

# Habitat for Humanity seeks approval for Dorset duplex

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DORSET — The Planning Commission voted unanimously at their Dec. 2 meeting to continue the hearing regarding the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity's proposal to partner with the town to construct a duplex on land to be donated by Housing Vermont.

According to town documents, the hearing was extended until Jan. 6 in part due to outstanding legal questions.

While affiliate representative of Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity, Dick Malley, is skeptical that the project will be approved, he remained hopeful.

"They (the planning commission) have the authority to issue a new permit and that it will be at their discretion. We hope they'll do that. We think it's a good place," Malley said. "It would be very hard for us to find another opportunity like this."

Habitat for Humanity has wanted to create a home in the Dorset area for some time now, but has never been able to do so because of land costs.

Even with the land being donated, Malley estimated that the cost of the proposed duplex — which will be the first constructed by the Bennington branch — will be about \$200,000. That translates to a \$100,000 mortgage for each of the families that would move in, provided the project comes to fruition. A point of contention pertaining to the

proposal is the utilization of green space in the surrounding area. According to the minutes, one of the neighbors stated that while the concept was a good one, the project as originally presented preserved the green space.

Dorset Planning Director, Joseph Bamford, said the open space is needed because the well for the original project requires a large isolation district. It's this requirement that poses problems for the project.

"It seems to be the consensus of our planning commission that this needs to remain open space," said Bamford. "That seems to be the crux of the argument at this point."

However, Malley said according to the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity's legal counsel, it is legal for the organization to construct the duplex in the proposed area. Habitat presented the planning commission with a proposal for the look of the landscaping at the most recent meeting on Tuesday night.

According to the Dec. 2 meeting minutes, Executive Director of Housing Vermont, Andy Broderick, said Malley asked them if there was room to create a Habitat House on Harmony Lane. Broderick indicated that as long as the project received approval from the planning commission and the State, Housing Vermont would be comfortable with the project.

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