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**Welcome...**

You're receiving this newsletter because we thought you might enjoy hearing about our evolving cohousing community in Belfast, Maine. In each issue, we'll share what we've been working on, where we're headed, and how you can get involved if you like.

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**Belfast Area Cohousing & Ecovillage eNewsletter - May 6, 2009**

A warm welcome to our three new equity member households - Hans Hellstrom and Wendy Watson, Elizabeth Garber, and Barbara & Steve Chiasson. Visit the "[Who We Are](#)" section of our website to view their bios. And please join us on Sunday, May 10, from 2-4 pm, for a fun-filled Open House at the Farm on Edgcomb Road in Belfast. At 2:00 pm there will be bird watching and a nature walk with Mike Shannon, followed at 3:00 pm by a May Pole dance with live music, ribbons, and fabulous frivolity galore!

Project Update

Latest developments in our community-building efforts

Member Profile

Get to know a member of the community

Notable Quotes

What folks have to say about Belfast Cohousing & Ecovillage, and about cohousing in general

Membership Information

Membership levels and current enrollments

Our Mission

Sustainability, affordability, farmland preservation

**Project Update - Sanna McKim**

Over the past 9 months we have progressed along the design continuum in typical cohousing fashion - starting with the community aspects and ending with personal home decisions. Why didn't we start with our



homes (since we all will be buying a home and are clear about what we expect/need from them)? Because as typical citizens of American culture, we weren't at all likely to overlook our personal needs. Privacy and autonomy are always prominent concerns. But we might well overlook opportunities for the richness that community could add to our lives because we have so little experience recognizing those opportunities, much less prioritizing them. Only once we know what we want to do together, and we design a place for it to happen, can we see that our personal need for extra space and additional amenities has lessened. So far, we're pretty excited about it!



We started with our land goals. Solar-oriented for passive heating and great gardens, beautiful views, rural yet very close to town, and affordable. We bought a great piece of land that will encourage walking and biking to town, possibly sharing a vehicle, producing food - in short, an easy way to have a lighter environmental footprint (not to mention less expensive!) We designed the layout of our site to prioritize pedestrians over cars, celebrate rural living, work with the land's natural contours, and maximize the opportunities for spontaneous social gatherings... yet afford plenty of privacy and some room for pets and farm animals. We decided how our Common House should feel and function, knowing that this building will become the heart of our community while also allowing our own homes to be smaller and less expensive.

And NOW we are working on home designs we can all agree on.

What does this next step entail? Well, to enable us to create modestly-priced homes, we've decided to build a custom community, not custom homes. We'll have some options like porches, additions, siding and colors, and can always tailor the interior to our liking, but we'll "buy in quantity" and have many features in common.

Knowing that our Common House will have several guest rooms, do we need a guestroom in our home? Given the many gardeners and cooks in our group, the Common House will have a stellar kitchen, root cellar and facilities for 'preserving the harvest'. So do we need a large personal kitchen to store canning equipment and that used-once-a-year lobster pot or fondue equipment? With kids likely to seek friends in the Common House and favorite outdoor play areas, do we need a room in our home dedicated to kids and their stuff (other than their bedrooms)? And since the Common House will have a library, how much wall space do we need in our private homes for books?

With big goals for high quality buildings at a modest price, many of us are starting to play with the idea of buying a home one bedroom smaller than we imagined last fall - because we've found we really like each other and can actually envision doing a lot more together. And because proximity allows us a unique opportunity to share some items. For instance, based on what we currently own, we predict that once full, our community could have 9 sailboats, 36 canoes/kayaks, 30 lawn mowers, 60 cars, 20 woodworking shops, 15 sewing/craft rooms, etc... Rather than build basements and structures to store things, it might make a lot of sense to share a subset of these instead. Those are the discussions we're starting to have now.

As this community becomes real, our dreams of easy childcare trades (for that elusive night out with friend or spouse), working on a quilt with others, building that table we've been wanting to build, or actually preserving the harvest rather than talking about it... are becoming a reality.

Stay Tuned!



### Member Profile - Steve Chiasson

I grew up in a small town two hours west of Boston, the oldest child in a family of eight. I loved to prowl the wild areas of my little neighborhood - the stream that ran

through my back yard into a tunnel under the street, the trail through the woods that led to my school, the blackberry thicket behind the hardware store, the dark hedgerows along the back of the old cemetery. I've always followed where my natural curiosity and creative spirit have led me, from the backyards of my childhood to Mount Hermon School (my high school) to the University of Rochester, where I studied philosophy and played rock & roll.

A move to a small cabin on a wooded hillside in southern New Hampshire gave me a deep appreciation of what it means to live in a close relationship with a piece of land, and my subsequent move to Maine in the mid-seventies was made with the express intention of finding a place where I could sink deep roots and really establish a sense of place. The process of creating a life on my chosen spot has been hugely fulfilling - clearing the land, planting an orchard, tilling a garden, building a house and raising two beautiful children with my dearest companion, my wife Barbara.

What excites me most about our decision to join Belfast Area Cohousing is the opportunity to re-engage that process - to draw on the collective wisdom and expertise of an extraordinary group of caring, smart, aware, hard-working folks to create absolutely the BEST community we can imagine - where my sense of place has deep interpersonal roots as well as a connection to a gorgeous piece of land in one of the most interesting and vital communities on one of the most beautiful coastlines on the planet.

I'm absolutely thrilled to be part of this community, and look forward with eager anticipation to all the "firsts" that are yet to come - the first building, the first meal in the common house, the first harvest, the first birth, the first wedding, and all the myriad small things that bind us together and build our shared history. This is gonna be SO great, and I can't wait!

### Notable Quotes

*"Those attracted to cohousing are generally proactive, make-it-happen, get-it-done kinds of people. They don't tend to think of the world as happening to them. Instead, they think of themselves as making the world happen." - from The Cohousing Handbook, by Chris and Kelly ScottHanson*

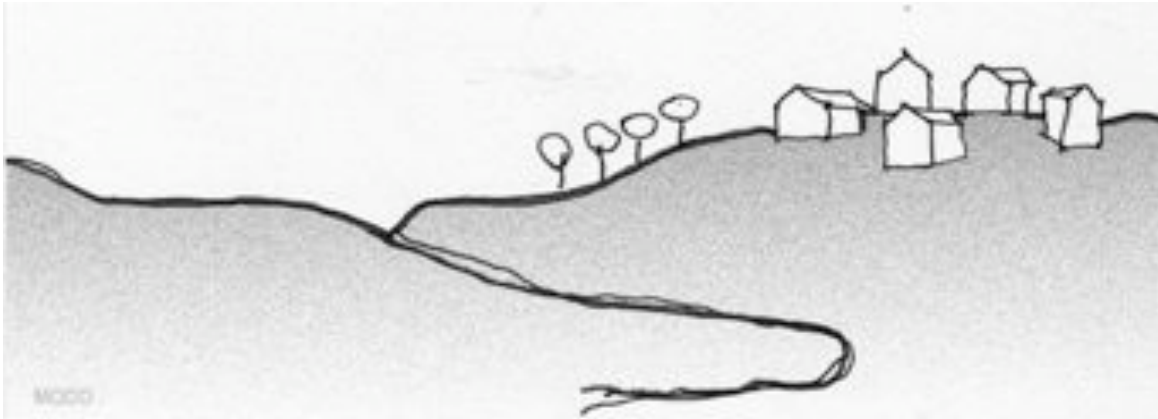
### Membership Information

Equity Members are those households who have already committed to purchasing a home in the community. There are currently fourteen of a projected thirty Equity members. Exploring Members are those households who have an interest in

becoming Equity Members, but are not yet ready to fully commit. There are currently sixteen Exploring members. Friends are those who are interested in our project, but are not members. See the [Membership](#) section of our website for further details.

**Our Mission**

To be a model environmentally sustainable, affordable, multi-generational cohousing community that is easily accessible to Belfast, includes land for agricultural use and open space, and is an innovative housing development option for rural Maine.



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