Library Finds the Land

Two parcels of land on Pine Street, 100 feet south of the present Town Hall, are being bought by the Cornwall Library Association (CLA) as a site for a new library.

Agreements to purchase a half-acre parcel and a contiguous one-and-two-thirds-acre parcel from Dwight and Susan Hatcher and from Jill Bryant, respectively, will be formalized at the April 9 meeting of the library board. The cost for both parcels is $78,000.

Board President Audrey Ferman expressed pleasure at the prospect now open to the Library: "It’s a wonderful site. We’re grateful to Jill Bryant and to the Hatcher’s, and to Marjorie Gracey for relinquishing her right of first refusal on the Bryant parcel. It is the best location for a new library that can become the intellectual center of our town, a library Cornwall can be proud of now and in the twenty-first century." Ferman expressed confidence in the Library Association’s ability to raise the funds necessary to complete the project, a substantial amount of which (one-third) will come from the state.

"It’s very encouraging news," said John Callhoun, member of the CLA board, and point man in the negotiations. When asked how he felt about the CLA’s plan moving ahead, he had no doubt, "If the library trustees act to help ease the divisiveness created by the issue. My Dad would feel the same way. He was a peacemaker."

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway stated his satisfaction with the purchase and with the location of a site near other town buildings. "The decision has been made. Now it’s time to go forward. Building their own library will allow the board to get the kind of structure they want."

The library trustees will hold a public meeting at 5 P.M. on Thursday, April 9, to discuss and vote on the proposed agreement between the Board of Selectmen and the Cornwall Library Association. Cornwall residents are invited to attend and express their views. Copies of the agreement will be available in the Library prior to the meeting. Once approved by the trustees and the selectmen, the agreement, the terms of which were reported in last month’s Chronicle, will be presented to a town meeting for approval.

Budget Stats: Modest Upticks

If good news can come in small packages, recent prognostications about the 1998-99 school and town budgets should qualify as middling glad tidings.

The school budget, submitted by the Board of Education on March 12, increased 3.7 percent, but that stands in glowing contrast to last year’s surge of 15.41 percent. The shrinkage is unfortunately temporary; it stems in part from reduced Cornwall enrollment at HVRHS from 50 in 1996-97 to 43 this school year.

On March 19, the Board of Finance discussed a possible overall town budget of $4,011,708. If approved by a town meeting, this figure would boost taxes by between 2.7 and 4.1 percent, lower than last year’s increase of 4.3 percent. This rise would put the mill rate in the neighborhood of 19—from last year’s 18.25, but not by much. More precise numbers may be known at the April 16 BOF meeting, and at the April 24 public budget hearing.

—Charles Osborne

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* Check at Town Office
CORNWALL CHRONICLE
APRIL 1998

Welcome
Nathan Randall Brant to Rachel Reeve and Keith Brant
Nikola Antonia to Samantha and Ivan Lendl
Jolene Marie to Paul and Faith Daley Levesque

Land Transfers
Stephen A. and Christine E. Halas to Rosaria Rummings, house and 44 acres at 229 Kent Road for $148,000.
Lynn and Elynor Sweat to Joseph P. Marchetti, house and 4.8 acres on Kent Road for $90,000.
Dolores Zompa to Robert E. Clohessy and Catherine Erhardt, house and land at 44 Great Hollow Road for $185,000.
Elizabeth Bradley to William M. Gold, house and 1.8 acres on Popple Swamp Road for $130,000.
Edward J. Baird to Kenneth C. and Thomas Baird, building and land on Kent Road for $160,000.
Coltsfoot Farm Ltd. Partnership to Alexander L. and April Stevens Neubauer, 16.5 acres on Valley Road for $78,500.

Keeping Roads Scenic
How to replace the aging cribbing on three of the five sites on Route 4 just north of Cornwall Bridge is still under consideration by the Department of Transportation and the selectmen. Even though no town funds will be used for such roadside repairs, both groups have solicited opinions from citizens.

P&Z Office Changes
Remember the fanfare last spring about the changes in the zoning office? It's taken a while to perfect, but here's the new program:
Ruth Mulcahy, Zoning Administrator, will continue to have office hours on Saturday mornings, 9 to 12. She handles all land-use questions.

Vera Dinneen, who has been a P&Z alternate for seven years, will be the new P&Z clerk, starting in April, with office hours on Wednesdays, 9 A.M. to 12. She will help with applications and timetables. Since Vera serves as Assistant Town Clerk on Mondays, she cannot provide zoning help that day. However, application and instruction sheets will be available when the Town Office is open, Monday through Thursday, 9 A.M. to 4 P.M.

When you're doing involves planning or enforcement, Vera will refer you to Ruth, who is the person to see if you have plans to extract bauxite out back or to cram communications towers in the front yard. —Maggie Cooley

Fun in the Afternoon
I arrived at the Cornwall Child Center just in time for vanilla wafers, fruit cup, and apple juice. That's how the After School Program begins...with a snack. How good can it get? I was seated with a bunch of kids from my neighborhood: the Busby girls, Sabina and Camilla Marie, Isaac Pollan, and Genevieve Terrall of Popple Swamp Terralls. Nearby were the Charleton twins, Katherine and Robert, twinkle-eyed Kathleen Rogers, and a visiting guest, ten-year-old Ben Wright from Boston. Ben is a nephew of Sandy Dolinsky, who, with Laura Gandolfo, runs the After School Program with a combination of patience, warmth, and dedication to the idea that a good time and learning something can be compatible.
The Child Center across from CCS has an enrollment of 24 in its nursery school plus ten kindergarten kids in the morning and ten others in the afternoon. My visit was to the After School Program, which children attend anywhere from one to five days a week. They were in the midst of an African curriculum—dance, music, stories, and theater—beautifully put together by Laura and Sandy. After snacks, the kids painted scenery for their upcoming play and later sang and danced to an African song. In between there was time-out for a game of cards called UNO, where the idea is to get rid of your cards quickly. Katherine won. I ended up with more cards than when the game began. The kids were clearly taking advantage of a beginner.

I pass all this information on to you, young Chronicle readers, to let you know about an important community asset that is really fun. After School currently has a total enrollment of 17, with a daily average of 11 taking part. And by the time we go to press, the African program will be completed, replaced by a study of a rain forest.—John Miller

Trusts, Taxes, Town Needs...
Three topics and multiple opinions. How do they relate? How important are they?

The ever-growing pressure for land in Cornwall has made the roles of landowners and users increasingly important. However, owners' perceptions, preferences, and needs concerning land use differ. These differences are further influenced by the individuality of the land itself and its relationship to other physical features such as roads, lakes, marshes, and buildings. Added to this emotional mix is the fact that removing property taxes will shift the burden of paying the town's bills to other taxpayers.

Every use of land has a cost for the town. Houses and the people living in them make the greatest demand on town resources. Businesses come next, and the least demanding use comes with agricultural or open land. However, without these needs in balance, we would not have a community.

How are land trusts (and the land they protect) involved? They allow us to maintain the town's rural character while keeping land values stable and our community economically sound. Conserving particular areas for future generations is one part of the balance. Land trusts provide attractive open space for recreation, education, and agriculture at an affordable price. The reduced tax income from land in trust, often quite small, is offset by the enhanced value of the surrounding property. As landowners wrestle with the realities of taxes and estates, the benefits of conservation easements and gifts to land trusts are primary long-term considerations.

The operative word is balance. No one solution fits all cases, either at a personal or community level. As stewards of our land, preparing for the next century, we must consider the needs of future generations as well as our own. —Ralph Gold

(continued from page 1) Cornwall is the 17th wealthiest out of all 169 cities and towns. Worse for us, the ECS also counts our low population density against us—after all, trees don't need aid, do they?

State Representative Andrew Roraback is trying to amend the state formula to guarantee every town at least $300 per pupil. That would be a fiscal boon to Cornwall. Our 1997-98 aid would rise from $11,741 now to $68,700, nearly a fivefold increase! But the Roraback proposal faces an uphill fight, according to the Council of Small Towns. Part of the problem is that, in its current form, Roraback's formula would help only 37 towns, not enough to sway the legislature. Another obstacle is that a 1989 court decision held that giving flat sums per pupil might violate the state constitution.

—David A. Grossman

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in that stretch of Route 4, and the need to repair the neglected picnic and parking areas and guardrails along Furnace Brook.

On a related matter, Ridgway announced that a hearing on designating Route 7, south from Cornwall Bridge, as a "Scenic Highway" is set for April 15, at 7:30 p.m., in the Town Hall.

Boy Scouts in Cornwall?

In 1995, after a hiatus of several years, Cub Scout Pack 15 was re-established. It is starting its fourth year of new life with 35 boys in grades one (including Transition) through five. Normally, Cub Scouts graduate into a Boy Scout troop, which Cornwall does not have. Now the leaders of the cub pack would like to re-establish Cornwall Boy Scout Troop 15.

The troop would be open to boys in grades six through twelve. Its program will include hiking and camping, but it will also have many scientific and cultural aspects, from rockets to music. Although supervised by adults (of either gender), it will be organized by boys working on the principle of KISIMIF (Keep It Simple, Make It Fun).

Cub Scout leaders John Squires and I have offered to be adult members of a new troop. But we need other adults, and, of course, we need BOYS! Interested adults and boys are asked to contact me at 672-6377. —Jim Levy

Events & Announcements

CCS Kindergarten Registration for the 1998-1999 school year will be held on April 1, 2, and 6. Any child turning five on or before December 31, 1998, is eligible. Parents should call the school office at 672-6617 to schedule a visit to the kindergarten room and to meet Mrs. Wadhams, the kindergarten teacher. Parents: don’t forget to bring your child’s birth certificate.

Alternatives to Violence: A community workshop of the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) will be held on the weekend of May 1-3 at the UCC Parish House. Led by AVP facilitator John Perry, the workshop will focus on primary conflict resolution skills. The workshop will afford basic AVP training and is a prerequisite for advanced workshops which train individuals for work as volunteer facilitators in prisons and schools. Sessions are planned for Friday, May 1 from 5:30 to 9 p.m., Saturday, May 2, from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday, May 3, from 1 to 7 p.m. The fee per participant is $40; scholarships are available. For more information or to enroll, call the UCC church office, 672-6940, or Peg Keskinen, 672-6486, before April 10.

Letters to the Chronicle

NO SECURITY BLANKETS

About 15 townspersons met with members of the state’s engineering team on March 5, regarding the removal and replacement of antiquated crib walls along Furnace Brook Road (Route 4).

The second round of the Department of Transportation planning showed that two crib-wall sites were to be returned to their natural state, but three sites were to be laid out under three-foot-deep, sharp-edged “stone blankets,” the kind one sees along the Interstate or in industrial areas. When asked if foliage would grow through the blankets, the engineers said, “No. These are designed to eliminate any growth beneath; foliage would undermine the stability.” The stone blankets were proposed as a cost-saving alternative to the pre-cast cement walls at the request of the Cornwall selectmen. The cost for the entire project was originally $1.4 million as opposed to $900,000 for the blanket alternative. In truth, the state has budgeted enough to afford the cement walls and to beautify them through any number of means including coloration, surface texturing, “fieldstone” casting, and actual stone on the surface. The funds will be spent by the state regardless: if not in Cornwall along beautiful Furnace Brook, then in some other community where people recognize the value of their country roads.

The stone blankets are massive; they would raise back from the roadway for 100 feet in some instances, requiring appropriation from five landowners. The constant shifting of both water and terrain off that hill will undoubtedly undermine the stones. Those present at the meeting voiced concern over the advantage of cost cutting when issues of maintenance and commitment to a rural environment were factored in.

The state agreed to look further into more acceptable alternatives, and Selectman Jack Preston agreed that his office would support the wishes of the town. Also, it was clarified that the regrading of the dangerous Route 4 curve is not related to the crib wall replacement, nor will funds be available because of the proposed cost savings; rather it is linked to the project because it will be done concurrently, probably in the summer of 1999. —Martha Voutas Donegan

SOMETHING TO CONSIDER

The Gym Committee of the PTA has been looking at options for improving the gymnasium at CCS for the past three years. We have accomplished important steps toward this goal: we have held public meetings; an architect has created site plans and preliminary cost estimates; a professional fund-raiser has shown how we could raise (from outside sources) over $50 percent of the construction costs; we have made presentations to the Boards of Education, Finance, and Selectmen to show the need for an improved gym and how we could help to make it affordable.

The issue of a new gym is not a new one. The existing gym is basically the same as when the school was built. It is the smallest gym in the region, not even having a full-size basketball court. We are no longer able to hold home games. The gym is not large enough to hold all the people who should attend assemblies. Most importantly, our small gym has become a safety issue for today’s large class sizes at CCS.

The Gym Committee is bringing this project to your attention now, as the town considers major capital building projects. Our view is that if the town feels it can afford a major upgrade of its facilities, this is a project that should be given serious consideration.

—The Gym Committee of the PTA, Brian Kavanagh, David Samson, Craig Simons

WHOSE BUSINESS IS IT?

One of our selectmen, Jack Preston, has stated how disturbing it is to see the lack of business and businesses in Cornwall these days. How true! Look around our town and you will see empty buildings and empty parking spaces in front of stores that are open. What is going on here, or, better put, what is not going on here? Why are stores in other towns doing so well while we sit here with knitted brows and wonder what happened? Is there an anti-business attitude in Cornwall? Have we decided that blue-collar workers are not welcome here? I ask this because, with the termination of the industrial zone in Cornwall Bridge, there will be no new businesses to hire workers.

Is the anti-business attitude in Cornwall the result of actions taken by the Planning and Zoning Commission, or is their action just a reflection of our own personal attitudes?

The towns of Salisbury, Falls Village, Canaan, Kent, Sharon, and Goshen have all made an effort to improve the business climate in their towns. What has Cornwall done? What will Cornwall do in the future? Without the taxes paid by businesses, the tax burden falls on property owners, who, by the way, are becoming increasingly “out-of-towners” because local youth cannot afford to buy homes and raise their children here as they themselves were raised. The elderly of our town cannot live out their days here, again because of the tax burden and lack of town services provided.

I do not have the answers to these problems we face; perhaps many of us do not consider them problems. We elect our officials to represent us; do they represent our true feelings on the subject? I hope this letter at least begins some discussion on this matter.

—Harry L. Colley II
Sorry, Celebrity Seekers: Jackie O’s chipped china and the Duke of Windsor’s embroidered earmuffs won’t be up for grabs. The Cornwall Child Center’s seventh annual benefit auction emphasizes the practical, with items such as a day of skilled carpentry services going on the block. Those with dreamer inclinations, however, can bid on a house in Ireland, or have one built in a tree, if they show up at the Mohawk Mountain Ski Lodge on Sunday, April 26.

The silent auction begins at 1:30 P.M., and the live auction at 3 P.M., under the trusty gavel of Dave Cadwell and Jerry Blakey. The afternoon will conclude with a raffle drawing for an Ingersoll Shaker rocking chair. Admission is $5 and includes a groaning board of hors d’oeuvres and beverages.

Among the 200 items to be sold are theater tickets, catered meals, garden services, organic foods, computer consulting, and many works by Cornwall artists.

For more information call 672-4815.

Woman’s Society Scholarship Forms are available to any Cornwall senior graduating from public or private high school. Forms may be picked up at the HVRFS guidance office or from Thalia Scoville at 672-6288. Deadline for returns is May 1.

Art in Cornwall: During the month of April, Howard Stone will be exhibiting watercolors at the National Iron Bank. At the Cornwall Library, the Quarter Finals show continues until April 18. From April 20 until May 16 Nina and Silvia LaPorta will be showing watercolors and craftwork.

Culinary Delights Department: The Ecumenical Youth Group sponsored by UCC will hold a bake sale on Saturday, April 18, 8:30 to 11:30 A.M., at Baird’s Store in Cornwall Bridge. The sale will help to fund a May trip to New York City to attend the Nightwatch program at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Please come and buy!

Eye of Eagle

Which is what you needed to spot the answers to last month’s trivia question (1968 town officials still on the job in 1998). For you non-eagles, they are Dick Dakin, Monty Hare, and Ed Whitcomb; the names were in tiny type next to the coupon. If you have any good Cornwall trivia questions for the future, do send them in. And please remember those checks if you don’t want the Chronicle to become an endangered species.

Republicans Elect Officers: At a meeting on March 10, the Republican Town Committee reelected Don Bardot as chairman, and Lisa Cruse and Sue Simons as vice-chair and secretary, respectively. Bardot will also serve as treasurer.

Elderly Health Screening: Cornwall residents age 60 or over may make an appointment for this service, to take place on Tuesday, April 14, at CCS. A wide range of tests and procedures is offered, including hearing, vision, glaucoma, and blood tests; urinalysis, blood pressure, electrocardiogram; Pap/pelvic/breast or prostate exams; diabetic and hypertension counseling; and a review of medications. Suggested donation—$20 ($25 with Pap). For an appointment, call Municipal Agent on Aging Jill Gibbons at 672-2603.

Medical Mission to Saudi Arabia: Dr. Doug Green of Yelping Hill will talk about his recent trip to Saudi Arabia on Sunday, April 5, at 11:30 A.M. at the UCC Parish House. Call the church office, 672-6840, for information.

Phillipe, Duc d’Orleans is like a character in a great 18th century novel. Funny, fiercely partisan, and brilliant, he was regent to the young Louis XV, and he is the subject of a new biography by Christine Pevitt Algrant. She will talk about M. le Duc and how she came to write about him at a Friends of the Cornwall Library event on Saturday, April 18, at 5 P.M. Cheese and wine will be served. For information call Lisa Simont at 672-2659.

The Cornwall Land Trust will meet at the corner of Rattlesnake and Cogswell Roads in North Cornwall at 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 4. All are welcome to help clear the beautiful stone wall on the former Rogers land of vines and brush. Bring clippers! Questions? Call Anne Zinsser, 672-6400.

Summer Employment: Hammond Beach is looking for lifeguards and a swimming instructor. Competitive wages plus paid rain days. Red Cross Lifeguard, First Aid, and CPR certification required (training offered at Winsted Y.M.C.A. in April). For information call Jane Prentice at 672-6101.

Two Computer Workshops sponsored by the CCS PTA at the school are open to anyone over 11 years old. The first will be April 6, at which participants will disassemble donated computers and learn to identify reusable components. At the second workshop, on April 27, the group will assemble computer systems from the previously gathered components. These two workshops will run concurrently with the Monday evening computer labs and will meet from 6:30 until 9 P.M. For registration and information, call David Samson, 672-0616.

Park & Rec. Activities: The Easter party for preschool through fourth grade will be held on Saturday, April 4, at 10:30 A.M. at CCS. Bring baskets.

Gymnastics classes will meet for six consecutive Saturday mornings beginning on April 11. Classes will be from 9 to 10 A.M. and from 10 to 11 A.M. at the Goshen Elementary School. To register call Sharon Sawicki, 672-2975.

There will be a peg basket class on Sunday, April 5, 12 to 4 P.M. in the CCS art room. Call Jill Gibbons, 672-0033, for information.

Think Geraniums! The Republican Town Committee is now selling pink, red, or white geraniums for delivery in time for Mother’s Day or Memorial Day. Plants are $3 each or 15 for $40. Order before April 30 from Lisa Cruse, 672-0518.

Dinner at CCS: The eighth grade will host a Ziti Dinner on Friday, April 3, in the gym. Proceeds will benefit the class trip to Washington in May. Tickets are $4 for children under 12, $7 for everyone else, and may be purchased from an eighth grader, from Barbara Russ (672-6981), or at the door; please indicate which seating you prefer, 6 or 7:30 P.M. Also, baked goods and door raffle tickets will be for sale.