

The Warren Observer

Fact and Opinion about Warren, Connecticut, Population: 1300+

Vol. VIII, No. 7

August, 2003

Highlights of: www.warrenct.com

The Warren Observer and Warren Web Site

Welcome to the August issue of The Warren Observer. This newsletter is printed expressly for members of the Warren community who do not have easy access to the Warren web site: warrenct.com. It contains highlights of information found on the web site.

We continue to receive requests from people for the paper version of this newsletter and some of these requests contain checks. We have returned all checks and we thank you for sending them. The Warren Observer is not a subscription publication: we do not want to maintain a database of donations and subscriptions and we would appreciate not having to return your checks.

Please let us know by email if you have problems using our web site. This includes loading the front page, registering in the Community or logging in on return after registering. Our web site is not fancy but in order to use it you must have cookies and javascript enabled on your browser and if you are running Windows, you must have the clock set correctly on your computer.

We have a new forum in our Warren online community: Warren Trading Post. Warren Trading post is a place for you to sell, buy, and trade. It is only for residents of Warren and we will discourage anyone from outside of Warren from posting things for sale unless they live in a nearby town or offer services to Warren residents. This forum should prove useful for things as diverse as announcing tag sales, getting rid of unwanted firewood or trading baseball cards.

We are moving older postings into a forum called Archive so that they continue to appear in our monthly calendar but do not appear in the list of events on the front page of the site.

We hope to see more of you register and use our online community; it's a great way to share information and now, buy, sell, and trade with other Warren residents.

Richard Wanderman
webmaster@warrenct.com

Warren Church Community Childcare News

Reported by Colleen M. Frisbie

We have been accepting pre-registration forms since Monday, June 30, 2003 at 9:00 am. If you have not received a pre-registration packet, please contact the Childcare at 868-2236, or stop by Monday-Friday 9:00 am until 4:00 pm.

During our pre-registration, we learned that many parents needed us to stay open until 6:00 pm. We have placed a time change in with the State Licensing department so that we may accommodate those needs. For those parents who need the childcare until 6:00 pm and have not registered your child because of the time frame, your worries are over. Contact Ellen or Patti if you have any questions. Stop by and register your child or mail in the pre-registration form to hold a place in the Childcare.

We are still working with the State and looking forward to opening on Monday, August 4, 2003. Our staff, policies and procedures have been approved by the State. We will be inspected on Wednesday, July 16, 2003, by the State Licensing Department. The procedure is almost at an end. Hooray!

If you have any questions, please contact Ellen or Patti at 868-2236 or via fax 868-1199.

Notes from Warren Public Library

Martha Winkel, Librarian

Thanks to everyone who attended the "Notes in the Woods" event. The music was accented by a New England summer storm. The downpour and clearing light only highlighted the fine music and wonderful setting.

Book bins have been set out in the children's library area with the suggested reading lists from the Warren School. We also have the reading lists from Wamogo and are working hard to accommodate everyone's required reading.

We have many other great selections for the other required reading of summer - that is "relaxation reading". So please stop by for your vacation books.

A "Future Readers" (Ages 1- 4, or pre-kindergarten) story time will go from July 25 to August 15, Fridays, 10:30 AM at the library.

"Book a trip..." is currently happening at the library on Thursdays at 3 PM through August 14. A time of games, fun and reading about other countries. How many places can you go this summer?

Notes from the July 8th Planning and Zoning Meeting Reported by Toni Richardson

The Commission began the meeting with a Public Hearing on proposed amendments to the regulations concerning construction near major water bodies. The amendments are designed to protect water bodies of five acres or more and the Sucker Brook from erosion, runoff and other environment degradation due to over development. Their intent is to protect drinking water, prevent pollution, discourage weed and algae growth, avoid the need for a public sewer treatment system, and protect important recreational resources.

Commission Chairman, Wayne Wilson, took note of letters received in support of the proposed regulations and of a suggestion from the NW Council of Governments about identifying areas governed by the regulations.

Chairman Wilson then opened the meeting to public comment.

Tom McGowan delivered a visual presentation on behalf of the Lake Waramaug Task Force & Lake Waramaug Authority in support of the regulations. More than ten residents rose to assert their support as well and no one spoke in opposition.

In his overview Mr. McGowan described the main features of the regulations. A 75 foot setback from shorelines is required for most building with 50 feet permitted in certain circumstances. Excepted from the setback requirements are: repair and replacement of existing buildings and structures, waterline rip-rap necessary for shoreline stabilization, docks and floats, pedestrian walkways and storage sheds of less than 80 square feet floor area and 12 feet high. Such sheds must meet regular zoning setback requirements for their zone. New lots will need minimum shoreline frontage of 100 feet.

Mr. McGowan pointed out that there is no exact line for a boundary of the subsection affected by these regulations as was suggested by the NW Council of Governments. He suggested that a note on the zoning map could address the issue of notice to developers of the existence of special rules for building near water bodies.

The chairman adjourned the hearing and proceeded to the regular meeting which began with a motion to adopt the proposed regulations. Discussion followed about possible unanticipated problems that might be created by the regulations. Chairman Wilson finally noted that "...we will come up with other things as we go, but we need to get something substantive on the books." The Commission members agreed and voted to adopt the proposed regulations as presented. The effective date of the regulations will be one day after publication. The Commission secretary indicated she expected publication by Friday, July 11.

Commission member, Al Breton introduced job descriptions for the Zoning Enforcement Officer and the

secretary, indicating he had discussed them with the selectmen and that they approved. Key requirements include that the ZEO maintain office hours in the Town Hall on Tuesday: 1:00 to 4:00 pm and Thursday from 4:30 to 6:30 pm, receive questions by phone or mail at the Zoning Office during office hours only, and require an application for any building or structure of any size, except bird houses or lawn ornaments. The job descriptions were approved.

The Commission continued its discussion from a previous meeting about how to regulate structures under 100 square feet. Chairman Wilson indicated his inquiries revealed that some towns regulate the setback of small buildings and others do not.

Considerable discussion followed on whether to require a \$75 permit fee for a dog house that might cost less than that to build. Mr. Bolte suggested a nominal fee to cover the cost of making sure the dog house would be within the setbacks. Others pointed out that it costs as much to inspect for setback requirements for a dog house as for a larger structure.

Commission members suggested that it might require amendments to the regulations to clarify what is covered. The Commission agreed to form an ad hoc committee to come up with something for consideration. One member asked that the committee consider agricultural uses and portable buildings. The ad hoc committee will meet on July 22 at 7 pm. Members on the ad hoc committee are: Al Breton, John Miller, Susan Bates and Bob Bolte.

The Commission considered the ZEO report. Permits have been issued to: Town of Warren for a dumpster cover at the town garage, James & Lisa Stuart for improvements at 22 Reed Road, John & Melanie Chernak for improvements at 371 Brick School Road, Mark & Anthony Zappone for a dwelling at 31 Partridge Road, Laurence O'Toole for a tractor shed at 338 Brick School Road, Helen Widing for an accessory apartment at 50 Brick School Road.

The final matter before the commission concerned the building of a chicken coop without a permit. It seems the property owner asked whether a permit was required for a small, portable coop. The response was negative and so the owner proceeded to build it. However the coop turned out to be larger than anticipated and fixed, rather than portable and neighbors inquired about its permit status. Upon review, the Commission decided it should have had a permit and it should have respected setback requirements. When approached, the owner declined to move the coop or to obtain the permit.

This appears to be a case of genuine misunderstanding, but it does point out the absence of clear guidelines in the construction of small buildings. The solution lies in amending the regulations to clarify what is required and make enforcement evenhanded. The commission's appointment of a subcommittee to suggest amendments to the regulations was the Commission's solution to the problem long-term. Meanwhile, the Commission agreed to further consider its responsibilities in the chicken coop case.

Notes from July 24, 2003 Building Committee Meeting

Reported by Toni Richardson

This meeting concerned options for renovating the town hall to provide adequate office space, to resolve roof leaks and to address handicapped accessibility and emergency preparedness needs.

Jack Travers presented his proposal with drawings showing where offices would be placed in what is now the gym and in an addition to be built above the current town clerk's office. There would be approximately 3200 square feet of space available when completed. He noted there would be no need for an elevator since the upper level would be accessible through the front of the building. The lower level would be accessible from the back, also at ground level.

Mr. Travers' proposal provided for a window in each office. He indicated the town clerk and tax collector need to be close together, since they work collaboratively. Members offered suggestions on the proposed floor plan including:

partition fewer offices so they would be a better size;

what will be required for additional parking, septic space, etc.

the size of the storage space on the lower level might be changed with a more efficient way to store chairs.

Current rooms for mechanicals are adequate; AC would be outside and all conduits above the ceilings.

Tom Breakell of Torrington is a contractor who has been asked to do preliminary drawings. He works with a structural engineer, can provide cost estimates, etc. He could be the eventual contractor or he could be the construction manager or whatever we need from him. We do pay for his services.

Ken Layman suggested an alternative to the proposed use of the current gym for offices. He proposed an addition of two stories on the town clerk's end of the building. He indicated building a new space with elevator would be preferable in the long run because it would provide more flexible space, give a better appearance to the building and preserve the current gym for recreation activities and possible use as a shelter in an emergency. He proposed the alternative in concept, since he did not have drawings available.

He would go 15 feet west and 40 feet north and gain 5500 square feet on two floors. The new addition would have to include an elevator. It would provide ample space for offices both now and for the foreseeable future. Members raised questions about this alternative, including:

Entrance to the new space would be quite far from parking.

How much space is required for emergency shelter? Jack indicated there may be regulations and that he would check.

People in Warren have not been inclined to use shelters in emergencies such as power outages. However, with many new residents in town, this may change.

Is the gym really needed? Those present could only think of a few activities that are held there and which could be held elsewhere in town. Activities included the firemen's ball and dinner, some exercise programs, and once by the school when their gym was under repair. Members noted that the school gym is available and likely to be available in the future for recreational activities.

If the gym were retained, how could it be economically heated given the high ceilings?

Wouldn't it be better to have all recreational activities in a common location such as the Warren Woods, rather than in the town office building?

Members suggested to Ken that he present a rough drawing which could be given to the draftsman so that the alternative could be drawn up. When it is done, some cost estimates can be done so that costs of the two proposals can be compared.

Members discussed other ideas:

Some felt that the external appearance of the building looks fine in shape and brick. Others felt it would be a more handsome building with some architectural work.

Another idea would be to rent some excess office space to the NWCOG and give the Library more space in the old school building. With handicapped baths, a ramp and an assisted door, it could be made accessible at a reasonable cost.

There was some discussion of whether the library should be looking for space in the new town hall building plan. Toni Richardson said she did not think so, since the library would best be served by a new, separate building sometime in the future. In the meantime, relocating the NWCOG and allowing the library to expand in that building would be greatly appreciated. A new door and bathroom and a ramp would be even better.

Consider glass in interior walls to make it possible for people to see who is coming in and out.

What would be the time line to get the actual measuring and a workable drawing?

Make a foyer/reception area outside the town clerk's and tax collector's offices instead of a tiny office. It would give better visibility between town clerk and tax collector and allow for place for people to wait, see bulletin board, etc.

With the current proposal we would not need an elevator. Lower level would be mostly storage. Voting would still be downstairs.
The meeting concluded with Mr. Travers indicating he will get the shelter regulations.

Mr. Layman will get a drawing of the alternative proposal.

When Mr. Layman has a drawing, Mr. Travers will get it to Breakell for cost comparisons.

Another meeting will be scheduled when the drawings and cost comparisons are in hand.

Warren Almanac Danielle Pollock

Average temperature will be 70 degrees. This is normal. Precipitation will be about 5 inches, this is 1 1/2 inches over normal.

August 1-3: severe thunderstorms

August 4-6: sunny

August 7-13: cool, heavy thunderstorms

August 14-17: Warm, showers

August 18-22: Cool, rain

August 23-25: Sunny, hot

August 26-31: Thunderstorm, then cooler

August 1st: Venus sits at about 8 degrees above the horizon at sunset. Over the course of the month it will go from being "the evening star" to being the "morning star," by month's end rising in the east more than an hour before the sun.

August 12th: The Perseid meteor shower peaks tonight. Because the moon is new, observers with clear skies overhead should have an excellent view of these unusually fast, bright meteors.

August 26th: Full Moon, also known this month as the Green Corn or Sturgeon Moon.

Button Buck

Dr. Everett Vreeland

#94 in a series

In evening a young deer actually strolled unperturbed though wary, through my front yard. He was well fed but gangly, as yearlings are anywhere. The evident horn buds on his cranium told me his age, as acne often does in our genera, but here gave me his age and sex, as it often does not in our genera. He was alert yet unperturbed as he stopped to gaze at and evaluate the collection of machinery and vehicles that were across the road and never there as he gamboled and played behind his mom on this same trail a year ago. After his evaluation he visibly drew a deep breath, turned, and went back to my wood lot. There was, for certain, a sadness in his body language that we shared.

This is the time when hummingbirds exhibit rampant territory protection as they "squeal their tires" threatening anyone in their claimed area. I was watching this quietly this a.m. and the hummer went into "hover" mode in an area where a phoebe was alert for flying insects. The phoebe dove in a reflex way to grab the "biggest durn bug ever saw" only to swerve at the last instant, profiting by the experience - and shocked I'm sure.

Two things of note occurred in the natural world this day. At daybreak a fluttering chickadee pulled stuffing from a worn corner of an outdoor pillow out on the deck by my bedroom. Not unusual in April - but July? It means they are mating and nesting again for the second or third time. Chickadee supply will be okay this winter.

Later as I turned my car down river, my eye trained to the scene, spotted a group of some kind. They were on a new sandbar revealed by low water about a quarter mile away. The river mist and a rising sun made it look like a whole new world as I was treated to the sight of an extended deer family enjoying the river. The older doe was wary but four others cavorted in the water obviously pleased to be away from deer flies for a while. Two fawns chased each other and two yearlings simply stood up to their bellies in water content - like myself.

Across the road from my home three machines moved into a refreshing woodland. Other than mature oaks, maples, beech, and ash, there were other lives. Those of new young birds, mammals, amphibians all just getting used to living in the forest they were born in this spring. Here were the larva of katydid we wait to hear and tree frogs that serenade on hot summer days. There were young fawns squirrels, coons, possums, and chipmunks all learning to fit into a miraculous balance. In three days the trees were torn down and trunks loaded onto trucks while the tops were fed into a huge chipper. The woodland was no more. The focus now was to get a house into the space as fast as possible and none of the participants had knowledge of what was lost.

The only destruction I have seen to match that was of Pacific Islands under the guns and bombs of the US Navy. That was called war, this is called progress.