Budget Talks Begin

Early signs of spring: robin sightings, spring training, and Cornwall's budget season, which opened February 20 at a four-hour session in which the Board of Finance heard the Selectmen's preliminary budget.

It asked for general government expenditures of $1,467,362, an increase of $80,602, or 5.81%. Town wages have been frozen, and increases were mainly for insurance and revaluation.

The capital budget was $547,963, including $300,000 for road and bridge repair and salt shed construction. This item will likely be softened by a combination of cuts, state grants and use of funds from surplus.

The season continues through March and April, winding up with the annual budget town meeting on May 8.

— Ed Ferman

School Board Meeting

A School Board meeting was held Feb. 20, to discuss the preliminary budget to be presented to the Board of Finance. No member of the public or representative of the press was present.

There is an increase of $156,000 in the budget to $1,721,679. The Cornwall share of the High School budget for the 42 Cornwall students is $443,185. The Cornwall share of the Regional administrative costs is $37,769 and for pupil services $132,797. The CCS budget is $1,107,928. However these figures are bound to increase when the Regional Board submits its budget.

— Lynn Cheney

The Budget and More

The Selectmen's budget to be submitted to the Board of Finance will show a 5% increase. Budget transfer requests regarding legal, pension, and election expenses will be made at the March 6 Town Meeting.

A letter from the Northwestern Conn. COG urged Selectmen to ask their state legislators to oppose binding arbitration, state-mandated but unfunded functions, local retirement pay funded by the town rather than the state, and any reduction of state aid for education and roads.

Selectmen were unanimous in their objection to a low-level radioactive waste dump in a state forest, Cornwall having so much forest. A motion to that effect was passed. On other matters, the First Selectman's office will be ready March 1, a purchase spec. for an oil contract will be written and bids solicited, and residents on roads whose sides are being brush-cut will be advised beforehand about what is going on.

— Jack Forster

Sharp Cuts in State Grants

Formula grant aid to the town of Cornwall would decrease by 42% under the Governor's budget proposal for the fiscal year 1992-1993. During the current year the town will get $225,891; next year, if there are no changes during the state budget process, the town will get an estimated $131,003.

Our biggest loss will be in formula grants for education. Last year we got almost $88,000. During the current year the figure is $58,827. The estimate for next year is $9,683. The other big loser is town aid for roads, down from $98,156 to $72,254. Fortunately, the state reimbursement for the school addition, estimated at $128,141 for the coming year, is not a formula grant and will be unaffected.

Not all the news is bad. The grand list may be up about 2-1/2%, which would add close to $60,000 to real estate tax revenues and the fire department has decided not to ask this year for the $20,000 that is in the Five-Year Plan for a new ambulance. These go a considerable way to offset the aid reduction of $94,888.

— Hendon Chubb
Agriculture Goes to School

The Agricultural Advisory Committee, which was formed last August, decided to make use of the school as a way to help people appreciate farming. Chris Hopkins, Dody Clarke-Wolfe and Cilla Mauro, helped by Karen Stevens and Ralph Gold, created five lessons for students at the Cornwall School.

The lessons included a condensed version of the history of agriculture, a look at the human relationship to the cycles of nature and a talk on farm-related careers by a teacher from the HVRHS Vo-Ag Dept.

This brief course helped to show our need for farm and forest products, both for today and for future generations. It stressed that people must work to keep all other activities in harmony with productive lands. They can do so by a willingness to serve on committees, study issues, speak up and vote.

Each week there was a hands-on activity which included assembling and running a milk separator, using an antique corn sheller, and grinding corn and wheat seeds on a 2000-year-old grinding stone. The course ended on a sweet but sticky note of cornbread and honey. — Cilla Mauro

Goodbye to a Friend

Freddy, a veteran volunteer with the Fire Department and the Rescue Squad, now is an invaluable teacher's aide in the first grade at CCS.

P & Z Approves

On February 10, Planning and Zoning held public hearings on applications by Charles Besozzi, Jr. for a permanent sawmill near the Marvinwood playing field off Route 4; by the Town of Cornwall to renew the permit for a municipally operated dwelling on Lake Road; and by Rocky River Associates to renew their permit for a gravel mining operation on Kent Road in Cornwall Bridge.

Following the hearing the Besozzi application was approved. The applicant was cautioned that the Appellate Court decision as to whether or not to hear an appeal to the Superior Court ruling upholding the sawmill regulation had not yet been announced. The renewal of the Town’s housing permit was approved. The Rocky River renewal was approved with the condition that monthly reports detailing their activities be brought up to date.

Land Transfers

Ronald J. & Martha K. Bushey to James N. Ravlin, land on Grange Hall Rd.

Timothy McQuillan to William Hurlburt, house & land on Cornwall Hol­

Chester Mergian to Anne A. Hubbard, house on Kent Rd.

Anne A. Hubbard to Cornwall Housing Corporation, two houses on Kent Rd.

On Open Lands Protection

On January 17 the Agricultural Advisory Commission hosted a public forum with land-use specialist James Gibbons. At a well attended meeting of Cornwall friends and neighbors concerned with finding ways to maintain our area’s rural character, Mr. Gibbons reviewed the history of attempts to protect open lands and made a number of suggestions about how best to deal with regulations and the State. A cassette tape of the meeting is available from the Commission.

Welcome

Anaise Knox to Lisa Ann and Charles Knox

Goodbye to a Friend

Ruth G. Kelley

Congratulations

Richard J. Adams and Carol J. Howland

Welcome

Anaise Knox and Charles Knox

How the HVRHS Board Works

Last month I made a rash promise to explain the workings of the HVRHS Board of Education in this column. Now it’s time to make good that pledge.

The first thing to understand is that Region 1 is unlike any other regional school district in Connecticut. We were the first
regional district and operate under our own Special Act (#428 in 1937) with some later amendments. This accounts for our somewhat cumbersome system of seven school boards and at the same time allows for some latitude of action that other districts do not have.

Originally we were legally known as Regional High School District Number 1 of Litchfield County, but in 1959 this name was amended to Regional School District Number 1 of Litchfield County. That amendment also gives the Region 1 Board the right, with voter approval, to establish and operate schools to meet the general education needs of students in the Region beyond the sixth grade, as well as provide special education programs for all grade levels. Additionally, as you remember from last month, every District is required to have a Superintendent and a Director of Pupil Services. In practice, at this time, Cornwall has only nine votes out with its responsibility to provide education the local board (this procedure is consistent representative from each town in the Region and acts in an advisory capacity to the Region 1 Board. The RSC has no authority to do anything except pass its recommendations on to the Region 1 Board for action.

The Region 1 Board consists of one representative from each town in the Region. That representative is appointed by the local board (this procedure is consistent with its responsibility to provide education for all children in town). Voting power is weighed in accordance with each town's high school population — for example, at this time Cornwall has only nine votes out of the 100 total.

In a nutshell, that's how it works! Any questions? If so, feel free to call me at 672-6216.

— Becky Williams

PTO Playground Committee Report

As Chronicle readers may already know, the Cornwall Consolidated School playground has been closed. Why? Here's what's been happening.

The wooden climber was declared off limits this fall after students incurred some minor injuries. An insurance audit turned up serious faults in all three pieces of equipment. (Copies of the report are at the school and Town Offices.)

The PTO agreed to look at options for replacement or repair of the equipment and a committee was formed. After reviewing the insurance report, the equipment, and the playground site, the committee has recommended that new equipment be purchased. This will accomplish several things: one, it will bring the playground into compliance with the newest government guidelines for safety; two, it will incorporate handicapped-accessible components into the structure and safety surface which the current set-up does not do; three, it will enrich the physical education program by including equipment to encourage upper body strength. In addition, Jo Loi, the physical education teacher, has suggested a fitness course to encircle the playground. The Committee believes this can be put together by volunteers without purchasing additional equipment.

Playground equipment companies are being interviewed so that a budget proposal can be made to the town. We are very aware of budget concerns, and therefore the Committee is looking to the community for support in both volunteer labor to help prepare the sites and assemble the equipment when the time comes, and money donations. If you'd like to make a donation please send it to: CCS Playground Fund, c/o CCS PTO, 5 Cream Hill Road, West Cornwall, CT 06796.

Meanwhile, we're asking the school children to draw their favorite playground structure, and we plan to incorporate their ideas into the final design.

— Cheryl Evans, Chairman

Letters to the Chronicle

RESURGENCE OF THE WALKER

There has been a resurgence of the Walker - a native Cornwall species, considered by many to be a rare bird. Sightings now occur daily in various locations — River Road, Valley Road, Cream Hill, Town Street, Cherry Hill and Mohawk. There seem to be many kinds of Walkers: Crack-of-Dawn Walkers, Evening Walkers, Fairweather Walkers, Come-Hell-or-Highwater Walkers, Solitary Walkers, Group Walkers, Dog Walkers, Hikers and the odd Race Walker.

There are those who walk once or twice a week, or just on weekends, and those who walk daily. Some do the same route, others are explorers.

The prize for dedication goes to the Jackmans, Cherry Hill Walkers, who have rarely missed a day in 17 years. The most energetic Walker is surely Annie Van Doren, who carries one daughter in a back pack and pushes the other in a space-age stroller.

Walkers appreciate motorists who slow down and wave!

— Marie Prentice & Julia Scott
(two Cream Hill-Town Street Amblers)

ANOTHER SIGHTING

I, too, have seen "Gordon", not at the breakfast or town meeting table but in the Keminston's field. On January 11, 1992 at approximately 8:45 a.m. travelling eastward on Route 4, I noticed a large animal in the field. The animal's color was a yellowish tan. Intrigued, I slowed the vehicle down and glared at a large feline. It was walking crouched down toward the ground with one large paw raised. Thoroughly impressed with the size of the paw and ears, I stopped the car and continued to watch. As the cat moved forward, a terrific tail swung toward the sky. No doubt it was a MOUNTAIN LION.

— Jayne W. Ridgway

THE ANIMALS COMMENT

The Cornwall Chronicle is truly unique! A forum for many viewpoints! Now that Mountain Lion has written, we wish to greet you too.

There was a time – hundreds of years ago – when the humans who lived here knew that they were part of the larger animal world and shared it with respect and care for us. Now humans in Cornwall are having trouble sharing the land even among themselves! We wonder if your Cornwall Housing Corporation and your Habitat for Humanity will be able to help you remedy that problem. We have had enormous habitat problems ourselves and people are starting to understand that. Perhaps people will begin to care more for each other, for all species, and for our beautiful planet.

We are watching you with love and hope.

— Brother Bear & Sister Moon

MY CONFESSION

We moved here in 1987. On October 4th that year there was a blizzard. Now, as transplanted Californians who had lived in Florida for five years before moving here, we thought that the leaves should be off the trees before it snowed, but what do we know? So I thought I would take advantage of this disaster, and I bought myself a pair of cross-country skis so I could enjoy the #1 form of cardiovascular exercise. As we all know, it has barely snowed enough since then to keep Mohawk open, let alone ski on the railroad tracks! So forget about the greenhouse effect — it’s my fault. I bought those skis for my own selfish reasons and ended any chance of significant accumulation in the northwest hills. Sorry.

— Dave Cadwell

More letters, please. And if you don’t want your letter edited without consultation, please say so.

— Becky Williams
Math in Our School

Department Chairman Keith Bond, reported on the mathematics curriculum at the High School. Bond noted that HVREIS offers qualified students, constituting about 20% of the student body, five years of advanced math. Other students take lower level vocational math courses. The State requires three years of math for graduation. Some board members suggested it would be a good idea if all students were required to take some algebra. Mr. Bond also commented that there is a need for better coordination between elementary school and high school math programs.

The board was addressed briefly but vehemently by an area taxpayer who called for a major restructuring of secondary education in the district. — Earl Brecher

CHC Gives House, Land to Habitat

The Cornwall Housing Corporation at its February meeting voted to give to the Habitat for Humanity of Northwest Connecticut the former Mergian house on a two-acre parcel of land on Route 7. The parcel had been the gift of Anne and Tom Hubbard of Cornwall to the CHC.

The CHC board also discussed at some length the Ground Lease agreement being formulated by those wishing to lease parcels from the CHC. A subcommittee is incorporating suggested changes into the document, with further discussion to follow at the next board meeting. The 18-page document is based on models in successful use by other housing agencies.

The board will, at its March meeting, present a subdivision plan of the Town Street parcel for discussion. The plan will indicate septic system location and projected house placement. At that meeting the board will also decide whether to submit its application for a special permit to develop the parcel.

The board discussed its status as a private corporation and its obligation to have open meetings. In line with the policies of similar service organizations in the state, and in line with legal opinions from state agencies, the CHC board has the right to determine to what extent and when its meetings can be open to the public. It will continue its practice of sharing information with attendees at the beginning of meetings, and will move into executive session when appropriate. Furthermore, it will continue to share periodically with the town in special meetings its policies and procedures with regard to housing opportunities.

Mary Sams was elected to the board to fill a vacancy created by the resignation of Jim Whiteside whose helpful service over the years was recognized. — Ken Keskinen

Property Tax Credit

Cornwall homeowners who were 65 or older by Dec. 31, 1991, or who are receiving Social Security disability payments may be eligible for credit on their property tax. The property must be their principal residence and the total income, including Social Security, must be less than $19,400 single and $23,800 married.

Applications may be filed in the assessor’s office until May 15, and if eligible, will apply to the July billing. Once on the program, reapplication is every two years, and forms have been mailed to homeowners who must reapply this year. The applications are available from the assessor’s office, open Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-12:30 and Wednesdays 1-4. — Barbara Johnson

Events & Announcements

Auction for Child Center: March 22, 2-4:30 p.m. at Marvelwood School. Actor Larry Gates and stand-up comic Dave Cadwell will auction items of delighted including tickets to David Letterman show, brunch at Fresshfields, etc. Proceeds will benefit the Cornwall Child Center, a haven for children for 15 years. Increasing enrollment of over 50% has created a need for a larger and permanent home.

If you have a vacation home, talent or service to donate for the auction, call Jean Vitalis at 672-6880 immediately. Admission, $5, includes wine & appetizers. For free child care during the auction call Martha Bruehl, 672-6373, by March 13.