New Referendum on CCS Project

Cornwall’s cabin fever arrived a little late this year. No sooner is the near-term future of Region One finally decided in a fourth referendum, than another referendum is scheduled on the long-term future of Cornwall Consolidated School.

On July 10, voters in the six-town Region One district approved a $10,053,757 spending plan by a vote of 549 to 777. Cornwall’s heavily negative vote, 164 noes to 94 yeses, along with thumbs-down tallies in three other towns, was offset by an overwhelming vote of approval in Salisbury. This vote concerned expenses for the high school, as well as for administrative services and special education in all six towns.

Also on July 10, a legally correct petition, signed by 20-plus electors, requiring the Board of Selectmen to call a town meeting that would “consider and act” upon a proposal to “terminate and discontinue the Cornwall Consolidated School building project” was received at the Town Office. At a special meeting of the selectmen that same day, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway explained why the petition would probably result not only in a town meeting but also in a second referendum on the school building plan. After an hour-long session of explanation and public comment at another special meeting on July 16, the selectmen voted unanimously for a town meeting on July 28 (CCS, 7:30 P.M.) and a referendum, using voting machines, on August 11 (Town Hall, noon to 8:00 P.M.).

About $280,000 of the $4,715,000 approved by a 255–235 vote at the December 2 referendum has already been spent or committed. The CCS Building Committee will continue work as usual until the issue is resolved, but try to avoid immediate expenditures.

At the July 16 meeting, Gordon Ridgway explained why, although the issue could be legally decided by a town meeting vote, such a course of action would be impractical, cumbersome, and unfair. “In the past, a major issue that attracts a great deal of attention always goes to referendum,” he said. For one thing, the CCS gym will hold only about half of the 600 probable voters. For another, certifying voters who are not electors but own property in town is often a complicated and time-consuming process. Then, too, voting by absentee ballot would be possible only at a referendum. Ridgway added that information on absentee ballots would be posted on the Town Office door as soon as possible. (See “Referendum Rules,” page 4.)

Toward the end of the meeting, some residents wondered if other people would have trouble reading the ballot, and for this reason vote the opposite of their true intentions. The ballot must be legally phrased in the language of the petition—to rescind the December 2 vote for the building project. Therefore a yes vote is a vote to stop the project. Persons wishing the project to continue as scheduled should vote no. (For opinions on the merits of the building project, see “Letters,” page 3.)

—Bob Potter

Here Come the Towers

Residents of Popple Swamp Road and other Cornwallians can sign all the petitions they want, but that doesn’t mean that citizen opposition to the proliferation of cell towers will have much impact. That seems to be the conclusion of most state and local officials in the wake of growing opposition to a new 190-foot cell tower proposed on property owned by Ralph Gulliver on Bell Road off Popple Swamp.

Several recent court decisions interpreting how the federal Telecommunications Act regulates the cell phone industry have made it clear that towns have little power to control the siting, height, and scenic impact of cell towers. That is because Congress, when it passed the act in 1996, assigned greater importance to the expansion and utility of cell phone use than the environmental impact of the thousands of towers needed nationwide to ac

(continued on page 2)
have looked at the Cornwall Web Site recently? You should!

First, a little background: The Web Page is one of the most visible and successful outcomes of the Cornwall Association’s Town Profile of 1999. Lazlo Gyorsok, who had already set up a Web Site for Cornwall on his own, became the volunteer technical expert and Webmaster. He actually creates the page using his own software and stores it in his server. With great forethought, Virginia Brecher had already registered the name cornwallct.org, and the name was transferred to the newly formed Web Group which, earlier this year, affiliated with the Cornwall Association.

First look at the “Calendar,” which is managed by Anne Baren. If you are scheduling an event, call or E-mail her at pbaren@snet.net. If you find a meeting or event you want to attend, then look at “Minutes and Agendas” to find the agenda and what happened at the last meetings. Pages for “Town Offices” or “Civic Groups” will tell you who you can expect to be there.

Next check “Weather” (for the next ten days) to see if you need a raincoat or shorts or a snow shovel, and from there you can check on flight arrivals at Bradley for anyone who may be coming to visit. You had best check “Cornwall School” for your children’s homework assignments.

And if you still have time, check out the “History” page for an interesting read or “Archives” to see what you have missed in the past few months.

Then go on to “Businesses” for places to stay in Cornwall or for someone to cut your lawn. Incidentally, there are links from business web sites to just about anything you might want to do in the Litchfield Hills or the Berkshires.

Look for “Library” hours and the newest books; and “Churches” for Sunday service times.

If you now look at “Special Events,” you’ll see where you should have been instead of at that meeting; and click on “What’s New” to find Web photographer Richard Griggs’s up-to-date pictures of the event and who was there.

And there’s the “Cornwall Exchange,” a “give” and “receive” section. “Regulations” contain links to all the regulations, instructions on use of the dump, the Town Beach, and when to burn. Last and probably least is a daily count of the Cornwall black flies.

There’s something for everyone.
—Celia Senzer

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Welcome
Lancelot Charles to Sarah and Maurice Oyanadel

Good-bye to a Friend
Marion “Pete” Hayward

Congratulations
Noah Oskwerek to Francesca Falletta
Philippe Rummens to Monica Diogenes
Thomas Wolf to Alice Sarkissian
Christopher Zabriskie to Catherine Hays

Land Transfers
L&B Consultants (USA) Inc. to MK Design & Build, LLC., 3 acres on Reed Brook Road for $48,000.

R.I.P. Rattlesnake Pond
There was quite an uproar in the middle of June when the beaver dam near the north end of Rattlesnake Road was removed by the Town Crew and all the water held back from the Mill Brook hurtled down to the Housatonic.

"Who had made the decision to empty the pond?" Billie Jo Titchener (age seven) asked her grandmother. Joanie explained that it was probably the First Selectman, Mr. Ridgway, the father of Elizabeth, one of her classmates. "We need to talk to him," replied Billie Jo and after a pause added, "and we need to talk to Bush."

The drained water was knee-deep in three acres of Hedgerows Farm fields and it completely spoiled the hay. "There was no warning, and if the calves had been down there they could have been swept downstream," Dan Cain said. And what had been the beaver pond looked brown and desolate, and the stench was appalling.

Many Cornwallians who since May had been watching two families of hooded mergansers and a family of wood ducks were concerned. The ducks were not old enough to fly. Where were they and had they survived the violent destruction of their habitat?

The beavers had created a beautiful pond in the low-lying fields owned by Lawrence Van Valkenburgh, who was very happy with their work. But the water was running over the road and something had to be done. The First Selectman, in consultation with the Chairman of the Inland Wetlands Agency and the head of the Town Crew agreed that the Town Crew would "rake a little off the beaver dam every day until it was down half way," and, "after a couple of days, let it down completely so they could install a device to control the level of the water," Ridgway told me. But, unfortunately, that wasn’t the way it happened. Instead, all the pond water rushed out in a few hours.

The good news is that most, if not all, of the mergansers survived and have been seen sitting forlornly in the few square feet of deep water that remain. The best news is that now they are old enough to fly and can escape predators and move on to better feeding.
Letters to the Chronicle

Flight of the Bumblebee

Act I: 373 Town Street. Two cats eye the bumblebee that has dropped to the floor below the window. I slide a Chronicle Thank You card under it and carry the insect outside into the cool May afternoon. Once on the picnic table, it struggles across to a crack and dives in, leaving only its legs and abdomen in view. There it stays for twenty four hours, motionless except when breathed upon. Not a betting woman, I bet my neighbor that this bee will die.

He touches its hind leg with the end of a pencil and thinks he sees it flinch. "Five dollars says it'll live," he says.

"You're on," I say.

He eases the bee carefully into a small cardboard box and takes it home to 336 Town Street.

Act II: 336 Town Street. By the next morning it hasn't moved. When creatures come to the expiration date (unlike people, who make a big fuss), they curl up in a quiet corner and wait for the lights to go out. But I have five dollars on the line.

Bumblebees love Andromeda bushes, and though the blooms had almost dried up, I snap off a sprig and put it in the box. To my amazement the bumblebee staggers forward and puts its head into what had once been a juicy blossom. Then, once more, it is very, very still.

Observing plant and insect expiring together, and thinking of the meaningful poem I will write, I am interrupted by a whiff of wild azalea. I cut off four fresh blossoms and put them in the box. The heady fragrance inside the tiny space has an intoxicating effect. The bumblebee's wings, which had been neatly folded on its back, give a short BZZZZTs. With more and longer BZZZZTs the bumblebee becomes airborne, crashes once or twice against the sides of the box, and then spirals elegantly upwards. It is last seen making a bumblebee line for the azalea bush, thereby putting five dollars in my pocket.

The money was the least of it.

—Ella Clark and Marc Simont

Tag Sale: On Saturday, August 11, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., St. Bridget's Church will hold its Annual Tag Sale on the grounds of the church in Cornwall Bridge. Featured will be attic treasures, baked goods, clothes, a farmer's market, and dealers offering a variety of goods. Refreshments will be available through the day. Dealer space may be reserved by calling Sandi at 672-6716.

Community Calendar Deadline: The last day that birthday and anniversary dates will be accepted for the Republican Town Committee's Community Calendar will be August 15. The calendar will be free this year. Call K. C. Baird at 672-2773 or stop at Baird's.

Folk Art at the Historical Society: A collection of Mary Sams' entertaining bird houses, whirligs, and more will be on display from August 18 through Labor Day. The Cornwall Historical Society's hours are Tuesdays, 1 to 3 p.m., and Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Fiddling on the Green: Park & Rec is sponsoring a concert on the Village Green on Saturday, August 18. Bring a blanket to sit on, a picnic dinner, and your dancing shoes for a concert of high-spirited fiddling by Barebones & Wildflowers. Picnic area open at 6 p.m., music from 7 to 10 p.m. Free. For more information please call Park & Rec at 672-4070.
Referendum Rules: In the August 11 referendum on the CCS building project, (Town Hall, noon to 8 p.m.) voting machines will be used and absentee ballots are available.

However, the process for obtaining absentee ballots is different from that of a regular election. The Town Clerk cannot mail applications or ballots. You must apply in person or appoint a designee. The designee must be a member of your family or one of our Registrars of Voters—Jayne Ridgway (672-0279) or Virginia B. Potter (672-6191). Also, the Town Clerk’s Office will be open from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Sunday, August 5, to hand out applications and ballots. Until August 9, voters may obtain ballots from the Town Clerk and vote immediately while there.

Another point to clarify is who is eligible to vote. Connecticut State Statute 7-6 says those who may vote at referenda are: 1) “Any person who is an elector in the Town.” This means your name appears as a voter on the registration list kept current by the Registrars. Persons not already registered to vote may do so up to Thursday before the referendum. 2) “Any citizen of the age of eighteen or more who, jointly or severally, is liable to the tax assessment of not less than $1,000 on the Grand List of 2000.” This needs some explanation. First, non-elector property owners (whether of autos or real estate) must show proof of citizenship before they can vote (or have it on file with the Town Clerk from previous referenda); a birth certificate, passport, or naturalization papers will do. Second, if your property is listed on the Grand List in one name, only the person listed may vote. Also, companies cannot vote because they aren’t persons. Third, if you purchased property in town after October 1, 2000, your name does not appear on the Grand List of 2000, and you will not be able to vote in this referendum unless you become a registered voter.

If you have any questions, please contact the Town Clerk’s Office at 672-2709.

3rd Annual Interfaith Service, started on the tenth anniversary of the 1989 tornado, will place on Sunday, August 5, at 10 a.m. on the Town Green. The service, with music, will draw from the Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Quaker traditions. Refreshments following the service will be available on the Green.

Juggling Workshop: On Wednesday, August 8, 7 to 8 p.m., the Cornwall Library will present: Hands-on Workshop by the partners of “Positive Energy,” introducing children and their parents to juggling with balls, flower sticks, and diablos. Step-by-step instructions and demonstrations.

Wadsworth Atheneum Curator Talks: On Friday evening, August 24, at 8 p.m., the Friends of the Library will present Tom Denenberg, Curator of American Decorative Arts at the Wadsworth Atheneum. Tom, who started as a volunteer at the Cornwall Historical Society, will talk about his career as a curator. After the talk, the Coffin family will host a reception for Tom and enjoy refreshments. As this event is to benefit the endowment fund for the new Cornwall Library, a donation of $10 for the talk and $10 for the reception is requested.

Rose Algrant Art Show: Contrary to the report in the July Chronicle, commissions from the show this year (August 3-5) will be donated to the Clifton Read Rental Assistance Fund. This fund, which offers rental assistance in emergency situations, is financed by private donations and administered by the Cornwall Housing Corp.

Rummage $$$: The final figure is not yet in, but the yield from this year’s rummage sale was about $20,000.

Come Say Good-bye to Art: There will be a farewell party for Art Brean on the Village Green from 3 to 5 p.m. on August 5. Please bring beverages and/or appetizers.

Chamber Music at Cream Hill Lake: The Cream Hill Lake Association invites all to come Saturday evening, August 4, at 7:30 p.m., to hear the musicians of the Musicorda Chamber Music Institute. Bring chairs and please be prompt. Hear great music and have some cookies while you chat with the musicians after the concert.

Art in Cornwall: Through August 25, David Colbert will show photographs of people and landscapes at the Cornwall Library. Starting August 27, the library will feature a show of watercolors, mainly exotic flowers, by Jano Fairservis. At the National Iron Bank, the August artist of the month will be Joe Brien.

Cell Tower Meeting: For all those concerned about the proposed cell tower on Popple Swamp Road and other future sites in Cornwall, there will be an informal meeting on Saturday, August 4, at 7:30 p.m. in Town Hall. For further information please call Blanca La Porta at 672-0089. (See story, page 1.)