

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
CORNWALL BOARD OF SELECTMEN**

Tuesday, February 16, 2021
7:30 p.m. – Remotely via Zoom

PRESENT: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway; Selectwoman Marina Kotchoubey; Selectman Priscilla Pavel; Ted Larson- Transfer Station Manager; Will Berry – Transfer Station Assistant; Phil Hart – Housatonic River Commission; Five Members of the Public; One Member of the Press

First Selectman Gordon Ridgway called the meeting to order at 7:33 PM.

MINUTES: Selectman Priscilla Pavel moved to approve the minutes from the February 2, 2021 Regular Meeting of the Board of Selectmen. Selectwoman Marina Kotchoubey seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

COMMUNICATIONS: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway asked that people hiking on the roads this time of year to be aware of, and watch out for, plow trucks.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: Selectwoman Marina Kotchoubey moved to add Internet Committee Communication to the agenda. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS UPDATE: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway provided an update on the Covid-19 Pandemic: Residents 65 and older are now eligible to schedule a vaccination appointment through the State V.A.M.S. system. The First Selectman also thanked Cornwall Park and Rec. Director – Jen Markow for working with Cornwall Seniors to successfully schedule vaccination appointments. There have been some shortages of Covid Vaccine doses, and there are several Covid virus variants now in Connecticut. Social Distancing, and mask wearing are still needed.

- Tax Deferral Program: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway discussed a press article which omitted the application requirement regarding the tax deferment program for taxpayers adversely affected by the Pandemic. Due to the confusion, taxpayers - who believed the relief program was automatic and who would have otherwise paid their taxes on-time - will have interest penalties waived.

CONNECTICUT SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS COALITION / MSW & RECYCLING

BUDGET: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway discussed this an increase in costs for the Transfer Station. The increase is due to incineration fee rates and an increase in municipal solid waste at the Transfer Station. He also noted that the aging regional incinerator is more expensive to maintain and in need of an upgrade. The Board discussed a regional initiative aimed at reducing MSW, the Connecticut Coalition for Sustainable Materials Management. The CCSMM involves the Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (DEEP) and over seventy Connecticut Towns. The Board discussed the CCSMM plans to reduce garbage including potential for Town composting efforts. Transfer Station Manager Ted Larson provided information on the increase in municipal solid waste at the Transfer Station during the Pandemic. Transfer Station Assistant Will Berry discussed potential ins-and-outs of providing composting services in Cornwall. First Selectman Gordon Ridgway moved to accept DEEP's offer to join the CCSMM. Selectwoman Marina Kotchoubey seconded, and the motion unanimously passed. Selectman Priscilla Pavel extended her sincere gratitude to Ted Larson and Will Berry for their efforts at the Transfer Station during the Pandemic.

HOUSATONIC RIVER COMMISSION / PHILIP HART: Phil Hart began by thanking Ted Larson and Will Berry for their efforts at the Transfer Station. Next, he provided an update on the Housatonic River Commission: 1) There were difficulties last summer with large crowds using access points in the area; 2) Waste Disposal was an issue and law enforcement got involved on a few occasions; 3) The HVA continues to send people out to educate the public about the river, and assess the numbers of people accessing the river. Phil Hart also discussed the Access Subcommittee which is looking to add new river access points to help with the increase in river use. The HRC is also encouraging towns to discuss solutions for the high demand such, and noted that last summer some area parks and access points were closed during the Pandemic. First Selectman Ridgway stated that demand for river access could be more manageable next summer if DEEP re-opens the State parks that were closed last summer due to the Pandemic.

BUDGET: MEETING SCHEDULE, GRAND LIST, AND MORE: The Board of Selectmen is scheduled to present a proposed 2021-2022 Budget at the Board of Finance meeting on February 18, 2021. On March 11, 2021 the Cornwall School Board will present its proposed budget to the Board of Finance. Also, on April 23, 2021 there will be a public hearing on the FY 2021-2022 Budget to be held at Cornwall Consolidated School (CCS) at 7:30 PM. Finally, on May 21st a Town Meeting will be scheduled to vote on the Budget at CCS 7:30 PM. The Board of Selectmen discussed the Grand List, upcoming real estate assessments, and noted that several properties have been conserved and are now off the list of taxable properties. The Board continued to discuss the budget, and First Selectman Gordon Ridgway moved to cut the proposed line item for Land Use Legal Fees by \$1,000 and raise the proposed budget for the EDC by \$1,000. Selectwoman Marina Kotchoubey seconded, and the motion unanimously passed.

HOUSING MEETING FEB. 22: The Board of Selectmen discussed the Cornwall Affordable Housing Committee, and noted that the local housing market has less inventory now compared to previous years. The Board also discussed the need for housing options in Cornwall.

WEST CORNWALL WASTE WATER PROJECT: First Selectman Gordon Ridgway provided an update on the West Cornwall Waste Water Project. First Selectman Ridgway stated that a referendum on the project could be brought to a Town Vote in July, 2021. More information will be put up on the website, and there will be public informational meetings scheduled before the Town Vote on the project.

APRIL TOWN MEETING: First Selectman Ridgway discussed scheduling a Town Meeting in April, 2021 to address the proposed sale of the Firehouse Lot in West Cornwall, and the Sydney Kaye Fund.

MORE BUDGET: First Selectman Ridgway briefly discussed the budget for 2021 – 2022.

PUBLIC COMMENT: The Board heard public Comments from Nancy Berry regarding the following topics: 1) Crowds and littering at river access points; 2) Picknick tables at Housatonic Meadows State Park in Sharon; and 3) Building upgrades at the Transfer Station. Ezra Mager commented on conserved land and property taxes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Berry
Administrative Assistant
Town of Cornwall