

# Habitat eyes Jennifer Lane development

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MANCHESTER — Habitat for Humanity was expected to go before the Development Review Board on Wednesday for a preliminary hearing regarding the possible development of 23 single family homes on Jennifer Lane.

According to a letter from the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity, the organization has a purchase agreement with the owners of the 48 parcels of land on Jennifer Lane that they hope to develop. However, that agreement depends on Habitat's success in procuring the gifts and pledges necessary to pay for the land and necessary site improvements. The offer is also contingent upon the town and the state's approval of the project, according to the letter.

Affiliate Representative of the Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity, Richard Malley, said the organization will have until September to raise the money to not only purchase the property, but make the necessary site improvements.

The homes — which it costs Habitat about \$100,000 to construct — would be sold for approximately \$125,000, according to the letter.

If the project were to be approved, houses would be constructed one at a time at a rate of one per year, according to the letter. The Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity, which aims at constructing two homes a year, serves the rest of Bennington County as well and they would not want to concentrate all of their efforts in one town for more than a decade. It was that fact that

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seemed to be one of the more appealing aspects of the project to Malley.

"The wonderful thing about this property would be that it would give us land that we could build on for a number of years," he said.

If the organization is able to purchase the property, Malley said he hopes they are able to complete all of the infrastructure work and site improvements by the summer of 2010 and be able to begin construction by the spring of 2011.

Before the project can be approved — or the land purchased — one problem needs to be resolved.

"The property cannot be developed in its present form. That was decided in the early 1990s," said Planning Director and Zoning Administrator Lee Krohn. "It would have to be reconfigured in some form."

Malley said that the 48 parcels of property were all very small and because of that, numerous pieces would have to be combined and then subdivided before they could develop the property.

While Malley said that the property may be very difficult to develop, he indicated that it was a worthwhile project.

"The need for something like this in our community is greater than ever given the current economic climate," he said. "Being able to build housing for families close to Manchester with access to shopping, places to work, and good schools for kids, that would be a great contribution to the community."

The Bennington Area Habitat for Humanity also has another unique project under consideration in Dorset. The organization is attempting to partner with Housing Vermont to construct a duplex — the first the Bennington branch will have constructed. Approval of the project has been impeded in part because of opposition pertaining to the utilization of green space in the surrounding area, according to earlier reports.