lines of poetry and be able to identify the poet or the title:

"In a coign of the cliff, between lowland and highlands,

Walled 'round with rocks, as an inland island,

The ghost of a garden fronts the sea."

—Judy Gates

public school funds, John keystroked the word that is most unprintable in family journals. Later, a repentant Miller banned himself from the Network for two weeks. (The moderators can warn first offenders, and ban repeaters for two weeks; three-strikers face a permanent ban.)

Perhaps all the contention was to be expected. But what had the Network settled? Was it meant to settle anything? The moderators threw a meeting (with champagne) in August to celebrate their 100-strong membership, but scarcely anyone came. For now maybe the last words belong to Nora Prentice ("I am so confused") and John Miller: "Will someone tell me what this is all about? i've read this three times and can't figure it out. what, for example, do "noraster" and "hendim" have to do with dominique lasseur and who put up what and took something down at the fabulous and exclusive cream hill lake assn.? who is

'beefie'? how does hendon feel about the tone of these strange messages? waiting for answers with my cats on warren hill."

—Charles Osborne

Wanted: A Few Good Citizens

Currently there are 44 members of the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department, which sounds pretty good. But it isn't good enough, according to CVFD President Steve Hedden. The bulk of the work—responding to fires and emergency medical calls—is handled by a much smaller group within the corps. That means 12 to 15 ambulance responses in a typical month, until the ski season, when the number doubles. Fire calls run anywhere from six to 18 per month, with the higher numbers coming when the often-clogged chimney flues are back in use and catching fire.

Why am I telling you all this? Because the CVFD needs new blood, dedicated men and women to join a precious and often under-appreciated organization. Volunteering in this case should not be done lightly. State-mandated training runs into many hours: 120 over six months for firefighters and 180 for the EMS. There are also monthly meetings and drills. Everyone carries a pager, which we've all heard go off on occasion at town meetings,

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or over breakfast at the Wandering Moose.

No one joins the CVFD for the glory or the money. After all, it is a volunteer organization. However, there are a few benefits for members, such as the Gary Hepprich Scholarship Fund, which provides college tuition assistance for eligible members and their families. In addition, after five years in the department, the town provides \$1,000 per year towards either a retirement fund or tax relief for each member. It's Cornwall's small way of saying "thank you." So if you are interested in joining up, just talk to any member of the fire department. —John Miller

Events & Announcements

Art in Cornwall: On October 7, from 1 to 3 P.M., the Cornwall Library will be pleased to accept your ready-to-hang entries for the "Gala Exhibition and Competition for the Design of the New Addition to the Cornwall Consolidated School." A jury of prominent citizens will award prizes on October 14 at 4 P.M.

At the National Iron Bank, Danielle Mailer will exhibit her lyrical images in October.

At the Cornwall Arts Collection, 7 Railroad Street, there will be a reception on October 7 from 5 to 7 P.M. to mark the opening of a show featuring work of local artists that will run through December.

Absentee Ballots for the November 6 town election are available beginning October 5 from the Town Clerk. Any elector who will not be able to vote in person on election day may apply for a ballot. Call 672-2709 for further information.



How to Help

This month, please consider sending a donation to one of the following: American Red Cross, 430 17th St. NW, Washington, DC 20026; United Way of New York City, 2 Park Ave., New York, NY 10016; The New York Times 9/ 11 Neediest Fund, P.O. Box 5193, General Post Office, New York, NY 10087.

Registering to Vote: Registrars of Voters will hold sessions at the Town Hall on the following dates for anyone who wishes to register before the October 23 deadline for the November election: October 2, 9 A.M. to 1 P.M.; October 10, 1 to 5 P.M.; October 20, 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.; October 23, 9 A.M. to 8 P.M. Call Jayne Ridgway, 672-0279.

Annual Park and Rec. Hay Ride will be on Sunday, October 7, from 2 to 3 P.M. Peter Russ and the Scoville brothers will be at CCS ready to take young and old up Cream Hill Road. Cider, doughnuts, and apples will be served after the ride.

Two Important Health Events: There will be a 60-Plus Wellness Screening on Tuesday, Ocober 16, at the UCC Parish House, offering a wide range of tests including hearing, vision, electrocardiogram, urinalysis, Pap/pelvic/breast, prostate, and others. Suggested donation: \$25. An appointment is necessary. Call Jill Gibbons, 672-2603.

On Tuesday, October 30, from 10 A.M. to noon at the Parish House, Torrington Area Health District representatives will offer flu and pneumonia vaccines. There is a nominal fee; no appointment is necessary.

Two Park and Rec. Halloween Events will be held at CCS on Saturday, October 27. The first, from 2 to 3 P.M., is a party for children, pre-school through fourth grade. There will be a costume parade, haunted house, games, and a craft table especially for pre-schoolers, with treats for all. Come in costume and join the fun! That evening, from 7 to 10 P.M., there will be a dance for fifth through eighth graders. Parent volunteers are needed for both events; call Deirdre Fischer, 672-1123.

Household Hazardous Waste collection day is Saturday, October 27, on which you can take your toxic and corrosive stuff to Torrington for disposal. You must pre-register and get directions by calling the Selectmen's Office at 672-4959.

Friends of the Library Book Sale will be held Saturday, October 6, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. and Sunday, October 7, 9 A.M. to noon. On Saturday, from 8:30 to 9 A.M., early birds will be admitted for \$10. On Sunday, browsers will be able to fill a bag with books for \$3. Volunteers who would like to help sort or sell, please call Anne Baren at 672-6637.

Cornwall House Tour 2001: Six Cornwall homes will be open for touring on Saturday, October 6, from 11 A.M. to 4 P.M., for benefit of Prime Time House. Tickets are \$25 for the tour and \$50 for the tour and reception. For ticket and volunteer information, call Amy Cady at 672-0233.

Horse Show: On Sunday, October 14, Gunn Brook Farm will hold its third annual Autumnfest Horse Show. Beginning at 9 A.M. the show is open to both spectators and participants and has a full schedule of events for every English and Western rider. Call Marianne Pirotta at 672-0203.

The Annual Town Meeting will feature an explanation of an unusual item, i.e., a property tax relief proposal that will be the first such program in any Connecticut town. Approval of the five-year capital spending plan will also be on the agenda of this important meeting. October 26 at 7:30 P.M., CCS gym.

Hughes Memorial Library will hold a reception and book signing October 28, 2 to 4 P.M., for former West Cornwall postmaster Ursula McCafferty, who has written a memoir titled Acorn Academy.

Masquerade Ball will be held for the benefit of the Cornwall Volunteer Fire Department on November 3 from 8 P.M. to midnight. Costumes encouraged but not necessary. Music by Rock N Roll Heaven. \$20 per couple, BYOB, adults only. Call 672-0042 for more information.

Forest Forensics: Tom Wessels, ecology professor and author of Reading the Forested Landscape, has long impressed New Englanders with his vivid photographs and intimate knowledge of the forest. Come to the Cornwall Conservation Trust's Annual Meeting featuring Mr. Wessels' talk and slide show. Sunday, October 14, 3 P.M. at Town Hall. Call Lib at 672-2407 for more information.

GOP Get-Together: The Republican Town Committee will hold a "candidates' social" with refreshments, from 4 to 6 P.M., October 28, at the Wandering Moose.



CORNWALL CHRONICLE

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