

THE DUMMERSTON HOUSING ADVISORY COMMISSION

At the highly attended and participatory Y2C meetings held last April it was clear that housing was a major interest and concern to the citizens of Dummerston. Housing for those seeking to downsize, for first time owners, for renters, for younger and for older – the range was broad. Those who signed up at Y2C to further explore and define “housing” have been meeting monthly since June. The group has explored what makes a site feasible, how to access possible funds, and perhaps, most importantly, to attempt to define the actual housing needs.

It has been an active and energetic committee. Members have attended workshops on cluster housing, conferred with state organizations, and spoken to landowners. They have considered traffic issues, sustainability, design, the number and size of units, and the restraints of water and septic.

In September the Select Board approved this group as the Housing Advisory Commission. Recently, the Commission received funding to conduct a Dummerston housing needs assessment which will be completed in late February. The assessment will assist our community in defining its rental and home ownership needs.

A HOUSING VISION – John Wilcox’s Perspective

John and Cindy Wilcox have lived in Dummerston for a number of years. Their house on East Orchard Road has extensive gardens and requires ongoing maintenance and repairs. John’s experience as an advocate for elderly residents of public housing in Connecticut as well as his experience as a trust officer settling estates for often elderly surviving spouses has helped him define the kind of housing he wants for himself as he and Cindy move into the next phase of their lives.

“I see living is richer when you mix all types of people together. We all need that kind of sharing. Cindy and I know we can’t stay where we are forever; we need to plan ahead. We don’t want an indoor atmosphere only – I love the outdoors. I want a blended community and to be around children, older and younger folk.”

His vision of what this space could look like is compelling: an independent living space within Dummerston. There would be a communal space, green space, and a community room. “I have seen models where there are four units facing outward in each building – each unit has its own terrace and garden – but is surrounded by common ground.

To keep the mix of residents rich, John envisions rental units and owned units, smaller units for single people or couples of any age and family units as well. This could meet the needs of a broad range of people and ensure a vibrant community. “My son has been looking for a place to live in Dummerston and found, like many others, that the options were too expensive.”

As he points out so clearly, “It is easy for the elderly to become isolated, and if your children are not able to live near you it adds to the isolation.” Affordable community housing, with a

broad range of options is an ideal worth striving for, and, for John, is why he volunteered to join the Advisory Commission.

For further information on the Dummerston Housing Advisory Commission, contact Greg Brown (Chair) at 272 5634 or Gig_brown@yahoo.com