



# Are Wards right for Cornwall?

## What is the Ward structure of local government and why is it important to Cornwall?

A Ward structure of local government means the total population area being governed [Town of Cornwall] is broken up into equal parts called “wards.” Each ward has approximately the same population based on U.S. Census. Each ward elects their own councilperson who must live in that ward. Residents can only vote for their councilperson. Each ward is represented on the Town Council headed by the Town Supervisor. This structure is similar to the U.S. Congress and NY State Assembly.

Cornwall currently has an “at-large” Town Council structure. Each resident votes for all of the councilperson seats headed by the Town Supervisor. Because of the difficulty of being elected at-large, there is greater potential for special interest groups and large campaign contributors to influence Town government.

In both structures, the Town Supervisor is elected by all residents.

The current “at-large” structure has been leaving the interests of many residents unrepresented. Preserving the open spaces, vistas and rural atmosphere of Cornwall is critical to maintain our identity.

## Benefits of the Ward structure

The Ward structure of town government is extremely well-suited to improve representation of ALL residents.

**Wards create distinct voting districts within a Town. These smaller districts make it easier for residents to run for office:**

- Candidates for office only need to campaign in own neighborhood or ward – not the entire Town.
- Candidates have decreased expense of campaigning
- **Candidate time commitment is reduced**

Issues specific to an individual ward will be addressed more authentically since the Councilpersons reside in the ward.

Candidates and therefore Town Council members are more likely to be known by ward residents making the Ward structure much more inclusive.

All areas of Town are represented – particularly areas with pressing needs. It is difficult for Town

Board members to be fully aware of and responsive to issues across the entire Town.

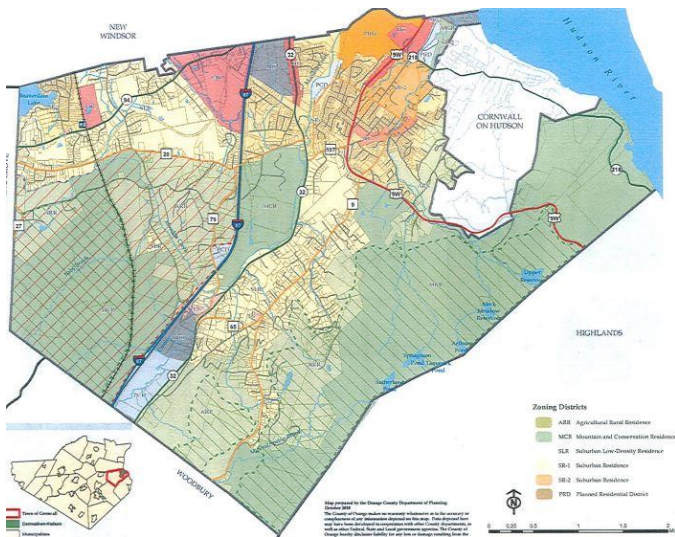
## TOWNS THAT HAVE ADOPTED WARD STRUCTURE

- **Blooming Grove [Orange Co]**
- **Chester [Orange Co – proposed]**
- Clarkstown [Rockland Co]
- Hyde Park [Dutchess Co]
- Beacon [Dutchess Co]
- Camillus [Onondaga Co]
- Walkkill [Orange Co]
- Salinas [Orange Co]
- Wappinger’s [Dutchess Co]
- New Hartford [Oneida Co]

## CORNWALL PROFILE

The Town's population grew steadily between 1970 and 2000 and has leveled off since. Currently, the total Town and Village population is approximately 12,500 and expected to remain relatively stable. However, large tracts of land and developments like Cornwall Commons could increase the population by 500-1,000 or more over the coming years. We need to recognize the demographic shifts occurring in Orange County and factor that into balanced representation on the Town Board.

According to the United States Census Bureau, the town has a total area of 28.2 square miles 30% of the land in Cornwall is public or non-profit and will not be developed. However there is approximately "500-1,000" developable acres.



## CURRENT STRUCTURE OF TOWN BOARD

The Town Supervisor office is a two-year term. Town Councilpersons serve a four-year term with two members elected every two years. This year the seats held by Michael Summerfield and Kerry McGuinness will be contested for another four-year term as well as the Supervisor's office.

Additionally, the vacant seat formerly held by Peter Russell will be contested for the remaining 2 years of that office. 4 of the 5 available seats will be voted on in November 2019.

All elections of all elected officials are held at-large. Voters vote the candidates of their choice and the greatest vote-getters win their offices.

## HOW THE WARD STRUCTURE DIFFERS

In both the Ward structure and At-Large structures, the Town Supervisor is elected At Large – by all voters of the Town. However, the Ward structure can have 6 ward Councilpersons. By increasing the number of council members from 4 to 6, the power of the Town Supervisor is reduced from 1/5<sup>th</sup> to 1/7<sup>th</sup>, leaving more of the decision-making power with the council members that represent their wards.

In the instance of a sudden increase in population, in an At-Large structure, the Town Supervisor and entire board can potentially be controlled by that population.

In a Ward structure, if large population shifts occur in a particular ward or two, the impact is reduced vs. an At-Large structure. The population shift can only impact the Town Supervisor and a single councilperson.

The Ward structure is particularly fair as it is reconfigured every 10 years based on U.S. Census figures. As the population changes, the Ward structure adapts and reconfigures the Wards so that each ward remains equal in terms of population. The Ward structure moderates population spikes.

Any change in population over each ten-year period will be captured in the U.S. census and corrected the following year.

## Possible Wards of Cornwall

- Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson \* 2
- Hamlet of Firthcliff
- Hamlet of Firthcliff Heights
- Hamlet of West Cornwall
- Hamlet of Meadowbrook
- Hamlet of Mountainville
- Hamlet of Salisbury Mills