

## **Cohousing project may break ground soon**

By Al Edwards

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A cooperative housing development that drew the ire of Buxton residents during Planning Board meetings in recent months could break ground in October.

Greensward Hamlet, a so-called cohousing community, would be an environmentally friendly development using geothermal, solar and wind energy. Residents would live in a tight knit group, share meals in a common house and grow some of their food together, said the project's creator, Françoise Paradis of Saco.

"I am still trying to get financing secured, and I am still waiting for final Department of Environment Protection approval," Paradis said. "That should all be finalized within the next few weeks.

Paradis said the project, to be built on 30-acres of land that she already owns, will take about three years to be completed. She expects the first two buildings, which will house a total of eight condos, to be done by the spring. The project will also have a common house for residents to gather, which Paradis said she hopes will be completed in the second stage.

She plans a total of five buildings with four condos in each. The condos will range from one, two, three and three bedrooms with an in-law apartment. The development will be located at the end of Marshall Lane, a dirt road off Route 117. Prices will range from \$225,000 for a one bedroom to \$415,000 for a three bedroom with an in-law apartment. Paradis has committed herself to a three-bedroom with the in-law apartment, she said.

"I think it's a little expensive but, it's a lifestyle and not just a home." Paradis said. "In the common house, we'll have a meditation room, a game room, a playroom for children, and a large dining room with a kitchen."

She has five other commitments for condos, but she cannot close deals until she receives financing, she said. She also has received 30 inquiries from people interested in moving to the community. Most of these people are 50 or older, she said.

While Paradis considers Greensward Hamlet to be a responsible environmental initiative, she did face town opposition while trying to get Planning Board approval.

Paradis' opponents went as far as accusing her of deceiving the Buxton Planning Board, reasoning that the cost of fossil-fuel free development, as Paradis proposed, was too expensive to ever become a reality. Despite residents' concerns about the impact of a large development on well water, traffic or simply the long-standing way of life in Buxton, the Planning Board voted to approve the project in late June, saying that the project was meeting the requirements to go forward.

Because of the new residents and increased traffic, the town required that Marshall Lane would have to be built up and paved.

"I think it's an exciting project," Jerry Ross, Buxton Planning Board vice chairman, said Tuesday. "As long as the applicant meets all of the town's requirements for the project, there really isn't a lot of leeway in not voting to approve it."

Paradis said most of the residents who voiced concern now seem to be on board.

Paulette Langevin, who operates Angels Retreat Assisted Living from her home on 50 Marshall Lane, said her concerns have been addressed. She previously was afraid that paving the road and increased traffic would mean the elderly residents would no longer be able to walk down the road. Langevin bought the home from Paradis, who used to operate her psychology practice there.

"The road is no longer going to go across from us," Langevin said. "They are also putting up trees as blockers so the view will still remain private. Hopefully, everything will go fine and it will still keep its privacy here."

Maine has one cohousing community, Two Echo in Brunswick, which was formed in 1991 and began occupancy in 1998. Another cohousing project is being planned in Belfast.

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