Connectivity: Two Views

At the Cornwall Connectivity forum held on July 11 at the Cornwall Town Hall, the question of the safety of wireless devices arose in a discussion about creating a municipally owned fiber broadband network in Cornwall. While fiber broadband networks (bundled glass light strands which carry multi-frequency signals at lightning speeds) have no radiofrequency (RF) radiation exposures, telcom companies are currently mounting “small cells,” mini-cell towers with radiation exposures, onto broadband fiber cable lines in conjunction with the rollout of 5G, the next wireless technology.

Hundreds of thousands of these mini-cell towers will be needed, as well as macro-cell towers to communicate with the mini-cells. As a result, many towns, including Brussels and Geneva, have banned 5G and “small cells” until further safety studies can be done. In Cornwall, the “small cell” rollout has already begun; a precursor to “small cells” is being installed at a distance of every third telephone pole on the cable lines throughout town.

Our selectman has met with Connecticut PURA (the Connecticut Public Utilities Regulatory Authority) to ascertain why these “small cell” precursors are being installed without town approval. He learned that Cornwall has no authority over these installations, and its ability to control the implementation of “small cells” has been restricted due to the recent enactment of rules by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), as well as by a lobbying effort at the state level to promote “small cells” and weaken local jurisdiction.

In Connecticut, Sen. Richard Blumenthal is co-sponsoring the “Empowering Local Communities Act,” and has called for the FCC to update its 20-year-old RF exposure standards.

Fiber broadband technology offers great promise, but in its current form as a vehicle for 5G and “small cell” installations, it is a technology many towns are approaching with caution. Additional information about the issue can also be found at mdsafetech.org.

—Caroline Nastro

At the well-attended Cornwall Connectivity meeting on July 11, Kim Maxwell of NWConneCT informed us that 5G technology will likely happen in urban areas within five years. Given that one of the main drivers for 5G technology is self-driving vehicles, we in the Northwest Corner probably don’t need to get in a panic.

Recent regulatory action in Connecticut is reassuring. In June 2017, the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities submitted a list of recommendations to PURA for establishing new processes for permitting “small cell” equipment deployments in public rights-of-way and on utility poles. In its final decision on June 2, 2017, PURA incorporated nearly all of the recommendations made by the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities for all new proceedings where “small cell” facilities might be constructed on utility poles. The decision was the culmination of a range of activism by CCM, along with many municipalities, concerned residents, state legislators, and municipal leaders.

The bottom line: elected officials will receive at least 30 days’ notice prior to the filing of any “small cell” application with PURA, along with a request for a municipal consultation. The provider is required to identify a company representative familiar with the proposed construction to work with the municipality. The host municipality will be designated as a participant in

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*Sundays: Yoga, 9–10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-0229; Zumba, 9:30–6:30 pm Library; Mah Jongg, 7–9 pm Library call 672-6874; Fridays: Yoga, 8:30–10 pm Library; Tuesday Play Group, 10:30–11:30 am Library; *Sundays: Yoga, 9–10:30 am Library; Meditation, 1 pm call Debra 672-6229; ASW Method Mat Class, 1–3 pm Library*
any PURA “small cell” proceeding, and, if an adjoining property owner files an objection, the municipality will automatically be elevated from participant to intervenor status in PURA proceedings.

Finally, Public Act 19-163, passed during the last legislative session, creates a Council on 5G Technology to study and set standards for the placement of “small cells” on state-owned property. The Office of Policy and Management is required to work with PURA and the Siting Council to establish policies for “small cell” siting on municipally owned land as well as private property (with the property owner’s permission).

For those with concerns, no doubt there will be endless rounds of public hearings to attend. —Anna Timmell

All About the Bike

Two women—one from across the river, the other her Brooklyn houseguest—came into the spiffy new Covered Bridge Electric Bike shop (https://coveredbridgeebike.com/860-248-3010) in the old Moose space. They hadn’t planned to stop, but, greeted by owners Bob and Meg Ensign, they were soon given basic instructions, fitted out with appropriate helmets and bikes, and took off down the road towards Trinity Retreat. After a few minutes, we watched them zip back onto the main drag and sail up towards Cream Hill Road.

Bob told me that he had retired from work in construction (“so I am extremely attentive to safety”) and wanted to do something fun, something that made people happy. “Hard-core cyclists can climb these hills, but, for most of us, hills are tough. The pedal assist makes it possible for you to go farther, but at the same time provides a perfect mix of exercise.”

One of those hard-core cyclists, Terry Burke, agrees. “When I led a bike tour I had on one occasion a lady in her 80s who brought along her e-bike and told me that she had ridden all her life, and now that she could not manage all the hills as once she could, that her e-bike gave her the necessary assistance and enabled her to maintain the same quality of life—and she would continue using one as long as she lived!” He adds, “Any business is good for West Cornwall, and a clean and environmentally friendly one like bicycles is very good.”

Unlike a motorbike, electric bikes are silent. “This area is so beautiful,” continued Bob, “the woods, the fields, the barns, the river, and the bikes make it possible for you to look around. Quietly.” Meg told me that some riders on Labor Day Weekend had returned ecstatic; they’d seen an eagle on the Housatonic. “People come back with perma-grins.”

The Ensigns are pleased and grateful for the welcome Cornwall has given them. For example, when Sharon Sawicki saw Bob wrestling with a cooler, she found three guys to help. (The cooler has water and soft drinks. Coffee is also available.) A second couple came in. He was considering a ride, while she was more hesitant. (Average age of riders so far is 45 to 65. Need to be 18 to ride; some bikes have back seats for kids.) But they reconsidered because, at that moment, two riders swooped their bikes to a stop outside and came in. Meg was right; they were smiling. “What a trip!” they exclaimed. “It was like a magic carpet ride!” —Ella Clark

The Wheel Is Turning...

It’s not every day we hear news of a new, home-based business starting up in Cornwall. So when Jane Herold and her husband, Robert Adzema, opened their pottery and art space in town this summer, inquiring minds wanted to know: Why did they choose Cornwall? Was it our friendly, educated citizenry? Our abundant natural resources? Our world-class transfer station?

Turns out, it was none of the above. What brought Jane and Robert to Cornwall was an old poultry farm and house on Route 128 that met the couple’s specific needs. “We found the property after a two-year search,” said Jane. “It is a work space, show room, home, garden, and orchard all in one, and a place we knew we would be comfortable in once we put some work into it.”

As for the Cornwall attributes (friendly citizenry, resources, etc.) Jane said they have been “incredible. I knew Todd Piker (fellow potter and longtime Cornwall resident) because we had both apprenticed in England with the same person,” said Jane. “So I had that connection. But otherwise, we didn’t really know anybody. I am grateful for the ways in which people have supported our presence here in town.”

After months of self-directed renovation work, Jane and Robert moved into their new home at 54 Sharon-Goshen Turnpike this spring. Inside the renovated poultry barn, one finds an array of wood-fired pots, mugs, and bowls, as well as specialty dinnerware created for families and restaurants. In an adjoining section of the building, Robert creates customized sundials and watercolor landscape paintings. The grounds contain flower beds and an old restored apple orchard.

With the addition of Jane Herold, Cornwall has gained another accomplished potter. Todd Piker, here since 1974, runs a workshop and exhibition space in Cornwall Bridge. It’s a great place to see production, drying, glazing, and firing in action. Meanwhile, underneath the Cornwall Bridge at 30 River Road, Susan Fox and Milkhouse Pottery have been in operation since 2000. In addition to her wares, Susan offers pottery classes.

Back at the former poultry shed on the flanks of Mohawk Mountain, Jane and Robert are seeing a steady stream of visitors. On a recent day, a couple visiting from California browsed the studio and admired Robert’s sundials on display in the yard. At a time when our community is exploring ways to attract and retain new people and businesses, it is welcome news that Jane and Robert chose the poultry shed (and Cornwall) as a place to put down roots. Why not discover or renew your interest in hand-crafted pottery with a visit to her, Todd, or Susan? —Dan Hubbard

A Fair Time

Autumn comes again to our sleepy town. It’s fair season, a time to harvest, to reflect, and to remember that the very character of our surrounding hills and valleys gains its charms from the old farmsteads and hayfields of old time Cornwall.

Logan Dolan’s oxen, driven by Garrick Dinneen, maneuver through the open field, as children play leaf-blower golf and others stream huge bubbles from great soap-
dipped hoops. The sound of Brad Hedden’s portable sawmill competes with the popping of a steam engine corn mash. A thin haze of grill smoke wafts through the crowd as people shuffle from booth to booth, stopping to chat with dear old friends, colleagues, fellow parents, and familiar townsfolk. The jam and jelly ladies hold down the corner of Pine Street with grace, a sweet transition between farm markets.

Vendors from Cornwall’s farms and small businesses chat with people as they wander. CCS funds its eighth-grade class trip to Washington, DC, with root beer floats, and the Cornwall Conservation Trust educates folks about invasive plants and remediation efforts. All politics aside, Cornwall comes together to socialize with, connect to, and treasure fellow townsman and townswomen.

At the judging tables, gorgeous vegetables of all sorts, lovely home-cooked preserves, and pickles and jams entice passersby. A blue ribbon to our town clerk Vera Dinneen for bread and butter pickles, several blue ribbons to Hugh Cheney for various vegetables. Jim Terrall, Wendy Kennedy, Dody Clarke, and Chris Hopkins received first-place recognition for their entries, and there were several blue ribbons for Dana Saccardi’s lovely nature photography. But the most impressive entry was a zucchini squash the size of a small child entered by our own unofficial town photographer Lazlo!

The most notable of the tractor entries: two formidable and handsome Olivers, remnants of the golden age of agriculture, brought in by the Doloran’s. Garrick Dinneen’s Farmall M, formerly belonging to the late and beloved Denny Frost, towed the hayride wagon.

Animals from all reaches of Cornwall munched hay or scratched about in various pens waiting for the highlight of the festivities, Cow Chip Bingo! This year the selected bovine raffle decider dawdled tepidly in the lower 200 range squares, finally selecting square 206 to grace with the winning plop.

In the end the people of Cornwall were reminded of the bounty we are graced with, be it in community and the bonds we share or in beautiful open-space lands we see around us. And while we held hands and kissed the cheeks of those we love and cherish today, we thought of those who are no longer here, about treasured memories of yesteryear: simpler times that seem to get longer here, about treasured memories of today, we thought of those who are no more. Cornwall girls have spent long, happy summer weeks at the YMCA facility on Great Hill Road. Some of those who came to the reunion had been Mohawk campers and later Mohawk counselors as the camp’s traditions carry forward for another 100 years.

• Renovation Reception: Another long-established institution in town is celebrating a milestone. National Iron Bank manager Ronald Goldstein announced “Iron Harvest: Grand Re-Opening” will be held between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. on October 25 at the Cornwall Bridge branch to celebrate the redesign of the bank. Cider and snacks will be on offer.

• Septic Schedule: The late July vote to authorize funding to prepare an application for federal funding of a wastewater septic installation in West Cornwall Village has generated a loose timetable: In the spring of 2020, there will be a town meeting vote on a specific project and site. The rest of 2020 will be spent refining the project and getting state approvals. Design, bidding, and construction will happen in 2021 and 2022 and the facility should be up and running in 2023. If all goes well, that is.

• Tree News: The spruce outside town hall was taken down in early September by Fred Scoville and his crew. At almost the same time, the state announced that it will celebrate the history of arborists in Connecticut by sending all 169 towns a white oak sapling. Cornwall’s gift may go where the spruce was, but the open space in front of town hall looks good too. Debby Bennett and Kent Greenhouse smartened up the plantings around town hall. That’s the good news. The bad news is that the Housatonic Railroad has been spraying the edges of its track bed again. This time the target seemed to be brush, but again no warning was given towns and no description of the herbicide was available. Arborist Peter Del Tredici examined the trees killed by the spraying several years ago and believes an oil-based agent was used to ensure a thorough job. And all those dead pines are waiting for the next big wind to bring them down on town roads as well as the tracks.

• Culvert work began on Cream Hill Road in late September and will move to Lake Road in October. Some detours will be necessary for short periods.

• Tying up long-dangling loose ends: CL&P has finally completed the lease granting the town use of the lawn south of the Hughes Library in West Cornwall and the beachhead at the Big Bend. That’s been years in the works. An air monitor has been installed beside the town office solar panels to keep track of possible pollution coming from the new power plant in Dover Plains.

Don’t Miss
Your Chance to Vote

Elections will be held on Tuesday, November 5, at the town hall, 24 Pine Street from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. to cast votes for First Selectman, Selectman, Town Clerk, Treasurer, Tax Collector, Board of Finance, Board of Education, Board of Assessment Appeals, Planning & Zoning Commission, and Zoning Board of Appeals. Absentee ballots will be available after October 4 in the town clerk’s office, Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Electors may use an absentee ballot only if they will be unable to appear at the polling place on the day of the election for one of the following reasons: active service in the armed forces, absence from town during all the hours of voting, illness, physical disability, or religious tenets.

Events & Announcements

For updates, changes, and additions, check the online calendar at cornwallchronicle.org or cornwallct.org (it is the same calendar). For reminders, see the Chronicle Facebook page.

Traditional New England Country Dancing on Saturday, October 5, at 7 p.m. at the town hall. Dances taught and called by Jacqueline Laufman. Music by Betsy’s Band. Donation: $5-8/child, $10-15/adult, $25/family. Contact Debra@Mothertousrhouse.us or 672-0229.

Cornwall Village Improvement Society (CVIS) annual meeting on Saturday, October 5, at 10 a.m. at the library.

My Name is ‘Opikaha’ia: Hawaiian bicentennial commemoration/play at UCC, Sunday, October 6, at 3 p.m. (See insert.)

What’s the Word? At our monthly meeting we choose a word and return the next month with a drawing, poem, song, or whatever we’ve created to depict it. October’s word is MERCURY. 11 a.m. Monday, October 7, at the library. Questions? Connie Steuerwalt at 672-2861 or csteuerwalt@gmail.com.

Park and Recreation

Senior Monthly Luncheon on Tuesday, October 8, at noon at the UCC Parish House. Cost $8/person, Please RSVP by the Friday before to prcornwall@gmail.com or call or text 860-480-0690.

Coffee, Confections & Conversations on Tuesday, October 22, at 9 a.m. at the UCC Parish House. No cost or RSVP needed.

SVNA Wellness Clinic on Tuesday, October 22, at 10:30 a.m. at the UCC Parish House. Talks, workshops, and free health screenings.

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Senior Outing on Friday, October 25. Leave UCC at 8:30 a.m. Breakfast in Canaan at Freund’s Farm Market, then to Dennis Hill State Park for fall views, and lunch at Berkshire Country Store in Norfolk. RSVP to Jen Markow by October 18. Space is limited. Trip is free; lunch not included.

Please drop off donations of Halloween candy by October 28 at the town hall or CCS for Park and Rec’s Halloween event on Thursday, October 31, from 5 to 8 p.m. at town hall. Come for dinner and enjoy an evening of trick or treating in the village. Parade at 6 p.m. Free.

At the Cornwall Library
Writer’s Workshop: Deb Devins offers a six-week workshop beginning Wednesday, October 9, at 6:30 p.m. Open to writers of novels, short stories, children’s stories, poetry, personal essays, memoir, or family stories. Writing exercises will explore many ways of looking at a specific theme. $50 fee.

Columbus Day Book Sale: The Cornwall Library’s Columbus Day book sale begins Saturday, October 12, from 9 to 10 a.m. to 11 a.m., and by arrangement with the artists for Paper at Freund’s Farm Market, then to Dennis Ingersoll, and Don Bracken. Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

A Town Meeting will be held Friday, October 25, at 7:30 p.m. at town hall to review the town report for the past year and to vote on the Five-Year Capital Plan for the years 2021-2025.

Voter Registration: The deadline for voter registration is October 29 in order to vote in the November 5 municipal election. Registration sessions will be held at the town hall on October 1, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and October 29 from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Registration applications are available at the town hall and library as well as online at http://voterregistration.ct.gov.

Cornwall Social Services: The Cornwall Food and Fuel Fund asks you to help keep your neighbors warm this winter by mailing a check soon to P.O. Box 97, Cornwall 06753. Anyone needing assistance with winter heating bills, please contact: cornwallsocialservices@gmail.com or 672-2603.

Cornwall Housing Corporation is looking for a family for one of the houses available in the Parcel Program. Contact Ginni Block at ginnib754@gmail.com.

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