

Habitat duplex proposed for Dorset

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DORSET — The Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity made a proposal to the Planning Board last Tuesday night to construct the organization's first duplex in Bennington County.

President of the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity, Dick Malley, said that while the cost of the project would be partially determined by the cost of materials — which are constantly changing — he estimated that the total cost of the project would be between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

The proposed duplex would be located on the same land as another 24 unit housing project off of Route 7A in East Dorset built by Housing Vermont — who has offered to donate the land and partner with Habitat for Humanity.

If Habitat for Humanity were to gain approval for the project, Malley indicated they would like to begin construction as soon as possible.

"In a perfect world we'd be building next summer, but you never know how long this process is going to take," he said.

The organization has been considering building a home in the proposed location for the past six to nine months, Malley said. According to the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity's Web site the organization completed their ninth home this past September.

While they have built homes in Bennington, East Arlington, Jackson, N.Y., Pownal, Rupert, Shaftsbury, West Rupert and Winhall, they have been unable to build a home in

despite their interest in doing so.

"... We've never been able to build in the Manchester or Dorset area because the land is too expensive. So this was a great opportunity for us," said Malley. "We would love to be able to offer some hard working families the opportunity to live closer to where they work."

One of the concerns that surrounds the project relates to greenspace. Town Manager Pete Webster said concerns were raised at the meeting about the greenspace near the leaching fields — which he said will remain unaltered — and the 200 feet surrounding the well.

Though Webster acknowledged some potential obstacles, he was in favor of the project. "I think it's a good effort to build ... two affordable units of housing," he said. "There's quite a bit in our Town Plan to direct the town to, wherever appropriate, support affordable housing initiatives."

The Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity is scheduled to appear at the next planning board meeting on Nov. 5 to provide them with additional information about the project.