Local Elections ’09
There were only two “contests” in this year’s local elections: John LaPorta and Earl Brecher won new terms on the Board of Finance, and incumbent Nancy Calhoun and newcomer Betty Spence took the two open seats on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Other winners who were either cross-endorsed or ran unopposed were First Selectman Gordon Ridgway; Selectmen Richard Bramley and K. C. Baird; Town Clerk Vera Man Gordon Ridgway; Selectmen Richard Hart, Irene Hurlburt, and Rachel Matsuaida-ra, Board of Education; Mag Cooley, Becky Hurlburt, Steve Saccardi, and Ron Laigle, Park and Recreation; Jim LaPorta and Heidi Kears, Planning and Zoning; and Charlie Gold, Assessment Appeals.

Voters also got to pick their favorite homemade soup at the regular Election Day luncheon sponsored by UCC and held at its Parish House. As it turned out, there were six soups and six slots for “best soup,” so they were all winners: Pat Blakey’s divine corn chowder, Lori Welles’s superb ginger mulligatawny, and a delicious mild chili by UCC’s own Pastor Micki. The mulligatawny got the most votes, and the Cornwall Food and Fuel Banks got the $460 contributed by soup-fueled diners.

—John Miller

Ebb Tide in the Economy Part 2
As they have done for the last 18 months, the media continue to regale us with non-stop bulletins about the state of our economy, many of them contradictory. We are told that our national economic health has improved—somewhat. The country is no longer teetering over the abyss of a total meltdown, and there are scattered signs of modest growth here and there.

Financial markets have been booming. Now adjusted to the realities of 2009—more productivity, fewer employees and expenditures, a falling dollar—80 percent of companies in the S&P 500 have reported higher-than-forecast third-quarter profits. But income tax receipts are still declining, foreclosures are still on the rise, banks still haven’t written down the value of bad loans, and the consumer—that’s you and I—still isn’t spending. In other words, we still don’t have the economic foundation to support a return to growth. Most ordinary Americans are looking forward to a lean winter, and conversations with Cornwall businesspeople illustrate how national conditions are reflected locally.

The Housatonic Rug Shop is an example. Our 26-year-high unemployment rate of 10.2 percent means that consumers are not buying what the statistics refer to as consumer-discretionary items (the things you and I don’t absolutely have to have—rugs for instance). Ed Kenniston says business is off 25–30 percent from its peak in 2007. His rugs and carpets come from everywhere, and while the cottage industries that produce these rugs are charging less, Ed, in turn, both charges less and sells fewer. His distributors, who formerly made 24 stops out of the city and back, now make five.

As for housing starts—a typical economic indicator—Building Inspector Paul Prindle says that in ten years he’s never seen so few new single-family buildings. In the years 2000 to 2009, the number of new house permits was 6, 4, 8, 10, 9, 9, 4, 9, 5. This year, there are only 2, and one of these is a guest house. “There are none in the works,” Paul says ruefully, adding, “There’s a lot of bidding going on, as everyone understands that this is a buyer’s market.”

Since September 2008, Cornwall has seen two foreclosures. On Great Hollow Road, a buyer originally paid $435,000 for a house the bank later sold to a new owner for $210,000. On Kent Road, a house originally bought for $210,000 by Tracy Gray, Jill Bryant’s fab mulligatawny, and a delicious mild chili by UCC’s own Pastor Micki. The mulligatawny...
H1N1 Flu Misses Cornwall (So Far)

Whether you call it H1N1 or “swine flu,” the flu virus sweeping the world is hitting Connecticut’s young people hard. The federal Centers for Disease Control (CDC) says the flu situation in our state is “widespread,” its most serious category. In nearby areas, such as School District 10 (Harwinton and Burlington), two out of every five students were out for two weeks with it, and schools were closed for three days.

So, too, has K.C. Baird. If you’ve noticed that the shelves in Baird’s are looking bare, it’s because K.C. has reduced the size of his inventory to match the 15 percent reduction in overall sales that he’s endured during the last year. There’s even much less activity on Route 7, he adds, although it’s partly because of the many rainy weekends during October and September.

Everyone independently reported a slight uptick in business in recent weeks. Whether this is because the stock market has been rising, or whether it indicates the beginnings of sustainable growth in the economy, remains to be seen. None of those interviewed for this article expressed any optimism, but, as a much-honed aphorism has it, “The darkest hour comes just before the dawn.”

—Catherine Noren

The Herpetophobe’s Dilemma

Jerry Doolittle’s September story about the loveable snakes of Cornwall elicited an “oh yeah?” from Town Office workers who can recall a title-searcher staggering wide-eyed into the vault in the early 1990s claiming in a hoarse whisper to have seen a car hit a rattlesnake. A few days after the fever goes down, Martha Bruehl says you should remain at home for at least 24 hours. If you don’t, CDC offers some guidance to help determine whether you or your child has H1N1 flu. Symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, body aches, headache, chills, fatigue, and sometimes diarrhea or vomiting. More serious warning signs—for which you should promptly consult your doctor—are fast or troubled breathing, bluish skin color, being very irritable, not waking up or interacting. Full corroboration that an infection is H1N1 requires time-consuming lab tests. But if anyone in your house has these symptoms, Martha Bruehl says you should remain at home for at least 24 hours after the fever goes down.

To date, the highest rate of attack from the H1N1 flu has been on young people. Dr. David Kurish of Sharon explains that this may be because there was an earlier wave of swine flu back in the 1960s. If you were exposed to the disease then, you may still have some immunity to the current version.

—David A. Grossman

Are the Bugs Winning?

Uh-oh, here comes another one. Insect, that is. The Asian Longhorned Beetle, Anoplophora glabripennis, or ALB, is the newest threat to New England’s hardwood forests. Thought to have hitched a ride into the United States as long ago as 1996 on wooden packing material used for cargo imported from Asia, this tree-boring insect has a particular taste for maple trees. But it’s not terribly picky about its host, which also makes birch, willow, elm, poplar, sycamore, and black locust among the trees susceptible to its deadly boring.

ALB is only the most recent threat to our native tree population. While fungal diseases killed off almost all of Connecticut’s stately American chestnut and elm trees during the
The saga rolled on as letters and Savannah Martin. Savannah Martin were Heather, Autumn, Anna, and to call on. At season’s end, the players team, CCS had only four substitutes the team’s success, and with such a small fifteen players as they hit Foote four eighth graders. The year veterans as well as the other Classey, and Anna Geyselaers. The oversaw great leadership from graders for the past three years. She team of sixth, seventh, and eighth pionship season for fifth-grade teacher team’s record of 7-1-2 reflected only one feet forward to capture the title this fall. The will soon flaunt a new blue-and-gold banner over-winter beneath the bark, and woodpiles firewood from an unknown source, as beetles know where your wood supply comes from: they end up as firewood. save the trees, although Mike says systemic unfortunately, there is no cost-effective way to help identify the bug and instructions on times oozing sap—can be seen in the bark it makes its home in the trees’ canopy, but the means to quarantine affected areas and institute eradication procedures once ALB hits our state.

Detection of the beetle is difficult because it makes its home in the trees’ canopy, but exit holes about 3/4” in diameter—sometimes oozing sap—can be seen in the bark (check out www.ct.gov/caes for an easy test to help identify the bug and instructions on how to report it if you do find it). Unfortunately, there is no cost-effective way to save the trees, although Mike says systemic insecticide may help specimen trees. Infected trees should be destroyed, which could mean they end up as firewood.

If you plan to heat with wood this winter, know where your wood supply comes from: buy or harvest locally. Inadvertent spread of ALB can take place through the purchase of firewood from an unknown source, as beetles over-winter beneath the bark, and woodpiles provide a safe haven until the insects’ emergence in the spring.

—Cheryl Evans

Kicking Their Way to the Goal
The Cornwall Consolidated School’s gym will soon flaunt a new blue-and-gold banner proclaiming yet another regional championship. The CCS girls’ soccer team put its best feet forward to capture the title this fall. The team’s record of 7-1-2 reflected only one loss (to Kent). This is the second championship season for fifth-grade teacher Kristi Pramuka, who has coached the team of sixth, seventh, and eighth graders for the past three years. She oversaw great leadership from captains Heather Kearns, Autumn Classy, and Anna Geyselaers. The team will sorely miss these three-year veterans as well as the other four eighth graders.

Soccer practice started early for the fifteen players as they hit Foote Fields in the second week of school. As goalkeeper, Autumn was key to the team’s success, and with such a small team, CCS had only four substitutes to call on. At season’s end, the players selected for the regional all-star game were Heather, Autumn, Anna, and seventh graders Brianna Thompson and Savannah Martin.

Principal Bob Vaughan said he was “very proud of the hard work the team put in to become regional champs.” Along with the principal’s first sports season at CCS came his extra duty as the volunteer athletic director for the six grammar schools in our region. Not to be outdone (or at least not by much), Aaron Boucher coached the boys’ soccer team to a second-place tie behind regional behemoth North Canaan.

—Tricia Collins

Cornwall Briefs
Cell Towers: The saga rolled on as letters and e-mails flew among Attorney General Richard Blumenthal, Verizon’s lawyers, and First Selectman Gordon Ridgway. Blumey to Verizon: the Popple Swamp Road sites are too close to a residential area and might “adversely affect the health of the surrounding community.” Verizon came back with an idea for a new site to the north of the two sites proposed earlier. Gordon and the selectmen asked to see topo maps and queried Verizon’s “dartboard approach” to choosing a site. So it goes on and on and on, and Verizon hasn’t even gone to the Connecticut Siting Council yet.

Solar Panels: The panels earned by the town will go up soon at CCS. Stay tuned for a small celebration as the switch is flipped. And there’s more. The little Town Office building, thanks to $29,000 of federal stimulus money, may soon be entirely run by a small solar panel facing uphill to the east.

Town Roads: The early word on road oiling for next summer is that Cream Hill and Dibble Hill Roads, plus others in the northwest quadrant of town, will be treated with a new “eco-friendly liquid surface treatment.” Goodness, we used to call it tar. Lots of sand will go down, too, some of it for the third time, thanks to the Highway Department’s sand reuse program.

Holidays and the Dump: The selectmen ask that townspople go easy with the post-Christmas trash at the Transfer Station. Stagger the loads of ribbons and paper and boxes. Consider temporary solutions like making origami birds with the paper. Or interesting curtains? Shelf liners? Just don’t bring it all at once so that Fred and Steve aren’t buried under an overwhelming tide of holiday detritus.

—Lisa L. Simont

Not an Auto Mechanic!
When Ellen Moon was in junior high school, she took a career aptitude test. The result? She should become an auto mechanic. But when she was three, her grandmother told her, “Be an artist,” and that was the path she chose.

After majoring in art at Connecticut College for Women, she took an MFA in multi-media at the University of Iowa. “I was making big costumes and performing strange rituals in the woods.” However, when she went to New York after graduating, she found that there weren’t many jobs that involved performing strange rituals in the woods, so she started making one-of-a-kind jackets and sweaters, which she sold to Bendel’s and Madison Avenue boutiques. In 1982, broke from paying New York rents, she moved to her grandmother’s house in Cornwall, where she found different kinds of work. She “bent wire” for Tim Prentice and then moved on to being his “tracker,” scouting out possible commissions. She made costumes and sets for the Grumbling Gryphons. And she kept on making embroidered jackets. Now they are more elaborate: She sells them through a Boston gallery, and her last show two years ago sold out at an average of $5,000 a garment.

When she first met Dave Colbert in 1982, he said, “Come up to my room and see my eagle’s claw.” What a line, she thought. But he did have a dead eagle’s claw, and she married him.

Later, when she was on vacation in exotic places with him, she would paint vast mountain ranges and expanses of water. Then, five years ago, she became fascinated by the intimate landscapes of Cornwall. She began going out every day with her watercolors, painting and repainting particular scenes that attracted her. The result is the show running at the Cornwall Library through December 5.

“I’ve never had a steady job,” she says. “I’m always wondering what to do next.” But she likes it that way.

—Hendon Chubb

The Delicate Balance of Hot and Cold
Long gone are the days of stoking the fire, blowing out the candle, calling the dogs onto the bed, and turning in until the sun came up again. Or are they? Gone soon may be any sense that turning up the thermostat on the oil or propane boiler is anything but a
It’s about the R-value of our insulation, the quality and efficiency of our heating system and fuel, and how much heat we feel we need to be comfortable. The more heat we need, the more fuel we use. Period.

The prevailing wisdom is that we should wean ourselves off fossil fuels and diminish our carbon footprint by turning to solar energy systems, wind power, and geothermal systems. In Germany and Scandinavia, there are over 15,000 zero-carbon homes with no visible source of heat. The houses have fantastic insulation, windows, and doors. The heat comes from typical appliances, the sun, and body heat...this in countries that share our latitude. Anything we do in that direction has got to be the right thing.

It’s important to note that wood (a renewable resource plentiful in our corner of the world) is considered a carbon-neutral fuel when burned in large community-scaled burners serving multiple dwellings and buildings. Smaller wood-burning stoves are not as clean, although some are far better than others.

Comparing various fuels to see which is most cost effective is a bit of a fool’s errand because of the variables of thermal envelope, cubic feet heated, quality of fuel, quality of heating unit, and the temperature desired. In the end, investing in passive energy sources is going to bring the greatest return. Improving the insulating value of our homes and diminishing our energy demands are the best first steps. From there all investments in greater efficiency and energy independence are forward steps. We have lots to learn and much we should do. Refer to the websites below for some fascinating information on these topics.

http://www.haileycityhall.org/ClimateProtection/Smg_Up.pdf
http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d110:h.r.00006:
http://www.yale.edu/sustainability/ncee/ climatechange.html

Events & Announcements

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Ellen Mooney’s show Landscapes and Time continues through December 5. A show of paintings by Magaly Ohika entitled A whiny spig will begin on December 8, with an opening reception held Friday, December 11, from 5 to 7 p.m. Robert Charity’s holiday village and dollhouse will decorate the Library during December.

Meet the artists and see where the ribbons are when Lady Audrey’s Gallery presents the art competition Winter’s Waltz at a reception on Sunday, December 13, from 2 to 5 p.m. Deadline for entries is December 1.

World War II Veterans from Cornwall and their families are invited to a commemoration ceremony at Geer led by Secretary of the State Susan Bysiewicz on Monday, December 7, at 11 A.M. Rides will be available from the Selectmen’s Office. Call 860 672-4959 for more details.

During December Cornwall Community School students will decorate the Library during December in keeping with the theme of the exhibit. An Old Style Life Skills workshop, led by herbalist Alicia North, will be held December 12 from 10:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M., at the ECC Parish House. Make scent-sational gifts of Thieves’ Oil hand sanitizer, herbal salve, sachets, and more. Pre-register with Debra@Motherhouse.us or 860 672-0229.

A Parking Ban on town roads is in effect from December 1 to March 30 so that town crews can clean up after winter weather.

Christmas Traditions at UCC

• The Christmas Fair will be held Saturday, December 5, from 9:30 A.M. to 2 P.M. at the Parish House.
• The Community Pageant will be held on Saturday, December 12, at 7:30 P.M. (Note: There will be no UCC Parish House on Tuesday, December 22. From 1:30 to 6:15 p.m. to register or request information call 1-800-GIVE LIFE.
• The Red Cross Blood Drive will be held at the UCC Parish House on Tuesday, December 22, from 1:30 to 6:15 P.M. To register or request information call 1-800-GIVE LIFE.

CORNWALL CHRONICLE DECEMBER 2009

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