It's Only Millions

Yes, the Region One High School Building Project Committee stumbles along a path strewn with reality potholes. At present, the reality is a project too grand for the budget. The $9.1 million wish list won't fit inside the $8 million package green-wrapped by the voters.

After months of study, the Board of Education voted to build a new Vo-Ag center and greenhouse, to be funded 100 percent by the state. The project was expanded to include upgrades to the high school, 39.2 percent of the cost to be funded by the state. The board commissioned a building committee and provided a professional management team and an architect. A new plan was approved by voters at a referendum on May 5. It included $3.8 million for a new Vo-Ag facility and $4.12 million for the upgrades—a total of $8 million, with approximately $2.4 million to be financed by Region One taxpayers.

Proposed changes to the school include demolition of the old Vo-Ag building, a redesigned media center with an outside entrance, new science classrooms, a new Tech-Ed wing, improved art and music facilities, a new equipment storage building (including a snack shack and toilets for sports events), a TV broadcast room, an outer deck (I grow dizzy), and a new barn for animal projects. In fact, the long list of wanted improvements, changes, and upgrades occupied hours of study for a committee sometimes too silent in the drumbeat of need pounded out by the management team and professionals—improvements justified by the "ten-year rule" which ensures that a school be adequately equipped and modernized for at least the next ten years.

The project has survived a minefield of problems. No one could prevent adding to the gawky sprawl which crowds the campus. Demolishing the Vo-Ag building seems indefensible to the thrifty Yankee spirit, but the board is reconsidering the demolition, thereby affecting other parts of the plan.

The final problem of too much project for the funding must be resolved. Instead of postponements of deletions, the board has decided to go back to the voters, perhaps in May, to salvage the $9.1 million totality.

In the meantime, District One officials will, as required, submit the project by February 17 to the State Facilities Unit by deleting enough parts to meet the $8 million limit. Applications for additional state funding have been submitted by Superintendent John O'Brien, and parts of the project can be put back if voters approve. The project could go to bid in March, and earth could be turned by late spring. It really could.

You might ask how a project originally projected at $8 million could blossom and then go wild—but please don't.

—Phil Hart
Member, Building Committee

Mountain Lion Proof?

Has the existence of mountain lions in our area, long believed by Cornwallians but doubted by the Department of Environmental Protection for lack of specific evidence, finally been proved?

Perhaps. Jan Tenney, on December 11, from the window of her house on Sharon-Goshen Turnpike, took a picture of what looked to her like "a small lion" on the other side of Mill Brook which runs past her house. The photograph is not clear. There was no snow on the ground, and the animal blends into the brown leaves and shrubbery of the stream bank. But the roundish head and first two feet of the body are discernible. "I hoped the sun shining on the lion's ears would show up in the picture, but it doesn't," Jan said.

The circumstances of the sighting are bizarre. At about seven in the morning, Jan noticed a doe standing in the middle of the brook which flares out into a pond-like area by her house. The doe was staring fixedly at the opposite bank, and Jan took her picture. She was surprised to see the doe there fifteen minutes later, and she took another snapshot. This went on for over two hours, the doe practically immobile in the water. Jan took about

(continued on page 2)
12 pictures at intervals as the light changed, and the doe still stood there, staring.

Then, shortly after nine o'clock, Jan saw an animal coming down a path on the far side of the brook. She watched for about 15 minutes until the creature went away. She describes it as the height of her Labrador, but longer, with a very long, heavily furred tail, and a golden brown coat, about the color of the dead leaves. At first she watched with binoculars, then thought of her camera. She lined up the picture with a bird feeder outside her window and a branch hanging over the stream to show exactly where the mountain lion was.

Will this "bad picture," as she describes it, be the proof that the DEP has been looking for? Stay tuned. —Barbara Klaw

**Hoosters' Winning Ways**

The Park and Rec. boys' basketball team, made up of fifth- and sixth-graders, with the CCS gym as its home court, is now part of a league that includes teams from Roxbury, Litchfield, Bridgewater, and Washington Depot. In its opening game on January 9, the home team, coached by Tom Baird, put away Bridgewater, 30 to 20. All eight team members scored, with Damien Davia and Byron Clohessy leading the way with eight points each. Coach Baird reported that "all the kids did great!"

On January 16 the Cornwall team scored a victory over Litchfield II, 44 to 28. A loss to Litchfield a week later left Cornwall with a 2-0 record. Coach Baird reported that "we didn't have the team we expected to have this year, but we did better than we expected," according to Ski Area Director Barbara Klaw.

**The Mountain Comes to CCS**

Mohawk Mountain's program for Cornwall Consolidated School children is now in its 50th year, which makes this a fitting time to reflect on how the mountain has come to Cornwall.

According to Ski Area President Carol Lugar, more than 2,000 kids have received approximately 75,000 lift tickets (and about $1.5 million worth of skiing) since her father, Walt Schoenlebach, started offering casual Saturday lessons in 1949, two years after the ski area opened. "My father thought everyone should learn to ski and be outside having fun in the winter, especially kids," Carol recalls.

By the mid 1980s, Friday skiing for upper graders had become a formal part of the physical education curriculum. Now, fourth- through eighth-graders can take ski lessons at a reduced rate, with Mohawk donating the lift tickets. Snowboarding lessons were added in 1996 for hot-doggers who passed the gold-level ski test. Students can also go cross-country skiing or snowshoeing with teacher Jo Loi.

Ski-fee instruction, which began in 1992, is for the transition class through third grade. Mohawk charges minimally for the six weeks of rentals; Park and Rec. pays for lessons. In addition, by simply flashing their IDs at Edna Hedden or her colleagues in the ticket booth, CCS students can get free lift tickets-2,200 last year alone. (That's a lot of Nutmeg navigating and Wildwood running!) Those tickets, Carol says, were worth about $38,500. Not surprisingly, the number of participants has doubled in the last seven years.

Cornwallians have happy memories of Mohawk. Susie Williamson remembers Saturday morning ski lessons (back in the late 1960s), for a buck a piece with Josie Whitney, now head of Mohawk's ski patrol and known as the "band-aid lady." "My father," says Susie, "would give me the dollar, and Mrs. Whitney would push or pull us up the bunny hill, line us up, and say, 'Follow me!'" Now Susie's seventh-grade son Caleb, whom Carol calls "one of our best customers," spends most winter afternoons snowboarding in the de rigeur mock hip-hop uniform. "He'd rather go to school all summer and ski all winter," says his mother.

Carol Lugar hopes the town-downhill connection will continue. Josie Whitney has been part of it since 1957 when she was barely older than her students. "I'm teaching the grandkids of the first Cornwall skiers," she says. I enjoy every minute of it, seeing the smiles on little kids' faces when they complete a turn." —Jamie Monagan

**More Birds than Ever**

Winter had hardly started by the day of the Bird Count. My earlier scouting expeditions had produced few birds. So expectations were low as five of us set out to count birds on Sunday morning, December 20. There was no snow and the temperature was practically balmy. We did more walking this year so we found several different birds: three cowbirds on Cherry Hill, a Carolina wren in West Cornwall, finches, woodpeckers, and cedar waxwings on Rexford Road, and horned larks on Cream Hill Farm.

My low expectations were unfounded. We counted some 1,000 birds, including 428 Canada geese. All in all, we found 34 species, four more than we did last year. There was jubilation at the end of the day when the tally for the entire region reported a total of 80 species, a new record.

—Celia Senzer

**Welcome**

Rebecca Rose to Jayne and Gordon Ridgway
Theodore Rogers to Abigail (Horan) and John D. Moore

**Good-bye to Friends**

Robert G. Barnes
Joseph W. Neary
Carl W. Yutzler

**Land Transfers**

Yelping Hill Association to Graham S. and Joy H. Wyatt, house at 16 McClelland Road for $162,000.
Coltsfoot Farm Ltd. Partnership to John E. and Nancy G. Calboun, 20.7 acres on Valley Road for $140,000.
Catherine L. Murphy and Frank H. Murphy to Elizabeth D. La Fond, house and 5 acres at 18 Warren Hill Road for $165,000.

**The Joys of Volunteering**

"Oh, my gosh," exclaimed fourth-grade teacher Florence Budge, when I asked about the school volunteer program, "that should be a long article!" Mary Ann Fox, Volunteer Coordinator, echoed the sentiment: "If I included all the volunteers, the list would be very long." Teachers and volunteers alike radiate enthusiasm and gratitude for the program. Of her volunteer, Mrs. Budge said, "She's so flexible, patient, easy to work with, a godsend. Volunteers are our greatest source of knowledge and expertise; I don't know what we'd do without them."

CCS has had volunteers in the classrooms for many years. However, when class sizes started increasing dramatically, PTA members Jamie Monagan and Diane Goldstein decided to recruit more volunteers and formalize the program so that, as Mrs. Budge put it, "We could make sure the program would be productive for everyone." They mailed questionnaires to all postal patrons asking for both regular helpers and "resource" people for special projects. In the fall of 1996, the new volunteers were given name buttons, Volunteer Guidebooks, and a formal training session; they watched the OSHA Video Blood Borne Pathogens, signed the Log Book, and were off and running-into the classrooms. Whereas there used to be six or seven volunteers, there are now more than 20.

"Why do I volunteer?" asked Janet Gold. "I was a librarian for 35 years and love working with children. I come in every Tuesday to work with Joyce Samson's transition class. We read, we do projects. Last week we made pretzels in the shape of an 'S.'"
Marie Gold, Janet’s daughter-in-law, taught in Sweden, and feels that the lower grades in particular can use extra help. “You can work one-on-one with the kids; it’s good for them and it’s good for the teachers.” Kim Gellaty agrees: “When I volunteered, I felt I gave the teacher more time to focus on certain skills. The kids love it.” Parents do, too. Praising the individual attention volunteers provide, Vera Dinneen says, “My son Garrick’s fourth-grade class has twenty-six kids; remember when there were only three eighth-graders?”

Judy Gates, who was Garrick’s father Bill’s ninth-grade English teacher, now volunteers in Garrick’s class. “I love it. I worked at Regional for twenty years and, frankly, I’d be lonely without this work. The kids are extraordinary—lively, well-mannered, and imaginative. And I take every opportunity to correct non-standard English.

“Besides,” she continues, “the school needs volunteers. The teachers and the principal at CCS work very hard to maintain standards in over-crowded classrooms.”

Perhaps it is not surprising that many of the volunteers have backgrounds in education. Principal Bill Oros likens their work to the pleasure of being a grandparent: “They love being with the kids, but they can go home.” Mrs. Budge says, “If you love what you do, you come back.” Judy Gates certainly agrees: “Once a teacher, always a teacher. We have that basic inclination. Teaching can be painful; anything that goes wrong is your fault. But after years in education, you want to volunteer because you feel you belong there. Also, I need to make a contribution, and this is a way to help the home town where I belong.”

—Ella Clark

Editors’ note: To volunteer, call Mary Ann Fox, 672-0192.

What Will CCS Need?

Responding to increasing concerns about the shortage of space at CCS, First Selectman Gordon Ridgway, with advice from the Board of Education, has appointed the Cornwall Education Strategic Study Committee, which includes Katherine Gannett, Barbara Gold, Ralph Gold, Phil Hart, Roger Kane, Brian Kavanagh, Anne Kosciusko, Willis Ocan, Catherine Tagte, and Gordon Ridgway. Principal Bill Oros and Superintendent John O’Brien are ex officio members.

At its meeting on January 7, Ralph Gold, current chairman of the Board of Finance, was voted to head the committee, with Susan Ginger as clerk. The charge to the committee is “to project the physical plant needs and a feasible plan for Cornwall education for the next ten years.” Such a study will include school population projections, current and (continued on page 4)

Letters to the Chronicle

SKATING LESSON

A heartfelt thanks to Monagan, Fox, Hubbard, et al., who created Cornwall’s own ice rink behind the West Cornwall Firehouse. We planned to teach our three-and-a-half-year-old son Lee to skate this winter, so the timing for us was perfect. Imagine our joy as we put on his first pair of skates and helped him onto the ice. A lightly falling snow added to the magic of the moment. After initial apprehension and several falls, he soon could stand alone, move along slowly while holding our hands, and with some help push along the small wooden chair left strategically on the ice for young skaters. By the end of our first visit he didn’t want to leave and asked to come back every day! Thanks to you, we can.

—Emile and Joe Pryor

Editors’ note: Contributions to offset rink start-up expenses are welcome—Cornwall Rink, Box 243, West Cornwall, CT 06796.

VALENTINES FOR MABEL

A beloved Cornwall lady, Mabel Engisch, turned 100 years old last November. For many decades she taught Cornwall children in the middle grades, both before and after CCS opened in 1940. Her former students are multitudinous, and many of them still live in Cornwall. I suggest that Cornwallians who were taught by Mabel send her a Valentine this year, flooding her mail with good wishes and gratitude. Her address is: Noble Horizons, 17 Cobble Road, Salisbury, CT 06068. Valentine’s Day is February 14!

—Lynn Erna Niebergall

MOON NEWS

The moon is in the news in 1999 and not because someone’s walking on it. There will be two “blue moons” this year, a heavenly circumstance which has not occurred in 80 years, according to the Associated Press.

A blue moon is the second full moon in a calendar month. January had full moons on the 1st and 31st. March has its first moon on the 2nd and its blue moon on the 31st. Moons have other names. Here’s the AP list:

March—sap moon, crow moon, Lenten moon; April—grass moon, egg moon; May—planting moon, milk moon; June—rose moon, flower moon, strawberry moon, July—thunder moon, hay moon; August—green corn moon, grain moon; September—harvest moon, fruit moon; October—hunter’s moon; November—frosty moon, beaver moon; December—the moon before Yule.

But isn’t there a wolf moon? I wonder when it is. Anyone have other names they’ve heard?

—Lisa Lansing Simont

THANKS, MOHAWK

Congratulations to Mohawk Ski Area in its 52nd year, and a very special thank you for offering the ski programs to the students of CCS. The students have the unique experience of developing skills in a sport that will last a lifetime. We appreciate Mohawk’s offering this opportunity to the students and staff of CCS.

—Bill Oros, Principal

Editors’ note: See article, page 2.
future space needs, and community uses of school facilities.

The school expansion of ten years ago assumed a maximum population of 225. The current student body numbers 210, with future enrollment expected to rise to 250.

Solutions to the space problem could include expanding existing facilities, building new structures, or using existing empty buildings in town. All solutions must have long-range needs in mind as well as being financially feasible.

Committee members have been assigned to subcommittees to review demographics, to determine classroom, gymnasium, public space, playground, and other land needs, and to consider the viability of such options as establishing a middle school or junior high. The committee will report to the town in April at which time it will propose a budget item for a professional planner to help the committee in its work. Meanwhile, townpeople are urged to share their ideas and questions with committee members.

—Ken Keskinen

Events & Announcements

Helping Healthy Hearts: On Wednesday, February 24, from 11:30 A.M. to 2:45 P.M., sixth to eighth graders at CCS will participate in the 20th anniversary of the American Heart Association’s fund-raiser, Jump Rope for Heart. Student teams will not only benefit from exercising their own hearts but also bring attention to the importance of a healthy diet and a smoke-free lifestyle.

In past years, students will be seeking sponsors. Consider making your American Heart Association donation through a student. Money goes toward AHA research and education programs.

We will need help in several ways. If you are interested in contributing prizes for contests, supervising a team, helping to organize healthful snacks, or are willing to sponsor a student, please call Jo Loi at CCS, 672-6617. Sue Gallo can be contacted about prizes.

Most important, please stop by the gym on February 24 to see Cornwall students do their part to prevent heart disease.

Art in Cornwall: At the Cornwall Library, Ken Keskinen’s show of Multifarious Art continues until February 20. Opening on February 22 will be an exhibit of watercolors by Nancy Calhoun. This show will continue until April 3. At the National Iron Bank, Pat Rimany will exhibit photographs during February. The bank would like to thank Robert Fournier for showing his paintings in January. Both Pieter Leffers’ exhibit of paintings at Hedgerows and Nick Jacobs’ show of photographs at the Wish House will continue until the end of March.

The Cornwall Senior Club is pleased to present the CT Tech Act Project on Tuesday, February 9, at 1 P.M. in the Town Hall. All are welcome. Evelyn Oliver Knight of the CT Tech Act Project will demonstrate devices designed to help a person’s ability to function. Assistive technology devices range from small kitchen gadgets that help you cook to a specially adapted van to help you drive. The project provides information and advocacy to insure that Connecticut residents of all ages have access to assistive technology. If weather conditions are hazardous on February 9, call Jill Gibbons at 672-2603 for re-scheduling information.

Kids’ Night Out at the Cornwall Library, a film series for school-age children using a large-screen video projector, starts Friday, February 19, at 6:45 to 8:30 P.M. with the showing of The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T. Films for preschoolers will be on Saturdays from 10:30 to 11:30 A.M., beginning February 20 with Harry the Dirty Dog. Please register: 672-6874. Snacks provided.

Library “Walk-Through”: The Building Committee of the Cornwall Library Association, still in the process of designing its new building, invites all interested parties to a progress report—a “walk-through” of the floor plan—with Chairman Jim Terrall on Sunday, February 14, at 4 P.M. at the Town Hall. Refreshments will, of course, be served.

Property Tax Appeals: Application forms for the Board of Assessment Appeals hearings to be held in March are available now from the Town Clerk or the Assessor’s Office. They must be filed at the Town Office by Thursday, February 18 or postmarked by Saturday, February 20, according to state statutes. The hearings will be held at the Town Hall or Town Office on these dates: March 2, 1 to 4 P.M.; March 4, 9:30 A.M. to 12:30 P.M.; March 5, 5:30 to 7:30 P.M.; and March 6, 10 A.M. to 1 P.M. Applicants will be notified by mail or phone of their hearing time. The board asks that any information relevant to making a decision (e.g., maps, comparative property data, realtor appraisals, etc.) be brought to the hearing. For further information, please call 672-6614 or 672-6704.

Special Town Meeting: The following proposals will be voted on at a Town Meeting on Friday, February 19, 1999, at the CCS Gym, beginning at 7:30 P.M.: 1) to accept a fire alarms ordinance; 2) to appropriate up to $15,000 for the survey and acquisition of one-half acre of land adjacent to the Cornwall Bridge Firehouse on Route 7; 3) to establish the Cornwall Scholarship Fund to benefit students beyond the secondary level, and to accept a bequest of $40,000 to establish the Marie K. Baum Scholarship; 4) to amend the ordinance for building permit fees as follows: $20 for the first $1,000 of construction, and $6 for each additional $1,000.

Now We Are Eight

The first issue of the Chronicle was published in February 1991, spurred by a bit of cabin fever and an uncontrollable urge on the part of Tom Bevans. It reported on the formation of a building committee to study the use of Ramsey Hall, and noted a real estate recession, with prices falling by 30 percent and no zoning applications for the first time in P&Z’s history. So a few things are quite different in Cornwall, but most look pretty much the same, including the Chronicle itself.

Is that OK with you? If so, send money. If not, let us know! We’re almost 100 issues old, but still spry enough to learn some new tricks.