

town government

Forest Fragmentation

By Lynn Levine

Dummerston Conservation Commission

Forest fragmentation is like a small festering infection. It can be prevented with the right medicine, but the first step is to be aware that it is happening. That is why Jamie Fidel, from the Vermont Natural Resources Agency came, to the Dummerston Conservation Commission meeting in June. Also attending the meeting were members of the planning commission and the zoning board of adjustment. Forest fragmentation is the process whereby slowly, one house at a time, the forested landscape is broken up into smaller pieces. The negative impact of fragmentation is manifold.

Not only does it make less land accessible for recreational uses such as walking, snowmobiling, or hunting. In addition, wildlife such as deer, bear, moose, hermit thrush, and ovenbirds are affected because their habitat is fragmented, or broken up into smaller areas than they require.

Jamie discussed many ways of dealing with the issue of forest fragmentation in Dummerston.

Of first and foremost importance is that landowners need to know that how they subdivide their land can have a significant effect on the landscape.

If landowners with parcels greater than twenty-seven acres enroll their land in the state's Use

Value Appraisal Program, they are eligible for lower property taxes. This might make it unnecessary to subdivide the property.

Another strategy is to allow for planned unit development whereby housing is built in a cluster and the surrounding area is kept undeveloped. One such project is being proposed on Camp Arden Road.

Several pieces of property in town are protected from development by holding a conservation easement with the Vermont Land Trust. This prevents development of land in perpetuity. At present there is a one-time fee of roughly \$3,500 for creating a conservation easement, which insures that the wishes of the landowner are followed forever. Additional costs of this process are covered by a grant from the Freeman Foundation.

Finally, Jamie recommended that the town has subdivision regulations that provide specific guidelines for how a property can be divided up. Such regulations help prevent the building of new homes further and further away from the main roads. Jamie pointed out that because of new technology, septic systems are becoming easier to engineer and people can build in areas we never thought could be threatened by development.

For a better understanding of the construction that is going on in remote areas of town go to the conservation commission web site www.dummerstonconservation.com. You can click on "maps" and look at the pictorial images that tell the story of the forest fragmentation that is going on in Dummerston.

Dummerston Cares

Walk for Healthy Aging Raises \$1000

By Shirley Perkins

Dummerston Cares wants to thank all those who participated in the walk for healthy aging on May 5. New walkers joining the Cares members this year were Pam McFadden and her mother Lila, Joanie McBean, and Kelsey Rabideau. Through their efforts we were able to raise about one thousand dollars this year and many thanks to everyone who so generously donated to this fund raising. This is an annual event sponsored by the Council on Aging to support services for seniors in this area of Vermont, such as congregate meals and Meals on Wheels, among others. Three-fourths of the money we raised remains with Dummerston Cares to continue our local programs.

It has been decided to suspend the senior social hours during the summer months but they will be started again in the fall. We welcome suggestions for programs and activities at any time. Leave your name and number on our

Cares line, 257-5800, so we can talk to you. Also in the fall, we expect to be able to offer a strong living exercise program. We now have two volunteers who will take the training as leaders. Watch for this announcement.

Dummerston Cares continues to send a representative to the bi-monthly Windham Cares meetings. Jeanette White has recently been hired by Windham Cares as a coordinator. Her job will be to help the various Cares in each town develop individualized programs. One goal of Dummerston Cares is to get more members, please consider joining us.

2007 Real Estate Taxes Due August 20, 2007

by Pamela G. McFadden

Town Clerk

The town residents at the March town meeting voted to change the first payment date for real estate taxes. Starting in 2007, the first installment of real estate taxes will be due on Monday August 20th.

The town office will be open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on that date to receive tax payments. If the payment is not received in the office by 5 p.m. on the 20th, the payment will be considered late and subject to a 1% late fee. The town has installed a mail slot next to the front door to accommodate residents who would like to drop off payments after hours on Friday, August 17th and over the weekend. If you would like a receipt for payment, please include a

self-addressed envelope and indicate that on the payment stub.

Important Reminder: The town does not send out second bills in January for the February payment. If you want to receive a reminder in January, please mark the stub asking for a reminder and send a self-addressed envelope with your payment in August. I will send anyone a reminder who asks for it but other than putting a notice in the paper, it is up to the taxpayer to remember to pay the February bill. If a payment is late in February, there is a one time 8% penalty and a 1% late fee applied. **Postmarks are not accepted as timely payment.** Just a word of advice: the town's mailing address is in 05346 zip code, if you are mailing from any other zip code than 05346 please allow for at least three days for mail to be delivered here.

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