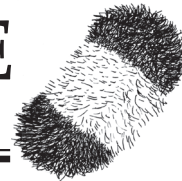


CORNWALL CHRONICLE

VOLUME 26 : NUMBER 8 SEPTEMBER 2016



P&Z

Tables Short-Term Rentals

For the past year, the town's Planning and Zoning Commission has been looking into whether permitting short-term rentals in Cornwall, like those posted on sites such as Airbnb, requires an amendment to the town's zoning regulations. At the July meeting, there was some resolution to this at times heated debate, though not the kind that lends a lot of clarity. The commission voted unanimously to table further discussion on amending zoning regulations, instead opting to wait for regulatory action at the state level and to continue gathering information on a best approach.

Citing "considerable time and expense" spent to understand the issue, the resolution mentions a key problem of enforcement. With a zoning commission comprised of volunteers and one part-time paid enforcement staff person, Cornwall lacks the "budgetary and staff resources to monitor and enforce" any change that might restrict these types of rentals.

Stacey Marcin and Mark Hampson, co-owners of the Cornwall Inn, had gone before the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) in November to urge the town to take action, in part because increased competition from Airbnb had cut into the inn's business.

(ZBA agreed with their position, ruling that rentals under a month require a special permit.) Marcin said she and her husband have backed off since then, because they were dealing with damage after a car drove into the inn in late December. The Cornwall Inn itself now lists two rooms on Airbnb. Still, Marcin says Cornwall missed a chance to be a leader on this issue.

Commission chairman David Colbert disagreed. He said Cornwall has taken leadership positions on other zoning issues and would have done so on this issue if there was a clear path to take. Regulating sites like Airbnb is challenging towns, cities, and states across the country, and the landscape is changing too quickly. For example, Colbert cited a June agreement between Connecticut and Airbnb where Airbnb will collect the state's 15 percent hotel tax on behalf of people who rent properties through the website. Colbert said, "We could spend an awful lot of time trying to break new ground and set precedent and craft a regulation that other towns might want or might not want to emulate. In the meantime, the ground is shifting under our feet."

The question of whether short-term rentals are permitted remains

unresolved for the time being. But it seems unlikely that the ZBA ruling will be enforced unless there is a complaint.

—Kerry Donahue

Understanding Your New Assessment

Within the next few weeks you'll receive your new property assessment. What follows may help you figure it out.

State law mandates a revaluation every five years. The goal is to capture changes in value so that homeowners pay their fair share of property taxes, which provide almost all of the town's revenues. The last revaluation was in 2011, at the bottom of the real estate market. Home values had declined 33 percent nationally and 14 percent in Cornwall. Since then, values have recovered nationally, but not so in Cornwall, we learned from assessor Barbara Bigos, who was finishing her third revaluation for us when we spoke to her in July.

"The market improved in the last year or two, but we have a lot of average, working-class homes that are hard to sell," she said. "Although interest rates are low, it's still difficult to get a mortgage on these. We

(continued on page 2)



SEPTEMBER 2016

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
Every Week This Month: Mondays: Yoga, 8:30-10 am Library Karate , 6:30-7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Tuesdays: Zumba, 5:30-6:30 pm Library Wednesdays: Tai Chi, 5-7 pm Town Hall call 672-0064 Introduction to Fiction , 6:30-8:30 pm Library Stitch 'n Spin , 7:15-8:30 pm UCC ♦ Thursdays: Pilates, 8:30-9:30 am Library Toddler Play Group , 10:30-11:30 am Library Meditation , 4-5 pm call Debra 672-0229 Zumba , 5:30-6:30 pm Library Mah Jongg , 7-9 pm Library call 672-6874 Adult Volleyball , 7:30 pm CCS gym ♦ Fridays: Yoga 8:30-10 am Library ♦ Saturdays: Farmers' Market, 9 am-12:30 pm Wish House ♦ Sundays: Yoga 9-10:30 am Library Meditation , 1 pm call Debra 672-0229				1 NEW	2	3 ♦ Book Signing Sally Cook 10 am-Noon Farm Market ♦ Community Contra Dance 7 pm Town Hall
4 ♦ Turtle Trot Fundraising Walk Noon Cornwall Village UCC	5 LABOR DAY	6 ♦ Inland Wetlands 7 pm Town Hall ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall ♦ Agricultural Advisory Committee 7:30 pm Town Office	7	8	9 1st Q	10 ♦ Cornwall Agricultural Fair 10 am-4 pm ♦ Animal Blessing 11 am Town Green
11 ♦ Rain Date Agricultural Fair 10 am-4 pm	12 ♦ Free Blood Pressure Clinic Noon-1 pm UCC Day Room ♦ Region 1 Board of Ed 6:30 pm HVRHS Rm. 133 ♦ Park and Rec 7:30 pm Town Hall	13 ♦ Economic Dev. Commission 9 am Town Hall ♦ Senior Luncheon 11:30 am-1 pm Wandering Moose ♦ Planning & Zoning 7 pm Library ♦ Housatonic River Commission 7:30 pm CCS	14	15 ♦ Deadline: October Chronicle Copy ♦ Knitting Group Hats/Cancer Patients 10 am Library ♦ Cornwall Conservation Comm. 7 pm Library	16 FULL	17 ♦ Bd. of Assessment Appeals 9-10 am Town Office ♦ Lasagna Workshop 10:30 am-1:30 pm Local Farm ♦ Chronicle 25th Anniv. Reception 4-6 pm Library ♦ Cornwall Assoc. Annual Mtg./Newcomers Tea 4-6 pm Library
18 ♦ The Write Stuff Readings 4 pm Town Hall	19	20 ♦ Board of Selectmen 7:30 pm Town Hall	21 ♦ Board of Education 4:15 pm CCS Library ♦ Board of Finance 7:30 pm Town Hall	22	23 4th Q	24 ♦ Keeping a Family Cow 10 am-1 pm Local Farm ♦ Author Talk: Beth Gutcheon 5 pm Library
25	26 ♦ ZBA* 7 pm Library	27	28	29 ♦ Red Cross Blood Drive 1-6 pm UCC	30 NEW	

*Check with Zoning Office—672-4957

(continued from page 1)

also have many homes that have fallen into disrepair, possibly because some are owned by elderly folk. The value of these will be decreasing, pulling our list down."

On the other hand, values have held up or improved in some areas. Homes with weekender appeal show increased values, "but these days the house has to have everything: privacy, views, and completed renovation," Barbara said.

"Buyers are no longer willing to do much work on homes." More upsides: Land and building lots are finally selling. Foreclosures that were pulling the market down through 2013 are now cleared out.

Antique homes still show great appeal, but contemporary homes also do OK here. "Cornwall has a more eclectic mix of weekender buyers than some towns in the area: not all financial people, some artistic folks who are willing to consider a modern or even funky property."

Keep the following in mind when you open the envelope. State law requires assessors to value property at 70 percent of market value. Divide your assessment by (.7) to calculate the market value.

You can't calculate your tax bill from the assessment (that depends on mill rate, not set until May). But you can get some idea if your taxes will go up or down. Compare your new assessment with your old. If you've done better than the average (not yet final, but likely to show a five percent decline), your bill will rise; if you've done worse, your bill will go down.

If you are not happy with your number, you can request a meeting with Barbara or ask that she revisit your home in October. You can look at your card in the town office, or, for the first time this year, request that it be scanned and emailed to you.

—Ed Ferman

The Animal Quiz

Over the years we've run hundreds of stories about a variety of animals, wild and domestic. Test your memory of these with our quiz. Answers direct you to the issue where the stories appeared; they are worth a new look. See our online archive.

- Back in the day, Martha Hubbard and other folks in the Village disposed of their garbage by feeding it to:
 - A giant pig who lived behind Rumsey Hall.
 - Goats kept by the Lutheran Church.
 - Passing hobos.
 - Feral cats.

- We once published an animal photo; it showed:
 - A border collie changing a light bulb.
 - A two-headed turtle emerging from a pond.
 - An elephant at the doorstep of a Village home.
 - Animal Control Officer Brad Hedden poking a dead frog.

- What statement about the eastern mountain lion is not true?
 - He is officially extinct.
 - He is frequently spotted in Cornwall.
 - He is the third largest cat in the world.
 - No other species preys on him.
 - His primary prey is deer.

- Marion Bell's Labrador retriever Julie appeared in a movie where she played a small, but pivotal part which involved:
 - Defending a child from a giant crocodile.
 - Peeing on Hugh Grant's leg.
 - Stealing a shoe from a corpse.
 - Tunneling out from a cruel kennel.

- In 2003, ChicKen Keskinen embarked on a remarkable journalistic mission: counting Cornwall's chickens. After months of research, he came up with a total of:
 - 1,063
 - 344
 - 858
 - 549

- Loose cattle are a town concern. If you come across cows on the road, you should:
 - Blow your horn till they get out of the way.
 - Call 911.
 - Stretch your hands and arms wide and get them to move slowly toward other cows.
 - Grab them by the ear, slap them on the rump, and bellow "git!"

- Beavers are benevolent super creatures, in part because they:
 - Are mighty engineers, building dams as long as 2,700 feet.
 - Provide flood control and filter stream water.
 - Enjoy practical jokes.
 - All of the above.

- The snake you are mostly likely to see in Cornwall is the:
 - Northern water snake.
 - Timber rattlesnake.
 - Black mamba
 - Bean moccasin.

- We recently interviewed Buster, a Jack Russell who at 18 is the town's oldest dog. He told us:
 - "I feel OK, but my short-term memory is shot."
 - Nothing; dogs can't talk.
 - "A scratch on the butt and a bowl of Velveeta and I'm in heaven."
 - "I miss my pals Sparky and Scooter."

—Ed Ferman

ANSWERS: 1. a (Dec 1991); 2. c (Sept 1991); 3. c (Feb 2012—fourth largest, after Siberian tiger, lion and jaguar); 4. c (May 1998); 5. d (May 2003); 6. c (July 2007); 7. d (July 2008); 8. a (Sept 2009); 9. d (Feb 2016).

Welcome

Wilson Tanner Woods
to Kira Sandmeyer Woods and Ryan Woods

Congratulations

Rachel Whiteside and Eric Rosen

Land Transfers

US Bank, National Association, Trustee, to Southern Specialty Properties, LLC, property at 15 Burlwood Lane, for \$106,050.

Richard J. Soltes and Mary Margaret Soltes, Trustees, to State of Connecticut, 55.653 acres more or less, on Dark Entry Road, for \$250,000.

Michael Kling, Trustee, to Erica T. Joncyk and Joseph J. Brien, land with all buildings thereon, at 83 Todd Hill Road, for \$175,000.

CCS: A Very Big Family

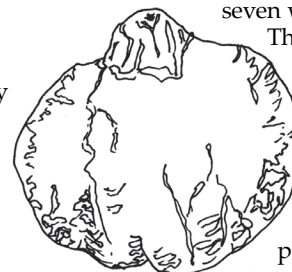
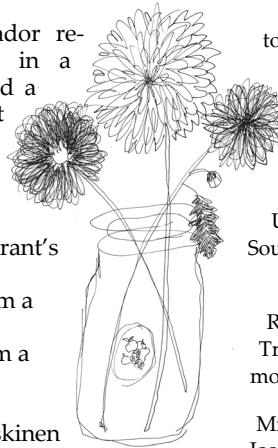
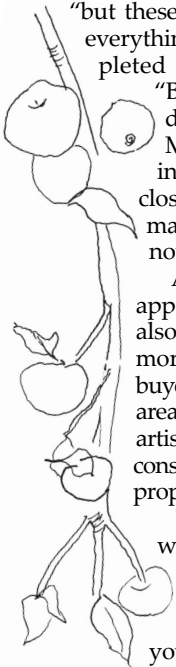
In the 1989–1990 school year, CCS had an enrollment of 202 students, enough to field our own soccer, basketball, and baseball teams. When CCS opened on August 29, 2016 it welcomed 74 students in grades K–8. Projections show a continuing decline.

The Board of Education has considered many options to deal with the decreasing enrollment: not replacing departing teachers, combining classes, and combining programs with other schools for sports, field trips, and enrichment programs.

Several of these options have been implemented for the new school year. There will be a combined K–2 class with 20 students (five, ten, five) taught by Bonnie Burdick and Kristi Pramuka, who taught a combined class of grades one and two last year. There will also be a variety of combinations for the upper grades: 5/6, 6/7, and 7/8. The smallest class will be grade seven with two girls and two boys.

The largest class will be grade four with 12 students, four girls and eight boys.

There will be staffing changes as well. When third-grade teacher Ann Grant retired last October, Suzanne Lancaster filled her position only for the remain-



der of the year. Kindergarten teacher Candise Stiewing will now teach that grade; Carol Kesl, the third-grade teacher's aide, has retired. Annie Kosciusko will replace Valerie Barber as Board of Education clerk.

With our low enrollment, some things are certain. The students will know each other by name, continue to look out for each other, and CCS will seem like a big family.

If no snow days, the last day of school will be June 9, 2017.

Principal Michael Croft offered these comments: "I'm energized by the changes at CCS this year. I expect students and staff from the LEAPSS program for students with autism to add new ideas and perspectives to our community. Our K-2 classrooms look beautiful and this will be a great approach to educating our youngest students. We have some changes to literacy instructions that will be excellent for our K-4 students and more interdisciplinary work for middle schoolers, much of it driven by student choice." —*Erin Hedden*

Witch Hunt

Nature loves camouflage, it's one of her favorite survival strategies. Almost every creature uses it, one way or another: the blurred geometric patterns on snakes, the sun dapples on new fawns, the mottles and stripes on giraffes and zebras, mimicking sun and shade. Our white-tailed deer have pale bellies to confuse predators: normally the underside is in shadow. Nature offers this trick to both deer and cougars.

Another part of camouflage is mental, not ocular: when we see something confusing, we try to make sense of it. The brain tries to make a python into a pile of dead leaves, for example. If it is a pile of dead leaves, we've saved ourselves a panic attack. (If it's a python, that's a problem, of course.)

A few evenings ago I went into the kitchen, which opens onto the back porch. Someone was sitting on the top step, and since the silhouette didn't make immediate sense, I made it into something that did: my step-daughter, reading to one of her children, and wearing a black witch's hat. I don't

know why all those things came together so smoothly, but they did. A little figure snuggled up to a bigger one, black shapes against the lawn.

It was a bear, of course, messing around in the garbage.

Seeing a bear is good for focusing the mind. I wasn't frightened, exactly, only my hair was standing on end. I ran in to find my son-in-law, who had his cell phone in his hand.

"Come quick," I hissed: I wanted a witness. We ran back to the kitchen. There was the bear, carefully spreading trash on the lawn. We watched, taking deep thrilled breaths. He was, actually, awesome, his thick pelt a black hole in the evening light. His big pricked ears and long square nose were doglike enough to seem friendly and familiar. And yet: that shambling hulk carries a message that stills the muscle of the heart.

We stared, motionless, until it dawned on me that I was becoming complicit in the crime against garbage cans. I ran out onto the porch, clapping my hands. "No! No!" I shouted. "Bad bear. Go! Go!" He fled, abandoning the shredded bits of frozen lima beans packets and flattened milk cartons he'd taken such trouble to spread out.

It's hot now at night, but I can't leave the back door open. I don't think I can even leave the kitchen windows open. They're way too small for a bear to get through, but I can't leave them open for the same reason that we make that python into a pile of dead leaves. My bear (you see how quickly I've become proprietary, despite his bad habits) would use the psychological mechanisms we all share. He'd choose to see those windows as just exactly the right size for the Bear Entrance, and he might try to impose his view on the window itself. So I will leave them shut.

The trash can has been moved into the house, and with any luck I won't find any more witches on the back step, reading to their children. —*Roxana Robinson*

The Chronicle Regrets: A Competition

Below: three fictional, preposterous "Corrections." We invite readers to submit up to three such corrections. Best entries will be published in a future issue and the winner will receive a "valuable" prize. Email entries to: info@cornwallchronicle.org

Due to an editing error, the *Chronicle* misstated the nature of a recent event sponsored by Park and Rec: it should have said tap dancing instructions, not lap dancing. We regret the error.

"Bad News Bears" in the July issue reported incorrectly that John Miller was eaten by a black bear who entered his

home in June. Miller was eaten by a great white shark while visiting family on Cape Cod. We regret the error.

Because of a computer error, text in the August issue was printed in reverse. The lead story, "Dammit, I'm Mad!" was written entirely in palindromes and should cause no problem. The rest of the issue can easily be read by holding the paper up to a mirror. We regret the error.

—*Rodney Spelvin*

Cornwall Briefs

•**Valley Road Bridge:** It will be closed for a week next month, which means the four families who live beyond it (south of Everest Hill Road) will need two vehicles to shuttle anywhere beyond the bridge. The outer vehicle can be parked on Will Calhoun's property. The cost according to Town Hall: "somewhere under \$150,000 in state funds."

•**Senior Van:** expected to be in service, serving Cornwall and Goshen, by October 1. Subsidized by the state and feds, it will seat 14 with two additional handicap spaces.

•**Hooray:** Jennifer Markow has been appointed director of Park & Rec. She had been serving in an interim capacity, dare we say, with verve.

•**West Cornwall Water/Septic Study:** approved at a town meeting on August 12. Most of the \$50,570 cost via state grant.

•**Algrant & Rummage Figures:** The art show moved to a new venue, Butler Hall on the Trinity campus, and produced record sales of \$38,692.90 before expenses. There were 56 exhibitors compared to 33 last year. That helped and possibly the vin ordinaire that loosened up the prospective art buyers. Fifteen percent of the proceeds will go to the Cornwall Food and Fuel Bank and the Torrington Food Bank. The popular Rummage Sale also had a boost in sales, \$33,000 plus, according to Woman's Society president Ann Hummel, who said 100 volunteers worked on the annual event, which produces funds for educational gifts to Cornwall students.

—*John Miller*

Lumberyard Reopens

The lumberyard at Northeast Building Supply in Cornwall Bridge reopened on Monday, August 15, once again carrying inventory, selling, and delivering.

The yard has been closed since a fire on January 15, 2015 destroyed most of the yard and the supply warehouse. It will probably be two years before a final settlement and the rebuilding is completed.

"It's been a long hard road from the fire to get to this point and I am grateful to the community and our customers for their continued support," said Rick Kearns, branch manager. —*Erin Hedden*



Events & Announcements

Book Signing: Saturday, September 3, 10 A.M. to noon at the Cornwall Farm Market. Sally Cook will present her latest book, How to Speak Football. How to Speak Golf, How to Speak Baseball and Hey Batta Batta Swing will also be available for signing.

Swing into September: Saturday, September 3, 7 P.M., old-time music and dancing at town hall. Peter Stix and Still, the Home-grown Band. All dances taught, no partner necessary. Donation requested. Questions: 672-6101.

Turtle Trot Fundraising Walk: Sponsored by Re-Member to raise funds for Pine Ridge Native Americans. September 4, Noon. Registration at 11:30 A.M. Adults \$25, kids \$10. Cornwall Village, UCC.

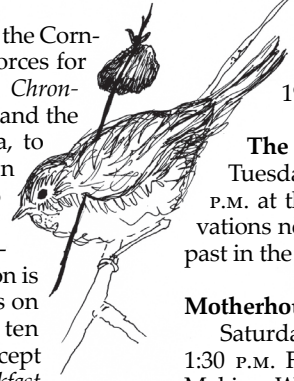
At the Cornwall Library

Introduction to Fiction with Deb Devins: September 7, 14, 21, 28, 6:30 to 8:30 P.M. \$40. Minimum six students, maximum eight. Call for details: 672-6874.

The Cornwall Chronicle and the Cornwall Association are joining forces for the opening reception of the Chronicle's 25th Anniversary Exhibit and the association's Newcomers' Tea, to take place simultaneously on Saturday, September 17, 4 to 6 P.M. (see insert).

Author Talk: Saturday, September 24, 5 P.M. Beth Gutcheon is a best-selling author of books on quilting, screen plays, and ten works of fiction, all novels except the most recent, Death At Breakfast, a detective story. In conversation with Franny Taliaferro, she will discuss what's involved in a change of genre.

Zumba classes: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 5:30 to 6:30 P.M. \$10. No registration required, minimum of three participants.



25th Agricultural Fair: Saturday, September 10, 10 A.M. to 4 P.M. on the Village Green. Bring your entries, join the contests, show your best garden find (see insert).

Farm Market will be at the Ag Fair on Saturday, September 10, and in West Cornwall all other Saturdays in September and October.

Animal Blessing: Saturday, September 10, 11 A.M. at the Ag Fair. The leaders of Cornwall's churches invite everyone to bring their animals, large and small, domestic and farm.

Free Blood Pressure Clinic: Monday, September 12, noon to 1 P.M. at the UCC Day Room. For information contact VNA Northwest at 860-567-6000 or vnanw.org.

Chronicle 25th Anniversary Exhibit: Opens September 13, reception Saturday, September 17, 4-6 P.M. at the library. Join us for a look at how we started and to celebrate and thank all who have so generously contributed time and talent to keep us going since 1991 (see insert).

The Senior Luncheon will be held Tuesday, September 13, 11:30 A.M. to 1 P.M. at the Wandering Moose. No reservations necessary for this three-course repast in the best of company.

Motherhouse Events

Saturday, September 17, 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. From the Ground Up: Lasagna-Making Workshop. Ingredients provided. \$35 donation per family.

Saturday, September 24, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. Keeping a Family Cow. Learn how to find, feed, milk, breed, and care for your cow. \$35/person, \$50/family.

Both events at Local Farm. Must pre-register at Debra@Motherhouse.us or 860-671-7945

The Board of Assessment Appeals will meet Saturday, September 17, 9 to 10 A.M. at the town offices for the purpose of hearing appeals regarding motor vehicle assessments. No appointment is required. There will be no other time for hearing such appeals.

The Historical Society will host "The Write Stuff" on Sunday, September 18, from 4 to 5 P.M. at the town hall. Current Cornwall writers will read short selections from original work. Refreshments. Questions?

Call Ginny Potter at 672-6191.

Red Cross Blood Drive: Thursday, September 29, 1 to 6 P.M. at UCC. For appointments please call the Red Cross: 1-800-733-2767.

Art in Cornwall

Souterrain Gallery: Ken Krug's exhibit, "Paintings and Illustrations," continues through September 25.

Toll House Gallery: Works by Don Bracken and Curtis Hanson.

Want to be a Justice of the Peace? If you are registered as an unaffiliated or minority party voter and would like to become a justice of the peace, contact the town clerk's office for an application and return it by November 1. The state of Connecticut says that Cornwall can have 59 JPs for a four-year term starting January 2017: 20 registered Republicans, 19 registered Democrats and 20 unaffiliated or minority party electors. Republicans and Democrats endorsed their candidates at meetings in May. The town clerk is charged with appointing the unaffiliated/minority party candidates. If more than 20 applications are received, names will be drawn at a public lottery on November 14.

White Pines Walk: Saturday, October 1, 9 A.M. to noon. Join Ron Hummel to learn their history by visiting three different preserves: Cathedral Pines, Ballyhack, and Gold's. Part of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area Annual Walks. Two miles of walking and four miles by car between preserves. Meet at Cathedral Pines parking area on Essex Hill Road. Details: 672-2325.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE

cornwallchronicle.org

THIS MONTH

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