

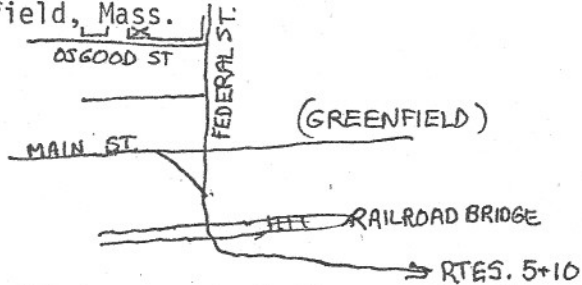
Valley Community Land Trust

NEWSLETTER Jan. 1979

VALLEY COMMUNITY LAND TRUST MEETING

Thurs., Jan. 18 7:30 p.m.

5 Osgood St., (off Federal)
Greenfield, Mass.



There will be an orientation session for new members, time for committees to meet, report on land search, and fund raising, and a panel discussion of where we'd like to see VCLT go from here, plus refreshment time to get to know each other.

Greetings--

Best to everyone in the new year! The membership committee has been regrouping and re-thinking ways to find new members, spread the word, and above all run the monthly meetings so they are interesting and informative to both old and new members.

Everyone agrees VCLT needs to become more focused, organized, and active. Some of my own ideas for new directions and approaches are expressed in the following article. These are meant as a beginning for a further discussion by everyone which will take place at the Jan. 18 meeting. A panel will open up the discussion. Please bring your own ideas.

By the way thanks are due to new roots magazine for letting us use their bulk mailing permit to send you this. Hope you enjoy the free magazine and land trust article.

Please spread the word of this meeting to any of your friends who might be interested.

Patricia Greene

WHERE ARE WE NOW ?

At times in the past year it seems the land trust's main activity has narrowed to searching for land. While finding land and getting people settled on it is extremely important, I think we've failed to pay atten-

tion to other equally important things that might have attracted and held the interest of more people.

Active membership has dwindled. People who come once often don't come again due both to a frustration with how the meetings have been run, and a sense that nothing seems to be happening that they can sink their teeth into.

We need to deal with the "time lag problem". Most people need a long span of time, perhaps a year or more, to really digest and get turned on to an idea as complex/simple as that of a land trust. Then they may need even more time to reach the point of being ready to get on land.

How the land trust involves people during this time lag is a problem that I think demands we seek a broader perspective on land related activities and education.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

On the simplest level VCLT could satisfy people's needs to know how to live ecologically and economically on land. We could run monthly hands-on, on-site workshops with area people experienced in forestry/woodlot management, soil conservation, organic small-scale farming, building your own house, utilizing appropriate technology--solar greenhouses and hot water heaters, wind energy, composting toilets, etc., and cooperating and interacting within a community of people.

We could all spend a day at Earthbridge CLT in Vermont examining how a well developed land trust works.

We also need to have regular work and play days at the Colrain land to help people get to know each other better.

Orientation sessions might be followed up with further "clearness sessions" at which anyone could ask questions about the land trust. These sessions would involve everyone, not just someone "assigned" to beginners. Interesting discussion and thought clarification for all might result.

Active involvement in local and national land use/land reform issues seems a likely directi

for VCLT. In order to familiarize ourselves with the issues panels of local planning, zoning, land use, and farmland preservation people could be organized for our meetings. Sponsoring talks by well-known people in these fields is another way to educate both ourselves and the larger public.

VCLT could actively work for and advocate farmland preservation in the valley, and lobby in support of government measures. It could work on county and town government levels for zoning and other reforms. It could urge a boycott against our own backyard monstrosity the Hampshire Mall and its builders Pyramid. If we gained an image as the area's land use activist group, perhaps we would attract a wider range of people.

Come on Jan. 18 and add to these ideas or generate new ones. Help establish priorities for VCLT for the new year.

Patricia Greene

LEASE COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The VCLT is looking for people who are serious enough about getting on land trust land to become active potential lessees. A meeting was called last month to help those who filled in questionnaires indicating their interest define their needs better, and get to know each other. Eight people attended in addition to Lease and Land Search Committee members.

Everyone got a chance to outline their dream about the land they'd like to live on, and the kind of leasehold arrangements they thought ideal for themselves.

There seemed to be consensus on the idea of a fairly large piece of rural land, part wooded and part cleared, with enough frontage so each unit could have its own one to two acre individual leasehold with garden. Everyone also wanted cooperative interaction in terms of woodlot, some gardening, and possibly animals.

No one present seemed prepared to farm full-time, although most agreed it would be good to include a full-time farmer/manager in the group of lessees. Most liked the idea of having a working farm close-by, and thought an arrangement could be worked out whereby the smaller leaseholds would pay somewhat more to make it possible for a young farmer to lease a large part of the land.

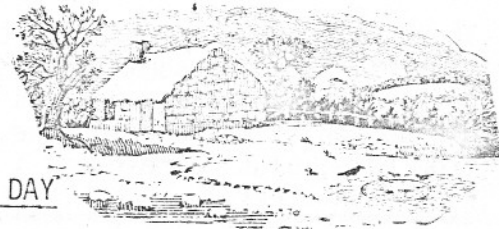
Geographically everyone wanted to be in Franklin County, most within commuting distance of Amherst. Two felt they would rather be farther out in the hilltowns.

At a second meeting the group determined that among those present about \$10,000 could be raised as a downpayment on land alone. Some felt it would be more practical to look for land with a house on it. This would eliminate lessees having to be financially strapped with paying rent wherever they're living, a lease fee for the land, and a mortgage on the house they're building. Lessees could live in the existing house while building.

People agreed to look for land in Leverett, Montague, Whately, and Conway.

MEETING FOR POTENTIAL LESSEES SET

A pot-luck supper/meeting was set for Tuesday, January 16 at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Meg Gage and James Propert in Montague Center on the corner of School St. For directions call 367-2616. Anyone interested in getting on land is welcome, so please come.



WORK AND PLAY DAY

Saturday, Feb. 10 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Colrain land on Shearer Road

Bring something for a potluck lunch, wear warm work clothes, bring skis and sleds if you wish. We'll be cutting wood for part of the day. Pick up maps to the land at the meeting, or call 625-2402 for instructions.

TREASURER'S REPORT

At present the treasury is very low, with only \$133 to carry on Trust business, and a \$228 state corporation excise tax due in March.

Obviously we have to concentrate on raising money again through memberships, donations, and special events. We have fewer than 30 paid members and need help to increase this number, a task requiring energy directed toward Membership Committee activities. We will need to solicit donations from our friends and members, and think of running another dance, folk concert, or flea market. Please contact me at 665-2365 if you would be willing to help with any of the above.

Steve Morgan