



William Braine
Village Trustee, Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY

May 2022: Trustee's Mid-Term Report

Dear Cornwall-on-Hudson Neighbor,

I hope this spring finds you well! I am your newest Village Trustee, elected to a two-year term in March 2021. It is my honor to serve on the Village Board. To help keep you informed, I submit this mid-term report in gratitude for the Village's trust. This is my personal report. It is not meant to reflect an official Village communication, and all opinions are my own. Below is an incomplete list highlighting some of the issues that have received the most attention, discussion, and time in the past 13 months.

Donahue Farm: The Village made a long-term, strategic commitment to open space and recreation in purchasing the Donahue Farm property. It's been my great pleasure to serve at the Mayor's request as the Board's liaison to the Donahue Farm Planning Steering Committee. Its nine dedicated and intelligent volunteer members, two advisors, and Historical Subcommittee are taking the community's pulse, learning about the property, clearing out the buildings, and immersing themselves in the project. As planning proceeds it will be transparent, open to comment, and reflective of the community's priorities and needs.

Donation policy: Cornwall-on-Hudson is extremely fortunate that residents on occasion offer to donate amenities to the public such as benches or trees. At this writing the Board is in the process of finalizing a policy for accepting donations, as well as criteria for limits, siting, design, and other details. One area of importance to me: on rare occasions, a generous donor may seek to bestow a monetary gift to the village for unspecified purposes. I believe the village should not be able to accept such unrestricted monetary gifts, as they create the potential for the appearance of a conflict of interest. We expect to arrive at a final policy shortly.

Marijuana law: Now that New York State has legalized the possession and consumption of marijuana, I voted against "opting out" of a potential marijuana selling establishment in the Village. Marijuana has long been bought, sold, and consumed in the Village illegally, and its legalization should be paralleled by a change in our local laws to make enforcement clearer. It's already here and not going away. We should make it as safe and regulated as possible. Specifically I would favor the possibility of a dispensary and not a consumption establishment, using the law's power to site and regulate any store in a way that aided transparency and economic activity without decreasing quality of life or public safety.

Police body-worn cameras: I voted for procurement of Body Worn Cameras for the COHPD to aid safety, evidence collection, transparency, and accountability. One point of policy stood out to me: the NYPD and the state of New Jersey both place controls on officers' viewing of footage prior to making reports following "critical incidents" such as weapon discharge or the injury or death of someone in a police interaction. I favored that approach. This would be valuable both for training purposes and in the rare instances when there is any confusion over what occurred. After long consideration and discussion, the Board voted 4-1 in favor of the final usage policy, which includes allowing officers unrestricted viewing of footage prior to making any report of a critical incident.

continued...

Short term rentals: I joined the rest of the Board to enact a law regulating short term rentals in the Village. Short term rentals are a tradition in COH, but with the rise of online services, attractive municipalities like ours are increasingly host to large numbers of residential vacation rentals. Their potential impact on affordability, municipal services, and quality of life requires oversight. The Board worked hard to balance rights of property owners and the rest of the public; the result is a system that allows this commercial activity on residential properties with safeguards for neighbors.

Village operations: I'm grateful to the other Board members, to Chief Dixon, Superintendent Mike Trainor, and Superintendent Dave Halvorsen for their orientation meetings and tours, and to Village Clerk Jeanne Mahoney, Attorney for the Village Joe McKay, Code Enforcement Officer Manny Carmona and the other specialists and experts I've met with, allowing me to gain a surface level understanding of these vital roles. It's not only important for decision making about purchases, hiring, policies, and strategies; it's fascinating.

Constituent service

It's my pleasure to be available to all residents with questions or concerns and to connect them with the right person for the best possible outcome. Please reach out to me at (917) 584-2537 with any questions, or email bill.braine@cornwall-on-hudson.org.

This year: In the second year of my term I would like to explore several new and ongoing items; if any new ideas seem beneficial and practicable, I will bring them to the rest of the Board for further discussion.

- **American Rescue Plan Act:** In March 2021 the federal government passed the American Rescue Plan Act, which included direct funds for municipalities with certain requirements for spending. COH's funding is approximately \$300,000, half of which has been disbursed to the Village so far. I look forward to formulating a plan for the funds with the rest of the Board.
- **Climate Smart Community:** I would like to continue COH's implementation of actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help our community adapt to the effects of climate change. In addition to the benefits of decreased emissions, CSC certification can provide COH with better scores on grant applications for some state funding programs.
- **Public health:** I will explore some manner of bringing public health the "last mile" from the County government to Cornwall-on-Hudson.
- **Public safety & assistance:** I will explore the potential for adding a part-time social worker to our police department to help families with obtaining services or diverting cases from the court system.
- **Tourism and business support:** As Covid (hopefully) recedes, and as Donahue Farm planning continues, COH has an opportunity to encourage economic activity through a comprehensive approach to managed tourism and business. Some of the initiatives already discussed can aid these objectives.
- **Zoning:** Following the previous Board's February 2021 adoption of the new Comprehensive Plan, the Village must now review the existing zoning code, determine if changes are warranted, and codify and implement them if so.

Once again I thank you all for your trust in me, and I pledge to continue showing up, doing my best, and working to keep you informed.



Bill Braine, Trustee