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February 16, 2010

In This Issue:

A trip down memory lane, courtesy of John Lightner...

Group Meeting - June 2007

A dozen of us gather on the porch of the cottage in Bayside. The group is still small enough that we all fit with legroom to spare. The issue at hand is a crucial one. The option on the purchase of the Keene Farm is coming due, and the cohousing group is purchasing 30 acres within this 180 acre farm. If we don't fulfill our end of the bargain, the entire deal will fall through and the farm will go back on the market. This is clearly a defining moment for our group. The math is pretty simple. Belfast Area Cohousing LLC must come up with \$300,000. To become equity members of the group (and obtain a ranking in the house site selection list) each of us must ante up \$10,000. With twelve active members on the porch, that only adds up to \$120,000. We must still come up with an additional \$180,000. We hope to raise it in the form of additional contributions from ourselves.

The "risk factor" for this money is high. If the whole project goes south we stand to lose a fair chunk of this money. For our family, the \$10,000 equity payment pretty much exhausts our savings reserves. We do, however, have enough equity in our current home to allow us to borrow some additional funds to contribute to the project. We are digging deep to try to get to \$300K. If we can't get there, we feel as though we will join that sad list of cohousing groups who, after years



of organization, still haven't bought any land. We finish the meeting with commitments for roughly \$270,000.

We aren't there yet, but are closer than we thought. Everyone is going home to beat their mattresses in hopes of finding some additional funds. The next day, miraculously, we learn that we have hit the mark. Oh, in for a penny, in for a pound...



Duplexes anyone? - November 2008

We are deep into a site planning and visioning exercise with Chuck Durrett, a cohousing guru from California who is going to work with us all weekend as we develop our site plan and program our common house. At this point at least half of the members of our group are living in country homes on twenty acres or more. We want cohousing, in part, because we want to feel less isolated. My vision of what my cohousing home will look like involves a beautiful view out the front and a loose arrangement of neighbors behind me that I can visit when the spirit moves me. Chuck has different ideas. As we play with house models on a scale floor map of the site, Chuck continually reaches across like a chess master to combine two house models together to make a duplex. Duplexes have never been on the table for this group. Some of us feel like we are giving up quite a bit just having to see our neighbors' homes. In previous discussions, members have often said "I'll never live in a duplex." Nevertheless, during the long Saturday session, with much discussion on the numerous complexities of site design and desires, duplexes remain on the table. Once again, we are going to "take it on faith".

Campout - May, 2009

We don't really know why it has taken this long. Partly it is because it took quite a lot of surveying to figure out which part of the 180 acre farm would eventually become the village. Now we have a pretty good idea of the boundaries of the lot and we are determined to make it ours. We will set our tents in the general vicinity of where the common house will eventually live and enjoy a Spring evening of fireside fellowship. The campsite is not ideal. A week earlier a tractor and bush hog mowed paths and clearings to allow for the site planning. We want the best view of the distant hills, but the ground cover consists of mowed barberry and other prickly vines. Still, we are a glass-half-full kind of group and we have managed to find enough grassy patches to pitch our tents. Other evidence of our "take it on faith" attitude is that we have chosen to continue with the campout despite a forecast of heavy downpours after sunset. We have just completed setting up our tents, laying out a camp kitchen and building a campfire



when we are rewarded with a clearing sky and beautiful sunset. The onslaught of black flies and mosquitoes never materializes, but the wine bottles and instruments sure do. Away from the fire we are treated to a dancing and singing woodcock. A little morning rain does nothing to dampen anyone's enthusiasm.

Cruising - August 2009

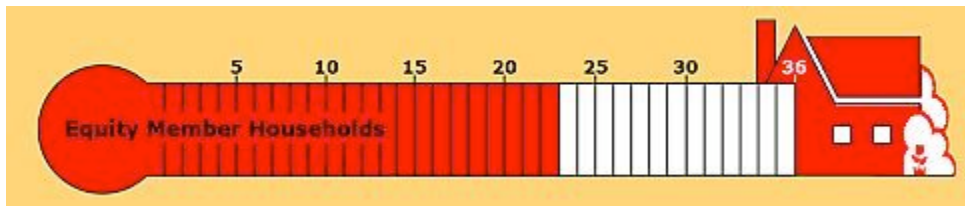
It is 6 PM and we are finally under sail on the bay in a gentle southwest breeze. Our boat is outfitted for a three-day jaunt; the first multi-day cruise we have attempted since our kids came into our lives twelve years earlier. I am slightly irritated since I am heading in what feels like the wrong direction - toward Belfast Harbor - where we are to meet up with three other boats being sailed by our new cohousing friends that will join us. I have been ready since 3:00. Now I know that we'll have to find our anchorage in the dark. As we approach the other boats, my irritation evaporates. Joanne and Paul have spent most of the day helping ready the "Tigger" for Sanna, Alan and their kids. Everyone agrees that Sanna needs a vacation, and friends that can make a sailing getaway seem as easy as pie. We come about and the fleet heads south to Turtle Head, kids and adults alike waving and calling across the gunwales to each other. We are five boats, nine adults and nine kids. All summer we've talked of doing this and finally, thanks to Joanne and Paul, it's happening. Once again we have had faith in the group synergy and, as the sun sets behind us, we are treated to a full moon rising over Turtle Head, at the tip of Islesboro. We do indeed anchor after sunset, but it is as bright as day. Later we set the record for the number of people that can fit in a thirty foot sloop.

To be continued...



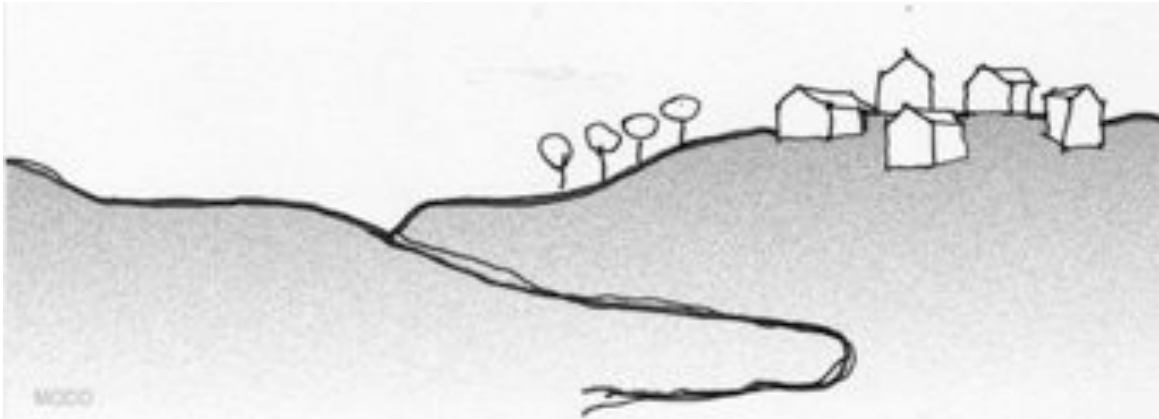
Membership Information

Equity Members are those households who have already committed to purchasing a home in the community. There are currently twenty-three of a projected thirty-six Equity members. Exploring Members are those households who have an interest in becoming Equity Members, but are not yet ready to fully commit. 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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