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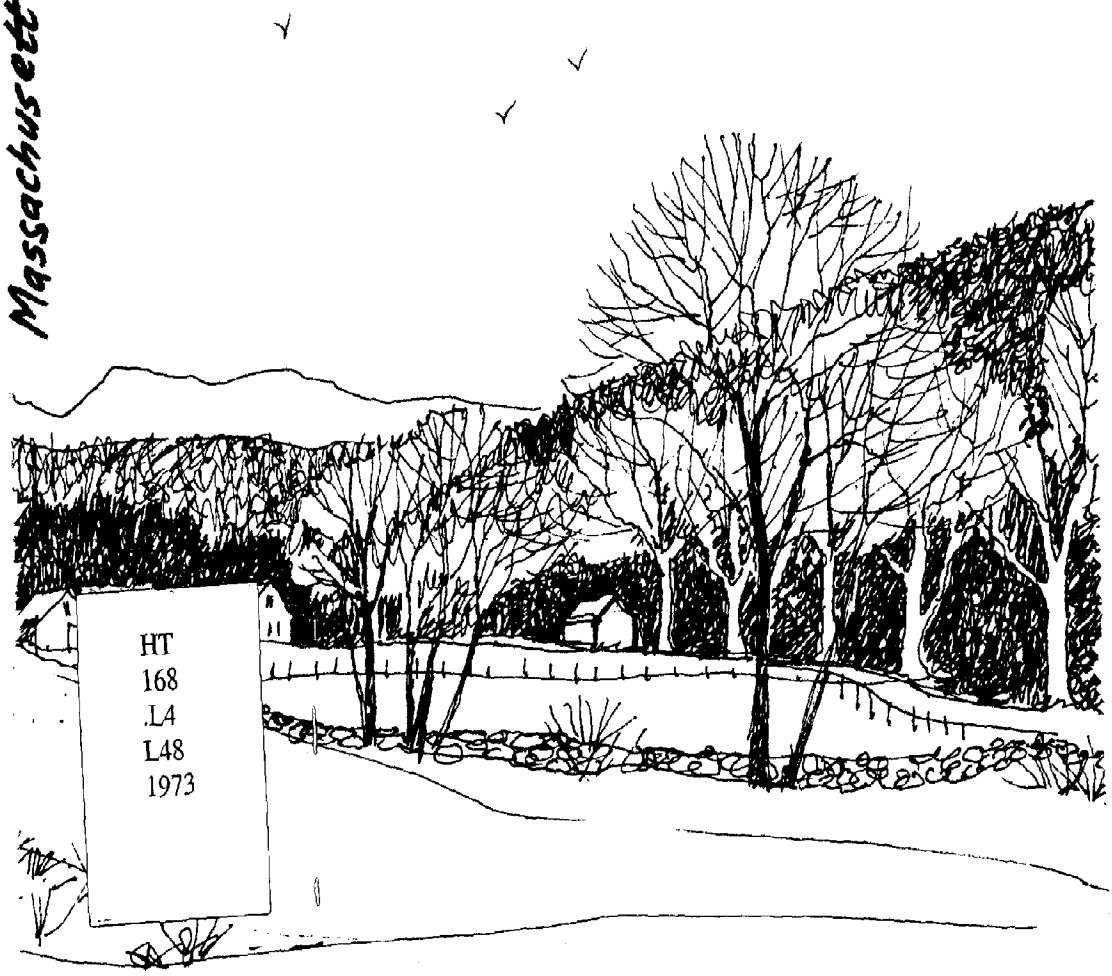
where we stand

Massachusetts. Town of Everett



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where we stand

a report on Leverett's planning process

HT168.L4 L48 1973

compiled by

William Carney

for the Leverett Conservation Commission
and the Leverett Planning Board

november, 1973

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TOWN OF LEVERETT, MASSACHUSETTS.

January 1, 1974

For many years various boards and committees have tried to carry our their responsibilities in accordance to the wishes of the citizens of Leverett. This has been a difficult task in many cases, mostly because the wishes and thoughts of our people were never put forth in an organized manner.

Two years ago the Leverett Conservation Commission had the foresight to take a step in the right direction. As a result of this move, we now have in our possession a document that will give our Town Government some sense of feeling in regards to the wishes of the people.

In a small town such as ours we have a real chance to live in a truly democratic society. There are millions of people in this world that never had an opportunity to express any feelings or desires in regard to the future of the place they live in. By participating in Town Meetings and Town Government, let us make sure that we never loose this privilege.

A document like this should be of great help in the years to come in assisting all phases of town government to carry out their duties to the people of Leverett.

Many thanks to William (Bill) Carney and all others who contributed to this report.

Leverett Selectmen

Philip O. Woodard

Philip O. Woodard

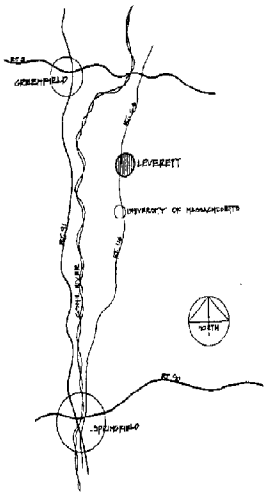
David A. Evans

David A. Evans

Nancy J. Raskevitz

Nancy J. Raskevitz

leverett's planning process



In an era of jets and interstates, of houses built for maximum profit and occupied for minimum tenure, of bulldozers and machine-made landscapes, of televised worldwide consciousness, and of power and attention increasingly concentrated on large-scale economic and political units, this is a document which focuses on one place. It expresses the values of a particular locality and considers how those values may be eroded or enriched by a rapidly moving, rapidly changing, rapidly growing world. And it suggests actions based on these considerations.

Leverett, Massachusetts, is just north of Amherst, where the concrete towers of the University of Massachusetts bespeak an enrollment rapidly approaching 25,000. North of Leverett, brick factory stacks symbolize the milltowns of Montague and Greenfield, where unemployment is 10%. To the west, Sunderland's tobacco-rich gravel terraces step down to the Connecticut River. But Leverett is basically a hilltown, sharing this identity with Shutesbury, Wendell, and half a dozen other communities to the east--towards the immense Quabbin Reservoir, which inundated three such out of the way places to supply Boston with water.

Leverett is bound by Brushy Mountain which occupies about a fourth of the town's 22.9 square miles, and Route 63, its only state road. If one starts down Roaring Brook at the Shutesbury line, staying on macadam and bearing right until reaching the Shutesbury line along the Sawmill River, one will have wrapped half way around the mountain, traversing the major,

though winding, roads within the town and seeing its chief, though small, villages. Similarly, on Route 63, one can very nearly drive from Sunderland to Sunderland as the highway curves around Mt. Toby. Connecting these two grand arcs, six other roads work their ways through gaps among the lower hills.

Along Leverett's roads, on generally rocky soil, among generally treed-in fields, in colonial houses, in trailers and ranchettes, live just over 1,000 people - 44 people per square mile, a population increase of ten percent in the last ten years. Most of this document was written, or more often than not, spoken, by these people. It is a forum for their feelings about where they live.

Two years ago, the Leverett Conservation Commission, aware of the natural and social quality of Leverett and alert to the pressures of change mounting in the Pioneer Valley, began to think of ways in which the town could shape its future. The commission met with the town Planning Board several times to explore the most productive approaches. The two groups felt that the surest way to insure Leverett's quality was to involve the thoughts and energies of as many townspeople as possible in an on-going planning process.

To aid this effort, the Conservation Commission applied for and received a $1550 Ford Foundation grant, which was matched by $800 appropriated at the 1972 Town Meeting and $2210 voted at the 1973 Town Meeting. North Leverett landscape architects Hugh and Lloyd Kirley agreed to oversee the project. Town planner William Carney was hired to help.

The first step was to talk to Leverett people. The bulk of this publication consists of quotations from about 50 townspeople, taped early in 1973. The consensus which emerged from these interviews gave

rise to a number of committees, which investigated specific environmental improvement projects. About 50 more townspeople served on these committees. Their major recommendations, including several warrant items for the 1974 Town Meeting, appear after the interviews.

The 1974 Town Meeting will mark Leverett's 200th year as an incorporated town. At that time one of the finest tributes to the values of the town's past would be to take steps to shape its future. In addition to the committee recommendations, the Conservation Commission and Planning Board will propose that the Town Meeting adopt a Statement of Leverett Goals and establish a permanent Leverett Goals Committee. These proposals conclude this report.

Leverett's landscape will remain healthy and beautiful to the extent that it remains meaningful to the people living here. By providing expression to feelings about the town, this publication hopes to amplify them. And by recording and suggesting ways of involvement with this landscape, on both personal and public levels, it seeks to increase the landscape's meaning.

where we stand

the purist position

Frances King

There are new people in town, an influx of newer people. It hasn't been a rapid influx, but gradual as older people in town die or move away; the houses that they once lived in are taken over by newer people. There is a very slow building trend. Hanging over our heads is the possibility that some housing developer could get hold of a piece of land and find a way of either breaking the zoning code or adapting to it.

The whole town is a series of rock ledges. So whereas an individual could buy a tract of land and find on it a place where the percolation test would pass and where he could find a well, for a housing developer to put a hundred houses on a hundred acres or less than that or whatever, would entail a whole public water system ultimately. Which would be extremely expensive in Leverett because we can't dig here you see.

I would just admit to a prejudice against crowding houses into a rural town, which is really a precious heritage in the sense that there aren't too many of them left. You've already ruined Amherst, so you might just as well crowd them into Amherst, and leave Leverett a place where people can breathe.

Not only for the people who live here, but for the people who in time may want to walk through here or drive through here and still see a little peace and harmony and old houses. After all, it could be pretty depressing if you got into your car and the only place you could drive would be up one street and down another of cheese box houses. It has not happened here. Selfishly we enjoy that fact, but beyond that, it's almost a responsibility for future generations that we don't allow it to happen here. I feel strongly in this direction.

And that while there are individuals that need a place to build a house--this seems to me legitimate, this is slow growth and what we have so far had in our town--I'd hate to see somebody from Connecticut come up here, buy a tract of land, build a bunch of chicken coops, sell them, make a million, and then leave Leverett to figure out what to do about sewerage and schools and even worse than that, destroy the landscape what we value.

Frances King

Schools are easily built. It's that land itself can never be replaced. Yes, nobody wants to pay higher taxes, nobody wants to build another school. And say if another 40 families moved into Leverett, we'd have to build another school. There are a lot of people in town who couldn't afford that. They might even have to leave town. But my own feeling is longer range than that. I hate to see the town itself built up to the point where its beauty is destroyed.

Having listened to my neighbors talk--and this not being the main topic, but over a length of time--I would say we have two conflicting feelings about development in Leverett. There are those who do fear higher taxes, because it seems to be an axiom that the more people who move into a town, the higher the taxes go. On the other hand, what are you going to do if you're a person who has a low income, and you own a large tract of land, and you're offered a substantial sum, and for the first time in your life maybe you're going to be able to go to Florida in the winter and own two cars?

There's a feeling that you own your land, and if you want to make money on it, why not? And with 91, these big highways, more and more this part of the world is going to become attractive to people who live in Hartford, Springfield. People who wish to escape urban life are going to commute.

(These people come here as an esthetic response to the landscape. Are beauty and development inherently at odds?)

I think in some ways they are. No matter how beautiful a home you may build, and how much of the natural tree growth you may try to preserve around it, you have never the less intruded upon nature itself.

pressures

Robert Raskevitz	They just want to leave the town exactly the way it is now.
Chester Woodard	Practically the only agricultural work is a few people have gardens, that's all. And not too many at that.
Steve Trudel	I enjoy being 10 miles outside of Amherst. Everything that's in Amherst is there for me, but I don't have to be a part of it. I feel almost a little Machiavellian about ripping off their community. By going and partaking of it, contributing as much as I feel is necessary, but not really giving myself to it--giving myself in effect to my home back here.
Chester Woodard	I would hope it wouldn't change too much. But it probably will. It's bound to grow. If it doesn't grow more than 100%, maybe it won't be too bad.
Paul Woodard	I'd rather see it natural, see the trees. But people have got to live somewhere. Probably that's what people thought when I built my house down there.
Clifford Graves	They're coming in from everywhere, that's all. And they'll buy any kind of piece of land to build on. And the value of land has changed so much, you can't believe it.
Pat Conklin	I don't know whether an exclusionary attitude is good or bad. All I know is that what happened to Hadley is ridiculous.
Mrs. Walter Carey	Here we have the advantage of the bigger towns--shopping marts and everything--yet you can enjoy your rural living, you know. Highways are kept clear and good and everything.
James Lumley	University people don't feel the University is going to top out at these figures. You can't just shut it off. New institutions don't pop up overnight.

Robert Raskevitz — The Planning Board feels that the only course for Leverett is it's going to be a bedroom town from the Amherst area. You can't get around that. And the consensus of opinion is to try to restrict it enough so that it doesn't become thoroughly saturated and degraded. Just try to control the houses, try to keep it a pleasant, rural residential area.

Edward Field, Sr. — No one really knows what's going to happen. Are we going into a program of regulating population? Are we actually going to try to preserve what we have now? Or are these apartment house developments and the like going to continue?

Clifford Blinn — Well, if no one wants to sell their land, nothing's going to develop. This is one factor. Eventually the old ones are going to die off and there's no telling what's going to happen.

Charles Linscott — I think the town's coming along pretty well right now. Building quite a lot of new houses. Of course, the problem here and in a lot of towns is high taxes. A man has to have a good steady income. Especially a man that's got a family.

Robert Raskevitz — The problem is there are a lot of people that buy 5 acres of land and think they ought to be able to build ten houses on it. . . they don't care about the water and the sewerage and the trees and the land or anything. They just want to make a profit. And they're looking for a place to make it.

Robert Brown — Most of the people today. . . I've got a couple coming in this week from down in Virginia--answered one of my ads in the Christian Science Monitor. They want a place to retire to in four more years. They want it at least five acres, if possible. Within Amherst commuting distance. And they want a place they can fix over. I always jokingly said, What we need to do is build more old places to fix over. Though some now want nothing to do. They want everything done for them.

Homer Germain — I would like to see it more or less stay country, but I doubt if it will. It keeps growing all the time as we get more and more houses. And people that own land, after they get up, they need the money and taxes get so high, they have to start selling them off to help keep them going in their later years.

Charles Roys — Where we've noticed a difference in our own living is having to lock the place, secure the place, where years ago we didn't. I don't think you can blame the new people. It's just we have more movement in town than we used to have. So now you have to be very conscious.

Steve Trudel — To go outdoors at night and be able to see the stars without any diffusion of light from the city. And just a whole lot of the silence. Walking out and hearing the river, going to bed with that sound.

Charles Roys — My father wanted a small farm because he had a large family.

Gerald Jackson — They want a house that doesn't look like the house next door, preferably one that can't even be seen from the house next door.

Nancy Parr — I don't have that much of a sense of living in Leverett. But a lot of the things you were talking about are really exciting to me, and made me feel happy about living in Leverett. This road dominates my life, and I hate it. Cars. I almost get run over every morning when I go to milk the goats.

Raymond Cosseboom — They just go up and down, just as fast as they can, up and down and back and forth. I don't know what they get out of that. They're certainly not viewing the scenery. There's something about handling power that interests people. Speed, and dashing through the air, and they think they're getting somewhere. It satisfies something within them I suppose. It dulls the frustrations.

Constantine Kamansky — Most of the places now, they want to build back in the woods. Streets right into the woods. You got your shrubbery there, trees and all. Everybody builds in the woods. No one's out in the open.

James Lumley — Being against change is not so bad a thing. But what they're really saying is, we're against people.

Barry Schonhaut — I don't think we're going to be the people here 30 years from now to see what happens. Maybe somewhere else in New England, but not here. Mainly because the land prices even right now are just out of bounds.

Charles Linscott — Well, if I was a young man, had a million dollars, I'd start building. As it is, I'll probably never do anything.

Nick Lenz — I sort of had ambitions about buying land up on this hill here and subdividing it. Building some really nice individualistic houses on say 10 acre lots. Very private and very beautiful. And selling them.

Clifford Graves — Look at the land you got both sides of you there. Have horses down below there, and a garden, and play ball up here, skimobile. But they didn't buy it to build a house on it. I don't know what they bought it for. None of my business. . . Well, they had some idea. They may want to stack lumber there you know. They may have some bigger plans than we know about.

Pat Conklin — I'd have house groups so small that you wouldn't think it was a community. Maybe a farm, some sheds and a house. If it would look like that, I wouldn't mind if there were several of them. But if there were one huge one, I'd be really turned off to it. Like there's a little group of houses up there where the Careys are. It's not huge, probably not more than five. The architecture isn't very appealing, just regular houses. But that would be fine. And cheap, too.

Robert Brown — Off 63 most of the land's pretty level, but it's also the most uninteresting place to build.

Most of them want (this area) for the college atmosphere--so they can come in to the goings on you get in a college community you don't get elsewhere.

My ideal of a lot in the country is not just full of woods. Most people when they build out in the country don't cut down enough trees. You need air circulation to breathe the house and also if you're going to have any kind of garden, particularly fruit trees.

Of course another thing many people don't know about is air drainage. It's very important in growing things, but also in building a house. You take the foot of a large hill, there'll be an air pocket that's very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer. It's better to build on top of the hill.

Steve Trudel — I think the mind has to come before the place. The person has to want to centralize his energies here before the place can come together.

Alice Levenson — The quality of life of the kids is something that I really hope the town could maintain. It offers a way of life that I wish I could have had as a child. On the other hand, an elitist feeling about town and space bothers me. I think we have to think beyond our borders to the needs of people in general. I don't think that means we have to lose what the town has, but I don't know in my own mind how to weld those two things. I want to keep the quality of life, but I don't want to deny so many other people from enjoying it.

Gordon King — By and large this planning, this land use, is very similar to the National Park Service--it's snobbish, it's built largely for the middle class, the upper class. Who can go to Yellowstone? People with cars and campers and time-off and money. And this is true in Leverett. Who can afford to come in here and buy a couple of acres at whatever the price is now and build a house?

Pat Conklin — There are a lot of low income families right now that are almost being kicked out because the tax rate's going up. It almost got us, but we decided to stick it out.

Nick Lenz — You can't wander out like these big environmental designers and say, Ok, we obviously know that people function in such and such a way so we're going to build this kind of area here and that kind there. We're going to have this circulation pattern and another and everyone's going to really enjoy the place and their heads are going to be much more open. It never seems to work.

Mrs. Walter Carey — I think once you've put down roots you must accept what comes along. If we were terribly well to do, it might make a difference, but we're just average.

a country town

Philip Woodard (What makes Leverett a good place to live?)

Oh, I think just the mode of living, the speed of living. The fact that you're not all tied up in fast moving social life. You know, it's a quiet town, very quiet. Which does allow you to live in this very relaxed atmosphere. Of course, to me, it's not nearly as relaxed as I recall. But to someone coming from other areas I'm sure it's very relaxed. And I think this is one of our aims, to try to maintain this. . .

I would say personally if you could just keep the town from building too rapidly, then you've got it made. Then the ones that do come in want the same things that we do as far as the area is concerned.

Chester Woodard The main problem is trying to keep it small. That's very difficult. Price doesn't seem to mean anything anymore. We try by making stiff zoning, but it doesn't do much good. We're just trying to keep Leverett a small town.

(What's good about a small town?)

That's hard to describe. You know more people in a small town. In a large town you don't really know too many people, just your own particular group. Of course that's the same in a small town now. It used to be everybody knew everybody.

Phillip Woodard

The town itself is apart from any major highways. They pass us by, thank goodness. They never know we're here. Consequently, they're not scrambling to try to buy in or get in or take advantage of us. Because they don't even know what Leverett is.

I don't anticipate any great amount of change really. It'll grow. If it grows as fast as it's growing right now, it won't show much change. Unless someone really gets a big development idea. And I think Amherst has already built so much that I think this is going to slack off. And I'm glad they did it. . .

In strictly financial terms, the hardest thing for any town to face is a lot of low cost housing. I don't want to belittle any group because of their income or anything else, but these are hard facts. The cost of building today, the cost of developing sites because there's no water, no sewer, all this sort of thing, does not encourage low cost housing here. And I think this is to our advantage.

You get nice homes, well-built, the people who can afford these places many times look for larger plots of land. I had a call in the last two weeks for a building permit on a 25 acre lot. Terrific. My daughter just got a 26 acre lot. People are willing to do this because this is the way they like it. With that in mind, I think we're winning. I think we're going to come out with almost what we want--a pleasant country town. This is just terrific.

If we can just avoid, and I don't mean avoid by restriction, but by attraction perhaps, a lot of development type homes or this sort of thing, we'll still end up with a real country town. Not a small town by any means but a country town, where people have room to stretch.

If we can keep the tax structure at a point where people can afford to hold these large plots of land, then this'll do a lot to encourage it. People can stand the initial cost, they'll swing it somehow, if they're not going to be penalized for the rest of their life for owning a large plot of land. This is terrific if we can hold it.

Chester Woodard (Do taxes help determine where people build?)

I don't think so. The availability of land. People in Leverett haven't been selling their land. They don't want to develop it at this point. But it's changing.

(What forces them into it?)

Taxes. Tax them out of it.

(Will the town reevaluate sometime soon?)

Eventually, it'll take place. Taxpayers probably won't accept the assessors' evaluation, no matter who's on the board.

We raised the values on Juggler Meadow. Right close to the University, it's worth more than any other street on account of being where it is. They didn't like it. So they were going for a reevaluation. Wanted an article in Town Meeting. We had a couple of meetings on it. However, now values seem to be about the same all over town, if sales prices mean anything.

If lowered, the tax rate would start creeping up again . . . It's done that in other towns. . . It's easier to spend money when you've got a low tax rate. They're afraid of a high tax rate, they don't coincide that a low rate (on high valuation) may equal the same thing.

We've changed values right along ever since '45. . . We doubled them all one year. Put the rate right down. It was heading up to $130. Six years ago.

It's all valued low. Most of it is valued as either farmland or forestry land.

(Anything the town can do to generate more money?)

Buy a lottery ticket! No, the town won't go broke. It isn't the town, it's the people.

There are an awfully lot of people in the town today who are getting real good salaries. They can afford it. But there are always some people that don't get those good salaries. That happens every generation. The retired people are kind of out of luck, if they have a fixed income. . . You can have a lot of property but no income.

constraints

Donald Wise — There are isolated little pieces of thin till where you can put isolated houses, as long as you keep the density down. But the town's mostly bedrock.

Peter Robinson — With a low population you can get away with things that couldn't be tolerated with a high density of septic tanks.

Wise — You should recognize that Leverett is different from the towns to the south and west where there are vast areas of gravel and fill. We're basically scoured bedrock. With septic tank systems you just can't have a high density of population on scoured bedrock.

Robinson — You can have a high density if you want to spend millions of dollars blasting sewer lines and creating an independent water supply.

We probably ought to increase the minimum house lot acreage in some of the bedrock areas. The town shouldn't plan on a lot of new houses.

(And the few large areas of gravel in East Leverett and on Long Plain are where the most water is?)

Wise — Yes. The same reason that a builder likes it is the reason we should be preserving it.

Robinson — The town I would say has no knowledge of the quality of its ground water in these large sand and gravel areas. What exactly is happening to the aquifers?

One of the rock layers in town contains iron sulfide which weathers and gives sulfates. Certain people complain about this taste. Generally the rock which gives the best bedrock wells is the Pelham Gneiss in the eastern part of town, essentially east of Doolittle Brook. West of there there's much less certainty as to what kind of water you'll get. Some wells in mica schist don't hold up too well, the cracks plug up. In all cases, drilling for water in bedrock is a chancy business.

Robert Brown

Sometimes you get a lot of houses close together usually on good flat land, and you get so many the wells start drying up one by one. Somebody suffers. That's because somebody allowed too many houses to be built in the area.

(What can the town do?)

Well, your zoning's supposed to take care of it.

(I'm not sure it does, but something should.)

It's definitely happened in other places. There's a development down in Connecticut built on the outskirts of an area beyond the water line. I think he put in 30 or 40 houses. And he sold out and made pretty good. So two years later he bought some adjoining land and put on 30 or 40 more. One July morning a lady called up from one of the houses and said, We aren't getting any water. Come out and check the plumbing. So he did. Found that the well had gone dry. While he was out there his wife called that 2 or 3 other people had called. Within a week practically the whole development went dry. The water table just dropped. He finally went in an insane asylum. He just couldn't take it.

Charles Linscott

I wouldn't want to build a place unless I had a good supply of water. These fellows up in the woods here went way back, drilled a well down 1,000 feet. That's expensive you know. Another fellow up there, he's thinking of building. I was talking with him the other day. I told him he wanted to find out whether there's a supply of water before he started in building. Well, he thought that was a good idea, he hadn't thought of it. And he's started to clear a piece of land up there where he decided to build.

My son-in-law, he can find water, you know, with a stick. I don't know whether you believe in that or not. It's a genuine discovery. He said there's a vein of water running up through here, down 20-25 feet, he said. That's quite reasonable, of course. . . Arnold Glazier down here now, he can find water. You know the parsonage they built over on the other side here? He found that water was there. Of course, he belongs to that church down there.

Clifford Blinn (How do you justify telling someone he has to have an acre of land before he can built a house?)

Well, you have your own well and septic tanks. You can't have them too close together, or you're going to have pollution problems.

Gordon King Enforce the percolation tests. Theoretically, all tests should be made from March to May when the soil is saturated with water. This is when you get a true percolation test. This is what the law is, and it isn't enforced.

Frances King The selectmen say a man comes to them in June wanting to build a house. How are we going to make him wait till next spring? So they'll let him build it. So really the percolation test ought to take place before the transaction takes place.

Robert Brown The trouble is, people don't know what they're getting into. I cannot conscientiously sell a lot that I know damn well they're going to have problems. But most of Leverett is gravelly, so with a few exceptions where it's wet, most of the septic tanks work pretty good.

But when you build in the country you've got to have enough room to handle your septic tank in the event you have to move it. A lot of people wouldn't want a five acre or ten acre lot, but on the other hand you've got to have enough room for that.

(Is this sort of 'conscientiousness' pretty general practice among realtors here?)

Some have some conscience left, and some don't. It's like selling cars, you know. . .

(Might the town require percolation tests and test pits before land transactions take place?)

Well, yes, a person should know. But you're saying the land is going to be used for houses.

(Most is. Would this pose difficulties to a realtor?)

No. It would eliminate people buying lots that wouldn't be suitable for a septic tank.

David Evans

You might go into disposal systems other than septic tanks. Aerobic digestion coupled with seepage through a disposal bed. Chlorination can be used with this as well. But a good aerobic digestion system costs $80-100-125,000. That could serve 20-25 units. ($4,000 a piece).

And you just can't set them up and let them run by themselves. They require technical assistance to operate properly. Now you could go into anaerobic treatment. A septic tank is basically anaerobic. You can go into a larger scale, but again you're back into maintenance of nutrient supplies for your sludges, back into controlling the pH. . .

(What about several units on one large septic tank?)

That can be very effective, providing your tank and leach area are large enough for the discharge and that soil conditions are adequate.

(How would costs on that for 25 units compare to individual systems?)

When you figure piping, problems of blockage, and varying elevations and topography, basically you're still further ahead under the present situation. But it's close.

It's going to be some time, but if the region continues to grow I think the town will be forced into supplying utilities.

Robert Brown

(To what degree does steepness and ledge in Leverett limit development?)

Not much. Any land that's too steep would be difficult to put roads on. But you can always hang a house on a ledge, make it cantilevered. I think a lot of California where they keep putting in beautiful houses overlooking the ocean, overlooking some view, just chopping holes into the mountains.

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participatory planning
site research
aesthetic analysis
environmental manuals
interpretive paths & signs
successional landscaping
land poems
local history
environmental education

OCS

23 April 1974

MAY 1 '74

INFORMATION

RD

Richard R. Gardner
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
Washington D.C. 20230

Dear Mr. Gardner,

Charles Little of the Conservation Foundation tells me that you are interested in assessing coastal esthetics. He thought that some of the participatory planning techniques developed by Landscript Associates could aid that effort. So I am enclosing for your inspection the central document of a planning process which I recently conducted for Leverett, Massachusetts.

"Where We Stand" consists almost entirely of quotations from townspeople, gleaned from about fifty taped interviews. The gist of this technique is to find out what an environment means to people and then hold up the results as a sort of mirror which strengthens environmental involvement. The interviews reveal many insights into how the environment is experienced, not only in its physical form but through the human associations which are its "content." I think the booklet demonstrates a very direct means of documenting and developing environmental images.

In Leverett, the emphasis was not strictly on esthetic perceptions; it may be that inerviewing could likewise prove a valuable tool in general efforts to involve the public in the coastal zone management which NOAA oversees. On the other hand, the collection and analysis of interview material strictly for esthetic content has potential which the Leverett work just begins to suggest. Perhaps we can discuss these possibilities soon. At any rate, I think you will enjoy "Where We Stand," and I look foreward to hearing your reactions to it and how you think its techniques might apply to your own efforts.

Sincerely,

William Carney

William Carney

the planning scene

Robert Raskevitz — If someone wants to build a house, they ought to be able to build it in Leverett. And we're glad to have them. But we do insist that they have the large lot sizes so they won't infringe on somebody else's sewerage or water. . .

(I think according to the SCS mapping, a lot of this gravel land is suitable for building and septic systems on half acre lots. I wonder if you would see any merit in maybe designating some of this Long Plain area for smaller lot sizes than the one and one-half acres, the idea being to take some of the development pressures off the less buildable areas in town.)

I wouldn't personally. . . I don't like to see houses on quarter acre lots. Just house after house after house after house. . . A lot of times when a fellow builds on an acre he doesn't build right on the road, he builds back so he can have trees in his front yard. And it's better to look at, that's all. But I think if we had to have half acre lots, this would be the area to do it.

What I'm saying is we don't need it right now. There's still enough land in town to build on.

David Evans — As things stand, our zoning is restrictive to full-scale growth such as has occurred in Amherst. This is expressive of the feeling of the town. As time goes by, there is going to be a change. I don't think we can continue with restrictive zoning indefinitely. . .

(Would you prefer cluster development?)

If growth should come to that stage, it would seem at least from the standpoint of preserving open space, that clustering would be preferable. This is from a theoretical standpoint. It may be impractical. Do individuals want to live that close together? It's basically a matter of psychology. Under present conditions, most of the people want to be fairly well separated.

(Even if it means eventually dividing up the landscape into fairly inaccessable chunks, rather than large chunks everyone might use?)

David Evans — Yes, this is reflected in the present zoning.

(Yet at a certain point, the spaces in between start filling in and you haven't really accomplished privacy after all. Whereas, if you submit to a compromise from the beginning, you can insure some lasting open space. The problem is to recognize the point when you need to shift gears. What would indicate that such a stage had been reached?)

Fewer and fewer front lots available. But there are plenty left now.

Denzel Hankinson — What attracted us to Leverett was the relative availability of space. Of course the amount of available open land where you can place a dwelling and not be concerned with a neighbor is disappearing very rapidly. If the situation when we came was what it is today, we probably would have looked further out.

The zoning by-law was put in to require building along the main roads. Soon that available land is going to be gone, and the growth is going to be in subdivisions. While I think there's quite a bit of potential here for this, it will change the nature of the town a lot. And not for the best.

William Bramlage — The Planning Board really wants to encourage people to build back off the roads. So you're not driving along seeing nothing but houses. They are built back because that's the way people want to live.

(Is cluster development, perhaps back around cul-de-sacs, one way of encouraging this?)

The main problem I see with that is water. You squeeze the houses together, they've got to get their water nearby. You start compressing the septic tanks and the wells and you're asking for trouble.

(It seems to me the virtue of the thing in principle is that you combine your services in one place. Instead of dividing a given tract into equal sized lots and then having to run your road to touch every lot, you reduce your lot sizes so you can fit them all on say one third the land. The rest stays in its natural state as shared open space. That way you get to choose the best part of the land and just run the road there.

Couldn't that same principle apply to other services--water and sewerage? Wouldn't it be possible to have a common septic system, a common water supply? This would allow the developer to choose the best sites on the acreage for the septic system and the well. You could monitor the single systems more easily from a health standpoint, and one big system might be cheaper than 40 separate ones.)

William Bramlage — If. If you could come up with enough water and a good enough disposal situation. There are very few good sites around town.

(Yes, but the odds seem better of finding one good disposal site on 60 acres of land than of finding 40 good sites, spread out at 1½ acre intervals. I would think one could write a clause into a cluster zoning by-law stipulating that facilities be shared for this reason. And of course that the sites be proven adequate.)

In theory you get people to build on the best sites, but in practice the people who want to build on hillsides are going to come in anyway. You're just enabling more people to come in. It would not serve the purpose of reducing the growth of the town.

Robert Raskevitz — What I wonder is what would be the advantage to this clustering really?. . . The only advantage I could see would be to a developer, in that he could put more houses on what little bit of actual building land he had, letting the rest go for conservation purposes. Which is what you have happening in the town right now. Because we have so little suitable building land, when somebody buys 20 acres of land, he'd be real lucky in most cases if he got four house lots off it--and go along with the Hatch Act, and go along with our zoning laws, and go along with the Health Board.

(I think that's sound logic. But clustering might be limited to a small and more or less buildable part of town, namely Long Plain. Where in fact you do have the possibility of dividing up quite a number acres contiguously. I would find it more desirable to encourage groups of houses with some amount of fields or other open land in between in this particular area, where you don't have those topographical restraints and your soils can take density.)

This would be about the only area in town where I think that would be even remotely possible. And like I say, I'm not against development at all. If a person wants to build a house he ought to be able to build it.

Frances King — If we were forced to have 20 dwellings in Leverett, I would rather see them in a cluster development than 20 houses on 20 separate acres.

William Bramlage — Any mention of conservation in your zoning by-law, and the Attorny General throws it right out. Everything has to be based on public health. Of course, in Leverett, this gives us a good deal more to work with than a lot of other towns. Everybody's dependent on a well for water. That's the way we justify the lot sizes. Most of the land shouldn't be built on. . .

The acreage requirements are probably about as far as we can stretch them. It's more a matter of restrictions based on soil types. There are some areas around town where you could build on smaller lots than are now allowed. It wouldn't really be fair to increase the acreage on a blanket basis. That isn't a very good way of using land. . .

I haven't really thought about the feasibility of tying zoning to soil types. I don't know if it's ever been tried.

Robert Raskevitz — And then we have the backlot provision. That's kind of a funny law. What it allows people to do is to build one house or several houses back away from the road, as far back as they want to, on a double sized house lot, but they can have much less frontage, 30 foot. . . When the zoning laws came in there were a lot of people that objected that they had large acreages out back with no apparent use for them. And they had children in town that wanted to build out there, and they just couldn't do it. So we put in this law.

Clifford Graves — Everybody was going to be tickled they had an acre, you know. But the fellow that's selling the land is not pleased. But an acre, you've got a chance to spread out everything, you see, your septic tank and your well. I wouldn't kick on an acre. I think an acre's good for anybody. It gives you a good big garden. An acre's quite a good sized piece of land.

Constantine Kamansky — Half an acre's big enough. Because if you get an acre you ain't going to keep that acre clean. Most of it'll grow up in brush anyway. It's too much land for a building lot.

Fred Muehle

One of the big disadvantages I see to a five acre lot/ten acre lot situation is that you're really tying up the land under one individual's ownership. And that land, which he'll never really use, is being taken out of production. The residents of Leverett have all these barriers put around them so they don't have free movement throughout the town anymore.

I don't like everybody setting up his own private little ten acre kingdom. This is why I think the cluster concept is good. I'm a great fan of common land. I think every resident of a community should to a certain degree have the freedom to walk on the land. I'm not saying he should be walking through my backyard so he's within sight of my backdoor. But up on that ten acres there are plenty of places he can go without disturbing me, and I can have my thing in my backyard without disturbing him.

I think land wants to be used. And I think it's almost impossible for an individual that's working for wages, paying taxes, paying mortgages, to really have the opportunity to reap the value that land is producing. I think cluster will do something like that. Maybe the common land, if it's wooded, could be actively under forest management.

I mean, I own 15 acres and I haven't seen that back quarter for the last two years. I'm not that big of a fan of having under my jurisdiction 15 acres. What I'm really glad about is I live across the street from a 1,000 acre state forest. And I like the option of going across into that 1,000 acre state forest. And that thing is being managed for me because I pay taxes, OK?

David Fife

I would think you would have to give some incentives to people to build in villages. I mean most people think it's much more pleasant to see a village in the hills and then a stretch of country. But I think now especially, having seen it's gone this far, unless you could give water supply, drainage, to encourage people to build in a town, I would assume they're going to build mainly where there are open spaces. Because most people that come sort of in the country want an acre, an acre and a half around them. Or perhaps ten acres.

I suppose if you can't keep the village centers, you might at least try to keep some country centers. Greenbelts. Like out in the back there I think it's 6 miles to the fire tower. As you look out I don't think there's anything between us and 63. So you could keep that center just as a wilderness.

Clifford Graves — This is old, and you've got timbers, hewed timbers. . . The ones now, well, you buy a 2x4 today and you know what you get--you don't get a 2x4. Why, it isn't an inch and seven eigths. And plywood. No, I don't look for those houses to stand up the way the old ones did. I don't see how they could.

Gerald Jackson — This house is pre-cut. The only difference between this home and a conventional home is really a price advantage. This log home you can build by yourself. It doesn't require any vast construction knowledge. The logs are numbered. It's just like a lincoln log kit. So most of the log homes I've sold in the last few years have been sold to people who put them up themselves. A house like this is maintenance free. It fits into the woods. And it's certainly more durable than a frame house, weighs about six times as much. Really I think it seems to fit the land better.

I've looked at all the material on modular housing to date, and unfortunately they all look so much better in the brochures than in real life. I'm not turned on by 4x8 panels of textured plywood with sandwich insulation. Modular housing's got to come, but the choices available right now are not much of an incentive.

William Bramlage — The sort of thing I detest seeing is the log cabins down on Montague Road. It shouldn't be. But it's legal. I can see this sort of thing happening often at least as long as University students are willing to come out and pay high rents. I don't have any great objection to the sort of houses being built down along Juggler Meadow Road. I'd prefer if there weren't any thing there, but people have to live somewhere. And those are tastefully designed.

Edward Field, Sr. — (Do you like your mobile home?)

I didn't want to leave the old house. We had done quite a lot of work on it, tried to restore it. After putting in all that time and effort it was kind of hard to give it up. It just got too much for us.

Clifford Graves — Boy, if you have a trailer, make them have an acre of land, just as well as you would a house. Then when the trailer goes, you can put a house up.

Fannie Taylor

I'm selling all my land. My house, my land--about 40 acres--is up for sale. I hope that somebody will buy the house for use as a residence, rather than to be put up and made into an apartment house. I don't think it'll be made to an apartment use because it's not very convenient for it. It's a very old place. My family has lived in the house for more than 100 years. It's been handed down from one group to another. And for that reason, and also for the appearance of the place, I think it would be much more desirable if someone buys it as a residence.

Nick Lenz

You need participation in the actual physical environment. I suspect that when someone comes in and builds spaces for people, the kind of people they attract are those that go away to do their thing. When people buy the land and build on it themselves, there's a greater possibility they will bring some uniqueness to it.

(Who would you want to build for?)

Someone young and interesting. You can have some rich people. You've got to have some poor people, too. The sort of person you would not build for, but build with. The concept of me being a developer or helping the community develop is new to me. I've always thought in 30 years in Leverett highrises will be towering up and I'll be putting super hormones on the trees trying to get them up to 300 feet to screen out the highrises.

Dorothy King

(Looking back say from 100 years from now, what would you say was the essential quality of life in Leverett now?)

Well the essential quality probably is simplicity of living. And of course the religious quality is important. . . We don't believe in physical heavens with gold houses and gold streets and that. For after-all, as Christ said, the future is a future of the spirit. It's only your spirit that goes on, not your body. You don't need a house made by hands. It's a spiritual thing. What survives after you is your spirit. What you take with you is what you've given away.

(Hemenway Road)

Charles Linscott — I'd like to see houses built everywhere there's a good place for them. But the Blacks who own the upper side of the road here, don't want anyone building here. They think they'd get some undesirables in there. Course they got a point there. Everybody's entitled to his own opinion, of course. I'm not going to try to change their minds for them. I'd be glad to see people build up through this section of woods here. It's good land. I don't know about the water. Wouldn't cost too much to put a road up through there, clear off the land and build up houses. I'd rather see them come up into the woods like that then see them build up over there in the fields. Those fields are good fields, and they ought to be kept cultivated.

(Moore's Corner)

Clifford Blinn — There aren't so many new families at this end of town, yet. More the old families that have been here for generations. North Leverett is probably similar to Moore's Corner, though they're beginning to get a lot of new, well, a lot of people call them hippies. 5-6 in a house. And a lot of the old people down there are no more. Up here it hasn't hit so much yet. Of course the other end of town, you have a lot of new families moving in because it's being developed because of the University. They're going to get up here sooner or later.

(North Leverett)

Clifford Graves — Well, there's a lot of good building lots up here. An awful lot of nice ones.

You just let somebody know you've got some land for sale and see. I had a fellow here last night, just begging for me to sell him that last chunk I've got up on the hill. Cause that's been the biggest thing anybody had any investment ever was--the land. And it looks as if it'll go on for awhile, too.

(Cave Hill Road)

David Fife

We would sort of fear those fields being built over because a lot of our walking begins in them. Also in that field you can see deer almost any evening in the summer. But we've built a house here. It's just as fair really for someone else to build over there. I suppose that someone who wanted to assure themselves of living in the country would buy ten acres. . . We wouldn't be surprised to see folk building on either side of us, even this spring. . . You sort of see folk looking as though they might be thinking of building there. . .

Even if it's built over there, if somehow the back can be kept, that would still provide most of the trails. As long as there are ways of getting on the trails. There are logging roads all out in back of here.

(East Leverett)

Charles Roys

You have perhaps a reluctance on the part of some people to sell building lots and such. My mother is in a position of having a good number of desirable building lots, but I don't think she's interested in selling them because it would mean a change in the immediate community here. Not only Leverett in general, but right in this area. A lot of people around this area could make a good quanity of money selling their land because of the demand right now, but I don't think they're interested in money as much as in their way of life here.

Peter Robinson

As far as recharge the lowlands are too swampy and as soon as you get outside that you're into bedrock. Most of the houses are essentially along the edge of this gravel field. Most of the wells are in bedrock, and most of the septic systems are in gravel. That edge is an important recharge area (for the large aquifer contained in the gravel). The most important recharge areas are where the streams go underground. Some possible sources of pollution that concern me are this large horse farm and piles of salty sand at the Town Garage.

(Brushy Mountain)

Charles Roys — This whole mountain back here is ideal for snowmobiles. I can leave here and go all the way over to Rattlesnake Gutter.

James Lumley — There are large parcels there that one day will probably make a prime subdivision. It has good proximity to Amherst.

Frances King — We own a good stretch of that land up there, and we'd never build on it or sell it unless we were driven to starvation.

(Long Plain)

Robert Raskevitz — As far as right now and the availability of good soils to handle sewerage, the only place that's really good for building is this Long Plain section, where it's all gravel. . .

Route 63 used to be the main access route from Route 2 up above, which would come from Boston, into the Amherst area. Then 91 came in. So this road is no longer a real main thoroughfare. It probably carries almost all local traffic now. It's dropped off I would say 50% since I've lived here. We used to get a lot of truck traffic you see. . .

I think most of the people along 63 at the time the zoning laws came through would have liked to have seen a lot of it zoned for business. And of course some of it is. . . But now I think all of it will be sold off to building lots. In the last two years, there's been probably 8 houses from here on down to the line. . .

(I am uncomfortable about the possibility of losing this Long Plain agricultural land.)

Another thing you ought to consider, I'm sure you never even thought of. And boy is it a big point. The Long Plain area, probably from the Bull Hill farm down, is one of the best gravel areas in 60 miles. And this gravel is the only gravel that seems to pass the state specifications for roads. . . In other words, everybody and his brother would just love to have a gravel pit here. . .

Robert Raskevitz Right west of 63 that's Puffer's, and that's just about mined out. What Puffer has plans for is just to slope it off as one big hill and then sell it as house lots. Because he now has another pit just over the Leverett line in Sunderland.

(Would he eventually look towards other Leverett lands?)

Well, he would like to, but I doubt very much that he would be able to get a permit.

(So there's a dilemma. You've got a resource here and building would close off using it.)

Well, the people who own it aren't likely to sell. . It's farmland. But if they got a high enough price they'd sell. Either for house lots or gravel.

(And it could be a progression of both?)

Right. . .

personal space

Robert Raskevitz

I honestly think they just kind of want to keep it. . New people have bought. And what they're doing is they're buying large acreages. And they buy it, and they just keep it. They don't sell it. They won't sell it.

Including myself, you know. I've got 75 acres up there. I cut a cord of wood off it a year. I just bought it for something to hold onto. I've had several offers to sell it, but you know, why sell it? It's just sitting there. It's not hurting anybody. . The taxes aren't killing me. They're high. But it pays to hold onto it as land values go.

Denzel Hankinson

I have no plans whatsoever. I bought the land as a retirement investment. There's no controlled cutting now in my woodlot. I take down trees as they die for firewood. It's mostly just a place to walk and a place to enjoy. So I'm not making good total use of it now. I don't plan any fields to farm when I retire--perhaps a woodlot to manage.

When I said retirement investment I didn't mean to sell off, although there are portions I might sell, if I needed the money for retirement. I've never posted the land and have said I won't till someone misuses the privilege. I'm not running people off the land.

Edward Field, Sr.

In case we were involved in serious illness, possibly we would resort to selling the land. But we feel it would be best to hand it on down to the two sons, and they could possibly resolve something. Basically we would rather not see it developed.

We've encouraged people to use it as horseback trails and so forth. I allowed a logger to go in and cut the trees that should be cut. 60,000 feet of timber. I thought he knew what he was doing. There was no written contract, but in the future there will be.

Paul Woodard	I'd rather leave it the way it is. I cut wood up there. I try to keep the pine trees growing. No, I don't have any plans for my land, but the way development's going, you can't tell.
Homer Germain	As far as the future we see now, I don't think we would sell. We don't know what will come, of course, in the future. But I think it will be handed down in our family.
Elizabeth Germain	We have one son and four grandchildren. They don't want any land sold.
Charles Roys	I use the land as far as hunting and fishing and that, and walking and that, but not where it's producing an income. I don't think there's really any appreciable timber. I've seen some land that's been timbered and I'm not too keen on what the land looks like when they get done. There would have to be some awfully tight restrictions or agreements. It was cut off not too many years before we came here. (1948).
John Paczkowski	I'd like to keep it just as it is now. Maybe get into this forestry business where they help take care of the land for you, planting timber and everything. I walk around it, fool around with the snowmobile, tool around a little bit. But as far as farming on it, no. Just mainly for the horses and the hay. Just to graze out there. They keep it down a little bit for us. But as far as selling for developments, no, never. As long as I can afford not to, let's put it that way. If I were on the way to the poorhouse, maybe then. . . We lived originally in the suburbs, and I just don't think I could hack living back there again. especially if I were the one who caused it to come up right around myself. I like it the way it is right now. I'm not very recreational. I just don't have the time.

Constantine Kamansky Used to be dairy. Sold out in '48. That's when they were getting bulk tanks in, you know. The state said build a new milk room, build this and that. Cost me $5,000. I said the hell with it. You can't make money with 40-50 cows today. 200-300. I'm retired. I raise a little tobacco. Got to do something. And I have some cucumbers sometimes. But I don't know if I'll put them in this year or not. Too much work. My belly's too big to bend down to pick them.

If a guy came along and gave me $100,000, I don't care what he puts in there. But the kids--there's three of them living right here--they work in construction, and that ain't too good. So they got something to fall back on.

Vernon Aiken I suppose it's just progress, and it has to come. You'd begin to feel hemmed in, though. Of course, I own enough land both sides of me, so that unless I sold, I wouldn't feel it. The only thing that could force me to sell would be pushing the taxes up.

Every little while we go into some selective cutting. We haven't done any pruning, and it seems to reforest itself, if you're careful.

We have a few good old sugar maples. I let them out to my neighbor up here. He taps the trees and gives me some syrup.

My daughter loves to ride. She's got plenty of place to ride right here on our own land. We pasture horses during the summer, and there's usually one or two she can ride. We don't have one of our own.

4 visions of environment

Clifford Graves

What'd I want land for now? See, what we had land for then, you lived on the land. You got your wood off from your own land. And you farmed your potatoes. And your garden. And you cut your own hay. And you had your horses and cows. And you had to have land to have that.

But now it's just the opposite. You don't use it for nothing. And when you get older, instead of paying taxes, I say, you better let it go and put your money in the bank and have the interest to live on. Land is no good whatever to me. It don't mean a thing.

There's no land being used here no more. Everybody used to have a small farm. That's part of the change that's come, now you're talking about changes. Everybody had a small farm. You had a driving horse, and you had a work horse, or a team. And you had a cow, or ten or twelve. . . That's where your big changeover's come. Now you're living just the way you live in the city.

Which they didn't used to do. You lived on your own, and my boy, you had to have a garden and your own meat or else you went hungry. They didn't dish it out to you the way they do now you know. You go and get a big check somewhere and don't half earn it. You just simply raised your food. That's what all the places were, you know, just small one-horse farms up through here. . .

That's the biggest change I can think of--the way of living in the country now from what it was 40 years ago. It's completely changed, that's all. You raised your stock. Raised beef and a hog and you had chickens. Cut your own wood. Instead of earning money and buying it, you see, you spent your time working on it.

And up there at your place, there was a good farm. Now it don't mean a thing. You just maybe have a little garden.

Nick Lenz

It's really fine to see that hump of trees. The curve of the tops acts as a delay or perhaps a precursor to the roll of the land. That is, the peak occurs downhill, and then it flattens out, the bonsai garden being tucked way down there in the hollow where it was well out of the way of the main visual part of the property, and where it definitely wouldn't interfere with anything that might be built or happen afterwards.

Oh, that nice power line. Joanna and I and before that Carol and I and before that Peter and I used to sit on that rock an awful lot. Being a pulpit, it was the place we came to meditate the world. And you can see, the scar's particularly evident from there.

When you become familiar with a landscape, looking out over it to the same rows of trees and the one pine tree sticking out of a grove of maples, it's very startling to see a fresh scar cut in the ground like that. You know, we're quite far away from it. But essentially, that is a visual scar to an incredible acreage in just this part of the valley. Everyone sees that, and it ruins the environment for a lot of people if they are sensitive to something like a straight line cut down a hillside with creosoted poles growing out of it.

Now Mr. Black's fields are very nice. The whole thing works very well, and I think if it were all forested it would be very monotonous and boring. One of the more exciting things to me, which I see from the house, which is on a level with the beginning of his field, is that you can follow a very definite steep drop of the land, heavily forested, down to the river. And then of course above this line begins this field spreading out, going up across the road, which is really a nice thing going through it with the houses on it and then up to the hilltop beyond.

That old cherry broke during the tornado. That's too bad. I cleared out everything around it. Not that it's terribly spectacular, but there's something really fine to its age and the gnarliness and shagginess of its bark. It's own peculiar color in the fall and flowers in the springtime.

Nick Lenz

Carol and I used to come up here and sleep underneath this pine tree. The branches used to come right down to the ground, so when you were inside it, you were essentially inside your own tent. That's a remarkable thing to find in nature. Unfortunately, it's like everthing with nature, it's there for a-while. You see it, you enjoy it, but it changes.

One approach is to leave it, watch it. The other is, yeh, I've studied the various trees and so forth and there is sort of a plan to this of architecture and reshaping. This is again a very dynamic place to me. You just walk 20 feet and you have the whole sense of something different happening environmentally.

These butternut shoots make good fence rails. Again, you can see where I cut them down the new shoots coming up. If they grow up straight they'll make new good fence rails. This is what I was hoping. That you could perpetuate an area that has a specific function like that.

I could conceive this whole area as a series of glades. Because everytime you hit a prominence, like there are a couple of little rocky heap areas going down, there are several neat trees or things happening on top. Branches that hang way down and almost go to the next heap. But you know it just looks like anyone else's junky forest. I've seen so many things here, I'm going crazy.

I can understand how the man in the city with his tiny yard and his one skanky forsythia bush in it can really worship that damn bush as he becomes familiar with it.

So far I think the place is coming along very well as a dumpy little New England farm.

These are the days I'm coming to enjoy the most around here. I suppose because they're not the most common. And the beauty, the change in it, the softness, the fading of one space into another until it disappears in a really soft grayness is so fine.

This is a lost area. This is the public part of my property. But I don't feel publically inclined. It's a random public driving by on their way to somewhere else. It's not like a town front yard. There such space has a social function. Here I just feel paranoid.

Rhody McCoy

I wanted to stay out of the city. And I'm looking towards that retirement age, where I can do more things on a leisure time basis than a work basis. I've got kids. We have some horses. We built a barn before we even came on the land.

We looked at the land and saw the opportunities. This was a logging road, and we came up, and this was a beautiful little plateau here, covered with pine trees, and we decided this was where we wanted to build a house. By the time the builders got through with it, I mean it was unbelievable. It would cost you twice the cost of the house to replace all those trees that they knocked down. And where did they knock them down? Right all around the damn house. Just unbelievable.

And we looked at the brook, right behind us. Fantastic brook. It runs all year. It sings. We wanted to go up and dredge out spots of it and stock it with fish. There's an area over here big enough for a big lake. We want to put a show ring out back. So really for my family's pleasure, to build a kind of leisure time place.

But like I say it's just unbelievable what people can do. I go back and look at where these people have been getting out logs, and I don't understand it. What I'm saying is, it raises questions in my mind like what's all this beauty everybody's talking about protecting? Is it beauty you see immediately on the roadside? Or off the roadside, some of the hills, fields that people farm? Or are you really talking about the town, you know, all behind the roads, where people live? This would be another whole different story.

(What do you find beautiful in Leverett?)

Well, to be honest, I'd say the potential that I saw when I drove around, drove through it. It's beautiful country. If I stand by my back porch and look at the range, it's just an unbelievably beautiful sight. But let me start walking through my own property, and I want to come back and cry.

You take a guy like me who comes from the city, I don't know how to control this land. I know I'd like to. I'd like to go back and cut some of that

Rhody McCoy

undergrowth and grow some hay. It used to be a gravel pit. It's located at a point where it would be very attractive to see. But I don't have the slightest idea what I'm doing. Take me a machete and go back there and chop it all up. Come back two weeks later, and it's come back thicker and stickier and stronger than ever. And I say to hell with it.

So I ask a guy to come through with a dozer, right? So he comes through, and it's just havoc, takes everything down. And what ever falls down takes something else with it. So you go out and get a chain saw. Man, you want to see some logs, we could supply the whole town of Amherst with logs for the next five years, man. But I don't want to spend my waning years with a damn chain saw cutting up firewood. It don't make sense.

For me at this juncture, the landscaping, quaintness, New England atmosphere was an attractive thing. Otherwise, I could have stayed in Amherst. So in order to preserve that, most people as I look at this particular town, need help. Things like mosquito control, which I think is atrocious. And to preserve the beauty of the land and so forth. They need help that a town like this can't afford. Or I don't believe they can. I think the taxes would just drive the people out.

When I first came here, somebody told me there were all kinds of federal programs that you could get, and they'd help you say enlarge your brook, put fish in it. They kept telling me all the things they'd help me do, and I haven't seen anybody help me do nothing. I think I've asked like 900 different people what's the best way to drain this land. The best thing I could get was a ditch and a drain. Seems there are natural springs in it. So it gets mucky and marshy and mosquitos come in.

Everybody's hollering about taxes. I see it reflected in their properties. Buildings tilting over, need to be repaired and painted. Even some kinds of construction, particularly along the arteries here. All kinds of lean-to's. People just can't afford to enhance the aesthetics along here. And one reason is the taxes.

And then you look at the kinds of services here. There's something of an imbalance.

Rhody McCoy

Like with these stores, I'm caught between two things. What they render in service and what they look like. I'd be supportive of getting the whole town out to rennovate those stores, make them look like country stores. I mean don't tear them down and build some fantastic, ultra-modern shopping center. I'm saying you can have a nice fascade, but something inside that serves the town. And the hours are just unbelievable for people that have some sort of mobility.

You get garbage at some spots along the road that are just wide enough to pull off. We went down this summer and cleaned up a couple of those. Some kind of policing or refuse control would be good. Used to go all the way down to Guttersnake Road cleaning up.

You're talking about preserving an aesthetic quality of the countryside, yet I'm saying driving down the road you can see all kinds of trees that have fallen and are rotting and take away from the very thing you say you want to protect.

Another thing up here is I can't get the papers. I've got to go all the way into Amherst to get the papers. We've had five or six instances where company can't get to a telephone, can't get a container of milk without going all the way to Amherst.

Had two young men break down on this road, and they were here all day, after calling that service station in Montague. Ok, let's translate that and say that's living in the country. That's what you got to expect living in the country. Well, I'm not so sure.

Then I look at the roads, and I take my chances. Maybe I got too much of a city orientation. Maybe that's the problem. But obviously with the kinds of roads we've got and the increased traffic and the increased population, we've got a catastrophe.

In order to improve the services to keep the land open and everything, they're going to have to develop for more people. And that's obviously going to drive a lot of the people presently here out.

Dorothy King

I've always wanted to live in the country. I was born and brought up in the city, and I hated it. I hated it. And I hated New York. So I said, when I grow up, I'm going to have a place in the country. Well, I worked all the time I was going to school, saved my money. So that when I graduated from Pratt, I had enough to buy a little house in the country. And I got together with a real estate agent. On weekends I'd go with him. He took me all over Connecticut. Finally, we got into Massachusetts. And then one day we got into Leverett. And I saw that red house. I said, this is it, this is what I want. And I bought it.

I never was sorry that I came to Leverett. There's no other place that I've ever been--and I've been in every state in the Union--that I like as well.

I'm not likely to be here more than one year or possibly two years. That's what my doctor gives me. But I hope that the new people who are coming in will learn what the old have contributed, and try to keep the town more or less as it's always been. Now that doesn't mean that there aren't new houses, because there's hundreds of them coming up everywhere around here. But it does mean that the philosophy of the town, that the future of the town be not allowed to be like Amherst.

We don't want developments. I bought this big farm down here in order to save all this land. 103 acres. Stanley Kosloski owned that farm. I heard one day he was going to sell out. Well, it didn't take me five minutes to walk down there. I said, 'Stanley, I hear you're selling.' He said, 'Yes, I'm too old to farm.' 'Well,' I said, 'I hear Walter Jones wants it.' He said, 'Yes, but he doesn't want to pay me enough.' I said, 'How much does he want to pay you?' '$35,000.' I said, 'How much do you want?' '$37,000.' I said, 'Put on your hat, we'll go to Amherst, I'll pay you cash for it.' Which I did.

(What motivates you. . . Where does your sort of town or civic responsibility come from?)

Well, I think it comes from my love of Leverett and my love of beauty. I don't make one cent in real estate. My grandfather, my great-grandfather, and

Dorothy King

my great-great grandfather died with the equivalent of a million dollars. Now I could have been a millionaire right here today very easily. If I wanted to. But I didn't want to leave a million dollars. I'd rather leave Leverett a little better than I found it. I'd rather add-which I have--to the benefit of my friends, both financially and in other ways. So I have given away more than $100,000 in the last few years.

(What are your favorite places in Leverett?)

Right in this house is the one I like the most. I love it. And I'm so grateful to God for it. Of course, I made it what it is. When we came here, my dear friend and I restored this house. The former tenant kept hens upstairs, a horse in the kitchen. You can still see some marks--I've tried to fill them in there--where he kicked the fireplace. On the porch there was a whole row of chambers, all full. And you can see how close it is to the road. And that was before these trees were planted. We planted these trees and that big fir tree out there, in fact, there were two fir trees. I had to take one down; it was too close to the driveway. A mama and papa tree.

We ought to be very grateful to those people way back there when they were so beset with every hindrance to have built these things, built these churches, built these beautiful houses. . . They came from England. And in England they remembered the beautiful English architecture. And they brought that over here in their memory so that they could plan and make houses that would be equal to their old English homes. See, they were still hungry for the old. This house is 300 years old. Have you ever looked at my door?

4 versions of community

Portia Weiskel

I'm very committed to a sense of a small community. I know good things happen to human beings in small communities. I know that that's at least one of the good ways to live. Somewhere within you it's very important to live with a sense of community. And especially at this time in our century when there's so much that's impersonal and so much that seems distant and irrelevant to our lives.

Just to know, just to be aware of other people's rhythms. That they come and go at a certain time during the day. You wave at them at the same time, you know who they are--even if you wave to them more than you've spoken words to them. It's important to see a small number of people. Small enough so that you can be aware that it's a community of people and have a feeling that the whole thing somehow makes sense. The point of it is just the sharing of dailyness.

I think human beings are much happier and more interested and interesting when they relate to people who are very different from themselves. To the extent that that's true in Leverett, I cherish that. Here I know the people I could go to and open up our discussion on a number of issues, and I would get tremendous arguments, and I'd get people that feel strongly about things. And I love that. I love that.

Issues like the way one lives, the life-styles, and the way you relate politics to your life. And the values of sharing and community values vs. everyone-out-for-himself values. You know those are the things I think are important in America.

I'd like to see our whole way of thinking about towns be such that instead of expanding on the population of one town, people would be encouraged to go to other places and start other little communities. You know, with a post office, with a church. My ideas are not that unusual. This is basically a rural revival.

William Floge

There is a sense of Godliness and a sense of the fear of God throughout this valley. And we all sort of pull together. Along this road you belong to the road, as it were.

The two churches in the valley believe the Bible, preach that people have to be saved to go to heaven, and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the answer to life. That has made our valley different from the other part of town.

If you do something unkindly up here, everyone knows about it because everybody is related. You can be in another section of town, and you can live like anybody you want because nobody knows you. But this is a family valley.

Along our valley now we have these young people's houses, and they live in a different type of life than we live. We're friendly, we love them, but it's made a difference. It's something brand new in the last five years in our way of thinking and living up here.

Everyone of these young people who come by our home looking for a hop, I will stop whatever I am doing and take them down to Route 63. Really, I do this with about three to six kids a week. And I do it for two reasons. First, to show them some kindness. I want them to know that I'd like to be their friend. And secondly, I present to them the Lord Jesus Christ as the answer to their searchings.

Our congregation is mostly from our own little neighborhood, Moore's Corner. And I like it that way. The bible teaches us that we should begin right in our own neighborhood. Every Monday night God has given us seven men, and we visit two by two from house to house. We do that in order to reach the new people that may be moving in and also the fathers and mothers of our own Sunday school children.

The Lord Jesus' last words were, Ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem. . . He says to the disciples, start right here in Jerusalem and preach the gospel here. And we do. We stress that. We're interested in our own community. We live here, and we're interested in reaching the people.

Steve Trudel

I just had cause to go into Boston, and I realized how alien tall buildings and streets with cars on them are to me. I have a natural place in me that identifies with trees and water. I guess that has a lot to do with my roots in Williamstown. I lived on land that was owned entirely by my family, my grandfather, so that no one else built on it, nothing changed, it was all the same. It just kind of grew in my blood. I'm pretty sure that's why I came back here. Seeking the same roots, roots being a nice pun.

I have a great deal to learn from the people. I was involved with the Zoning Board of Appeals last spring because I was an abutter to land which had been built on. I got to know quite a few of the people through that experience.

I was a symbolic arm of the community, so it was easy for people to identify with me as opposed to somebody who came from the outside as a real estate developer-not even knowing me, just because I was a landowner. I felt comfortable with that. I felt very warm to have been received in that manner. It certainly didn't puff my ego that much, but there wasn't any hostility because of my appearance, my living style--that being collective, or communal as might be said.

There are maybe three kinds of people. Those who can afford to build new homes for instance. I guess about 3 or 4 new homes have gone up just since this summer. I don't know the people, I don't know who they are. But they seem to abuse the land, rather than become a part of it. Now that is very prejudiced of me to say because I don't believe anyone intends to misuse or hurt a person or an environment. Nonetheless, it happens. It's rather unique for anyone to understand his place in nature, as opposed to believing that nature is one thing and man is something else.

A second variety of person I might say would be a person, a couple or a group of people interested in settling in this area to do whatever alternative lifestyle they might have in mind--maybe to farm and in that way remove themselves from whatever city lifestyle they had lived before.

Steve Trudel

Thirdly, there are the established families here. In historical terms, the people who used this area and community as a focus for their life had their livelihood here as well--going back to when I believe farming and milling were means of subsistence, and the people really didn't travel anywhere else. As the years went on, that broke down, and I think it really is a major breakdown. You have people's minds expanding to such an extent that they're very discontent with their own immediate environment.

Now, most people, not making their living here, are coming and going. Ours is not going to be a once a day or four times a week kind of meeting community--but to whatever extent possible I think we should actualize this community. It would take a reshifting of priorities, bringing energies back to the community--that, in my mind, is one of the greatest things I have to look forward to achieving in whatever community I live in. Unfortunately, my community now--all the people that I know within almost a fifty mile radius--is much too expanded for me to have that sense.

It may have a lot to do with my age, but the idea of settling down in a place is very threatening to me--I might be closing off experience. At the same time, I know this was the right thing to do, because I have been so disenchanted with travel and not having roots.

I think I'd be much readier to travel and know when it was time to come back if I had a sense of the community that I was leaving and coming back to. It would give me reason to choose in my travels something to bring back, whether it be material or intellectual or experiential. It would give me a focus for my travel.

A lot of this is my attitude abstractly. I'm not sure that I'm absolutely settled here. I know I feel good about being settled here. Eventually, I know I'll be in a similar circumstance. The more I stay around the more I find myself becoming a part of this community or being sought out by people who realize I've been here awhile. Just the fact that you came over is a good example of the community, of sharing what we have--because we have something in common.

David Fife

I think the thing that makes the church unique in my experience, other than just a village church, would be that half the folk come perhaps from the Amherst community and the other half from right around here through the valley. And their families go back hundreds of years some of them. This means you get a great stability from that 50%, and we also draw on the ideas of folk from the University Community. They've been down south, all over. It's a challenge to weld the two groups together. But it's also our strength.

(What strengths can newcomers contribute to a small community like this?)

I would say a breadth of ideas. Whoever travels, their judgements will be that much broader. And on the whole the University folk do travel much more. They come here for perhaps three years, and then they move on again. . . If they're professors down there they can often use those same talents to lead in the church.

(What strengths are native here?)

I think I would have to say loyalty. You know, it's largely these folk that built the church. They're very handy often with their practical work--much more than I would be. They support a meeting, they come week in and week out. For a minister that's ideal. They are folk you can really rely on. If you could really sell them an idea, they would be with you, I should think, to the end.

(Do you worry about an influx of new people eroding this type of community?)

If what has gone on in the church goes on in the community at large, there's quite a lot of hope. It's our tremendous strength. It does need working at. When we first came here, almost every house that sold seemed to go to outsiders. But I think recently some of the outsiders have toned down a little bit, and some of the people in North Leverett have accepted them a little more. I think it's hopeful.

shared place

Vernon Aiken

We live so much different than we used to. We don't see people. I don't know who lives in some of the houses. Years ago, someone would come to live here a number of years, and you'd get to know them. The farmers especially: You come to help me hay this week, and I'll come over to help you next week. When we filled the silos, two others would come help us and then we'd return a day's work all around. Not everybody got in the car and went to work.

You meet other people, but you don't meet the people right under your doorstep so much. Fellow who lives in the next house here, I've just seen once. He's a student. He just eats and sleeps here. Up here in the village there's a fellow I see real often at work. All of a sudden I found out he lives right here.

Edward Field, Sr.

It was almost a feeling of relationship with people, as if they were related to you. People still assist a person in trouble. That hasn't died out.

Loyce Dunbar

They're so friendly. Now I remember when my father's house burned, everyone just came out and helped. One lady took home all the silverware and polished it. It's little things like that you remember. The people went around--my folks were poor, it was a big farm--and they collected money. This was back probably in 1934. That was following the depression years--it had hit us here in town. Just everyone was so generous.

If there's a death in the family. I remember at the time the children's father died, people, well they brought in the meals for three days for us. Little things like that.

(They could sure use a store in Leverett Center.)

Clifford Graves — Well, the little store they had, you know, was too good. It was so good I hated to go in there, didn't feel at home you know. That was too clean. It didn't need to be as good as that. But you really should have a little kind of store in a little village. Now up in Moores Corner is not too bad. She has quite a lot of stuff there that you can go in and buy. Instead of going to Turners or Montague, you know, you can go in and get a few potatoes and your Sunday papers. But this place down here, it isn't safe to go in there.

Homer Germain — My father ran a store two houses from here when I was a boy. At one time, this was quite a factory settlement. . . I wouldn't be surprised though, the way the place is growing, if somebody didn't open up a little store in these places and stay going. One of your drawbacks is, you have to stay open nights and weekends, Sundays, cause that's when you're going to get your business--when the supermarkets are closed. Because I don't think the local stores can compete on their prices with the big ones. . . I guess Muriel enjoyed dealing with the public and helping the public out, more than she did the money she made from it.

Fannie Taylor — I don't know as the town is exactly excluded. But they don't mix. . . Most of these people that have come in are rather socially inclined, but they don't have the incentive to branch out from among their own class of people. . .

William Bramlage — If you go to town meeting you'll find the majority of people there are the older townspeople. But if you look at the composition of the town boards, the town officers, you find its turning over very rapidly. Simply because the old people aren't willing to do it.

Phillip Woodard — The only time you get a large percentage reaction is when you have a particular involvement at which a group takes issue. Then they develop interest. I guess what I'm saying is most people take a negative attitude rather than a positive attitude, and that's unfortunate. Many issues are lost because people who approve the issue do not make their voice known.

William Bramlage — The major motivation for my involvement is that there are things that must be done. I'm not trying to shape the town to my vision of its future, because that's pretty vague. The chances of my kids living here are pretty remote.

John Paczkowski — Someday I'd like to get into something. But right now I just don't have the time. We're just starting out the business, and most of my time is devoted to my own work.

Mrs. Walter Carey — Moore's Corner and North Leverett have a very active church life, and we do see people there. And of course there's always the local store. And we do go to Montague for the post office. Years ago we women had a women's club and we would meet once a month in somebody's home or a hall and have a speaker or something interesting and a sort of social time afterwards. It was nice for us to all get together and get acquainted, you know.

It isn't much of a life if you just get up, go to work, come home and keep repeating that.

Gordon King — The fire department fills a social need only because if your house catches on fire, you better know where the equipment is and how to run it. . . We have drills every weekend. Both trucks go out. This is work. The next five Tuesdays, we have first aid, 2½ hours. They aren't interested.

Frances King — What brings the people together is always things like the Conservation Commission. Whenever there's a common task. The Bicentennial Committee. We all have televisions now, we're all busy. If we can have an evening at home, it's precious.

If there are folks who have built homes out here to live out in the woods, what are you going to do?

Whenever there is a need in Leverett, the people rally. When the Boy Scouts built that cabin up on Brushy Mountain, the turn-out of fathers to get up there and build that thing was terrific. People donated lumber. But once the job was finished, they naturally disintegrated.

The center of their life is not Leverett. This is their bedroom.

Homer Germain — Maybe because of the transportation, the highways, there's more going on. We used to have a grange in town, a men's club. We had quite a large turn out at those meetings. The grange was really quite prosperous here. Then they kept going down and down and about 8 years ago, out.

The people from the college have a lot of time tied up down there. Of course, the grange, you have a lot of ritual you have to learn, and they put on degrees and all that. At first you had to learn it all by heart and then it got so people couldn't have time to learn so they'd let them read it. And then you couldn't even get them to come to read it. That was the trouble. That's when we started to loose our friendships with everyone in town. Now about the only one that's going is the PTO.

Elizabeth Germain — Our Friendship Club and Ladies Aid's still holding forth, but without many members.

Homer Germain — The grange was a farmer's organization. Back when it was first set up they bought food, you know. And they could buy it at larger quantities, and people could pick it up at the grange hall, and they got a better deal.

Fannie Taylor — I came here in 1894. I came in April. So let's see, pretty near 78 years. . . I shortly became able to know most everybody. And so long as I was doing the town work of Clerk and Treasurer, I did know pretty nearly everybody. . . Now there's so many people that I don't know where they live, and I don't know their names, and I don't know what they do.

the formative community

Pat Conklin

I really want to get involved in a community that's a community of people. We've been talking about moving to different communities or buying land and setting up a community. But I've decided that moving again is just not the thing for me to do now. I've got to settle down finally and just do something.

I like Leverett, and I really like this house and this valley and this town. And I think it has possibilities. Although I may always change my mind, so I may always be frustrated. I feel the people in Leverett are really independent minded--and that's a word that people use here. I know quite a few. Not a lot know me, but I know about them.

If I'm going to get to know somebody that I don't know, then I have to care about something that they care about and talk about that. And not just go, well, here's a little dinner and we're going to be friends. That just doesn't work. The kinds of issues that might work are, for me, child care and the school.

I am interested in keeping the town free of being cluttered by buildings, but I don't know if I would spend a lot of time and energy on that. I would if it was right across the street from me.

Our neighbors are really close to us, and they're really good to us. He grew up in this house. He knows where the drains are. Dick gets a ride into the University every day with him. They're good people.

Portia Weiskel

We're trying to get the town hall to use as a center for the distribution of food. We're serving at the moment 43 Leverett families. And these Leverett people are quite diverse. There are University people and there are Amherst College people, but there are also people who have been around a long time. There are middle-aged people and there are young people and there are two old people who are interested and I'm hoping will join.

A food co-op is by nature a co-operative community venture. We do work so that we all save money. And it's fun. We get together a lot. As a matter of fact, a week ago at this very hour in this very house on this very rug was about a ton of food. And there were about 6 of us all bagging people's orders. And my house was left, ha, askew, to say the least. And there are still broccoli fermenting under some couch in this house that I can't find. And that's a minor inconvenience.

But it's just well worth it in terms of the sense of community that takes place because of it. You know, the people all came to my house--and we don't do it at my house all the time--and they see my child, they see the animals, they see the way I live. They see I'm a glutton for plants, you know, and that maybe gives someone an idea to have a lot of plants.

One of the main points of a food co-op is to encourage people to take responsibility for their own lives. And to eat more honestly. For example not to have to buy 8 lemons in a plastic bag when you only want 2 and you know that 6 of those are going to rot but you can't buy 2--they only come in plastic bags of 8. And it is in this co-op possible to order one lemon once a week. That seems like a small detail, but it somehow represents this sort of honesty. Being able to take control of my own life. Saying I only want one lemon, I don't want 8. I don't want them in a plastic bag either. Because I don't like plastic bags.

And at the same time freeing ourselves from those big institutions called the Stop & Shop and First National and those endless hideous things that are going up on Route 9.

Pat Conklin

I want to get day care set up. A parent co-operative day care center. That's an important word to me because it means less money as soon as you involve the people who benefit. That's a technique Leverett doesn't use half enough. Getting people who live here to spend their time and energy as opposed to spending money. Like parents want to be involved with their kids. That might apply to the school, too.

I think one of the church nursery schools would be a fine place. Tha state will approve them as a facility. Perhaps enough people in town would support it so the town might pay for heating.

Another thing is that Nancy and my sister and my husband all work in nursing homes. And I know there are a lot of elderly people in Leverett. I'm sure there are some people who need rides and other things. In the country, they often can't walk to the store. When they get a little older, nursing homes may be the only answer, but there's that in between area where they just need some help.

In this town, a large percentage do have their parents in their homes, but that's getting less common. And it doesn't link them to the community. Even trying to link schools and older people, so they might spend time as volunteers in a day care center. You know, old people just love little children. Some could take a lot of responsibility.

I don't want to get old and find out that there's no place for me to go when I can't get a job. Older people want to keep busy. That's the whole problem with getting old. They feel worthless when they're doing nothing.

I think the town should be responsible for that. Maybe a sort of retirement home. Or maybe they want to live alone and just have help with services. Even if it's only five people, it's worth it.

I would think a co-operative grocery store would be a really nice thing. Of course, you'd have to hire someone to run it.

(Interested?)

I could be interested. I'd want to do it with a group probably.

Portia Weiskel

I haven't done this yet, but I've been interested in starting a machine and tool co-op. Anyone who wanted to join would contribute some sort of tool or machine such as a chain saw or a tractor or a roto-tiller. Because this is a country setting and because a lot of us have gardens, the tools would have to do with woods and garden enterprises. I think it's absurd for everybody to have their power lawn mower. Which is what happens in suburbia. You would have to work out the details, but it seems to me at least possible in a town like this where you do know people and there's a relationship with other people to start with because there aren't so many of us, to start something like a machine and tool co-op which would enable us all to have maybe one or two appliances which we use maybe not more than ten days a year, but then share them with people and in turn be able to borrow so-n-so's saw or roto-tiller or whatever they have. Again, it's getting away from consumerism and towards sharing.

Steve Trudel

One of the things I've talked about is alter-econ, where you'd have a co-operative of people in the community who would lend their abilities, their skills, to the rest of the people. Let's say Nick the carpenter would lend his skills to Gordon in return for Gordon working on his car. The problem, of course, would be to establish a credit system of hours worked.

One of my fantasies is to give a community meal each month. Let's say in the Town Hall.

David Fife

Quite a lot of folk have a common interest in gardening, don't they? In the town where we used to live, the town supplied magnolias I think free, and you put them in and cared for them. If the town wanted to do this, it might bring all sorts of folk together making a display in their gardens. In England they have competitions and give out geraniums and this type of thing.

Joanna Stone

All studio space is privately owned. What the Craft Center needs and what I dream of it having is a whole new building really with 24-hour available studio space for public use. Perhaps we could have a general arts and crafts instructional program with apprenticeship for a few afterwards. We would want to incorporate adults as well as kids. . . The master craftsman are there because they enjoy doing their work, not particularly teaching.

Nick Lenz

New communities just don't seem to work. You move into an old town, you seem to sense the community more. Perhaps because it was a community more. It was built up organically because the community need was there. They all lived right there. Because they had to be together, work together. About the only damned thing they could do was be sociable, to help their neighbors and be helped by their neighbors.

There's a sub-community which has inter-functions. Groups help other groups. I'm beginning to feel this sense of community which I certainly didn't feel with the town the way it was when I moved in. This is all very new--the last three years.

Terry Glazier

People used to run into each other more when the store was there. Now it's the same people all the time. There's a group that stops by on their way home from work and a group that stops by on their way into work, and they run into the same people.

The store was a meeting place. Each small town should have a place like that. I miss it. Usually people would stop and hang around a few minutes, especially if they ran into someone.

The post office is a poor substitute. Some of the old ones don't talk as much because I'm so much younger. They did with my grandmother. She'd been there 20-30 years, and they all knew her. They're not so sure about me.

the school

Robert Raskevitz — I think one of the big things that holds this town together right now and also draws people into town is the school. The whole town seems to revolve around the school. It's new and it's modern, and they have good teachers. This is the reason I moved here. Because I knew that my kids would get an elementary education in a small town atmosphere and then go from that into the Amherst system. That's the only reason. . . Taxes are high. You're paying for the school. But people are willing to pay for it. They just tried to regionalize it. They knocked that right down.

James Lumley — People living in Leverett prefer their school to Amherst's because of better student attention. It harks back to earlier days.

Nick Lenz — Traditionally in New England, school was not an all-day process. You went there, you learned your basics. You came home, you learned how to run a farm, you learned how to make shoes. All the different functions of living.

Fred Muehle — Maybe once a week the kids from one class don't go down to the central school. They go to a mobile unit. And the mobile unit changes maybe once a month.

Loyce Dunbar — We have freedom that we never used to have. The rooms are noisy, but I go along with that, it's OK, as long as it's a constructive noise. Sure, we used to have quietness in the schools, but it was a forced quietness. But the children learn just as much now. . . Everyone works along at their own speed now. You spend 10 or 15 minutes a day with each child. You know, we used to just stand up and talk and read from the books together.

We feed our own birds here. When we started feeding the birds, very few of the children knew the name of a bird, but they have learned the names. And they seem to enjoy watching them--and feeding them. . .

Alice Levenson

As an educator, I would hope that the school could maintain its uniqueness--which to us seems to have to do with its size and its ability to be really meshed with the community, with community people having a lot of influences and being able to participate directly in the school.

There's the school committee, of course. And the library is staffed one day a week by a professional librarian and then by mothers. People turn out for open houses by the PTO. Other PTO informational meetings, discussion hours. They turn out a lot for good old-fashioned fun-type things like potluck suppers--which are sometimes accompanied by programs that the kids plan, plays and music.

They turn out in good numbers for this day workshop program that we have some Friday afternoons. Regular classes are called off, and teachers and parents and other community people come in and offer small courses to everybody in an ungraded fashion in areas in which they feel particularly competent.

Next Friday afternoon we'll be having several field trips--one to a printing press in Amherst, one to the art exhibition at UMass that's a tactile exploration of art rather than a visual one, where kids are blindfolded and they explore with their hands, seeing art that way. There'll be breadmaking. There'll be cooking for men only--called 'Survival in the Kitchen'. There'll be weaving--which would entail making a loom and then weaving with it. Cross-country skiing, hopefully, ice-fishing.

We envision a nice exchange of kids going up to the Craft Center to see their craftsmen and artists at work. And maybe they would like to use the school as a display place for some of their things, and maybe in turn they'd display some of the kids' things. Because they're just down the road, we hope that we can make a pretty informal and constant exchange with them.

There's quite a bit of formal teaching about the town on all levels. And that will particularly start to gel towards the end of this year and all next year with the bicentennial celebration. The school plans to be very active in that.

Alice Levenson

We do a lot of exploring of Leverett, physically and historically. The Primary takes a bus tour of Leverett with people at different spots to tell about them--like the charcoal kiln, the pond, the sawmill that's been reactivated. This would be a round trip thing so that the kids are acquainted with the perimeters of Leverett--how big it is. And then to learn the neighborhoods within this big neighborhood that's Leverett.

People's enthusiasm about the place that they live is pretty evident to kids. I'm sure they feel a deep sense of pride living here.

I think they are very conscious of the way this town's government functions. The people who give their time to running the town are well known to the kids. People wear so many hats in this town. Kids see people that they know very well in many different roles, and one of the roles is town official. I think that gives them a very good picture of the town's government being really a function and expression and extension of the people who live in the town.

Just last night I was thinking of ways in which the school could be more in touch with the social needs of the community. Ways in which the school could be open to use by adult groups. That's something I'd like to hear from people about. That the school, not only because it's the major financial committment of the town, but because it just seems to be the one unifying locus or focus of a lot of the town's thinking and feelings--that the school ought to do more and be more open to adults as well as to kids. It's under-utilized.

There might be people who would want to learn something, and the school could be a clearinghouse for them to find out about people who would like to teach something. The school could bring those people together--say in the evenings or during the summer or weekends. There might be people who would want to use the school in an old-fashioned quilting bee. I don't want to limit possibilities. We'll just see.

(Who would start it?)

I guess we should start it. This would have to be initially generated by the School Committee, and I have not discussed it with them yet. Certainly, it could be within the next year. It would tie in with the bicentennial.

Alice Levenson (Does the school help create a more unified sense of the town than the old one-room schoolhouses might have?)

I think it does. What I'm wondering about now is whether we'll have to go back to more than one schoolhouse as the town grows. I think we will. We need an addition to this school now. But we don't want to see the school turned into a giant sprawling complex. So after the addition, then what? If the population expands greatly after that, will Leverett grow so big that that kind of cohesiveness can't exist anymore?

(Part of the function of the school is, or has been, to exert a generalizing influence--to prepare kids mentally for a wider society. This is the very thing which is encroaching on the town physically. And threatening the character as well as the size of the place--both of which you value as educational resources. Is this a conflict for you?)

We feel an acute sense of responsibility to bring more diversity into the school--cultural diversity, racial and religious diversity. But we must not preach. We want to be very careful not to impose values on kids, but to expose them to a range of values so they can form their own.

(Of course, that very relativism is perhaps in conflict with traditional small town society. It's a cosmopolitan value.)

But the town isn't that anymore. It's not a closed society. Partly due to the University.

(Is this a blessing of urban society?)

You might say that. But what a loss if we became nothing but.

(I think this is a key challenge to the town's planning process--and I would hope to its schooling process as well. Can we develop the values, the uniqueness, of this specific place, along with a cosmopolitan consciousness?)

I would hope to achieve a sense of commonality by recognizing and fostering diversity.

Robert Douglas — In the old school houses there were a lot of people packed together, so you didn't really miss one student.

(Do you ever study town history?)

Matthew LaClaire — We study Lexington, but we don't study much on Leverett.

(Would you like to find out more about Leverett?)

Of course I would. Like how old it is and who our ancestors were.

(Do you know where the old mills were?)

I know where one of them was. Right down at the end of our driveway. You can still see rocks with iron pieces pounded into them.

(How did it work?)

When the thing went around, it turned some gears that ran this power into that power and turned like this and then there's a big grindstone up here and one down here and they put the grain in between them and it comes out a pour spout down into bags.

(Did the bread taste better that way?)

Well, I hope so.

(Do you study Leverett's local government?)

We were talking about how the United States government came from Greece. Now we're into France and England.

(What happens at town meetings?)

Jonathan Field — They decide what's going to happen. They have suppers there.

(What do the selectmen do?)

Matthew LaClaire — My uncle is one, but I don't really know that much about it.

Susan Hoadley — They work on the roads and help build houses.

Robert Douglas — They say where you can build a house trailer.

Matthew LaClaire — They scrape the roads in spring.

Holly Greeley — They get volunteer firemen and policemen.

(Is zoning a good idea?)

Robert Douglas — Yeh. People are going to hate me for what I'm going to say, but I truthfully don't like the house trailers just there and no landscape. If they build it back in the woods it wouldn't look so bad, but I don't like house trailers myself.

Jonathan Field — The thing that I don't like is some people are building so many more houses in this particular Leverett spot. It's turning into a town. . .

Matthew LaClaire — It's turning into a city. I like Leverett just the way it is right now--with a couple of less people.

Robert Douglas — They'd have built apartment houses across from us if my dad hadn't bought the land.

(Why is it good to have such a small place?)

Privacy.

Linda Field — It would turn into factories and smog all over the place.

Susan Hoadley — And start littering.

Jonathan Field — In my opinion, I think cities are the worst place anybody could live, I don't see how they could live in them, because of all the smog in the air. And people are so stupid because they try to raise dogs and cats and they get hit by cars and if they don't get hit by cars they're always in the house.

Matthew LaClaire — In the country a dog or cat can grow up healthy. He has a big field to run in. And kids need the same thing. A place to run and have fun.

(Where are there good places for that in Leverett?)

I've got a great big field up by my house I fly my rockets in. We used to have two cars to drive around in the field, but my father finally sold them for scrap. . . There's a pine forest on the side and a hemlock forest in front and on the other side all kinds of stuff. And in the back it's mostly wild cherry, pine and maple.

Jonathan Field — Down behind my grandfather's, you can go out in the woods and there's a nice road and some railroad tracks, but the train doesn't go by very often. There's some big sand heaps that you can jump into.

Robert Douglas — I like to go back in the woods and bring my fishing rods and well just take a nap. There's lots of little creeks.

(Any fish in them?)

Well, every now and then.

Jonathan Field — We have a nice spot. We live on a lake. It's nice for boating and fishing. And we've got a big field in back of our house. And a pine wood in front. And we've got a big hemlock, and my dad just loves it. He won't even let me climb in it anymore. There's a place my uncle cleared out in the lake that goes out about 50 feet, pretty shallow. I keep walking and go all the way under and then I start running the other way and my head pops up. Then there's a dock. I found out that it's pretty darn shallow where you dive off.

Holly Greeley — We have a pond in our backyard to swim in.

Matthew LaClaire — We have a pond, too, but we can't go swimming there, because that's where we get our water. We have a well, but a dead rabbit fell in. The brook down below us is freezing cold, so you jump in there boiling hot and get out freezing and that makes you feel good.

Jonathan Field — Route 63 is the only place to ride a bike around my house. But cars really don't care if you're there or not. Come along blasting their horns.

Linda Field — We have a trail in back of our house. It goes to a gravel pit where we always stop and have picnic lunches.

(Would you like some more bike trails off the highways?)

Robert Douglas — I'd love it.

(What about between the school and the church?)

Everyone — Yes.

the roads

Steve Trudel

I get up in the morning and have a very pleasurable drive into town. It's not like driving down a superhighway from one city to another. I really appreciate the sanctity of the forests and this land. Going from my house down to Route 63--passing that whole stretch of land which the river borders on one side with just the plain forest on the other--I get a very beautiful spiritual feeling.

David Fife

I'm not really sure whether making bigger and better roads helps the community. Because then people drive fast and you have another problem. . . More folk come, and then you have to widen it again in another five or ten years. When we first came here five years ago, it was no problem. When people had gone to work by nine o'clock, there was hardly anything on the road until four.

I would say North Leverett Road has become tremendously busy to what it was. A lot of people just use it as a quick cut between 63 and 202.

(Would you like to see this road widened?)

Mrs. Walter Carey

Not so much widened, but I'd like to see it smoothed. So you don't get those potholes. . .

Walter Carey

The worst trouble is you get it too straightened out, they go too fast. Boy there's a lot of them up through here going to Lake Wyola.

Mrs. Walter Carey

There's a corner right below us. . . I would like to see taken care of. I do feel that life is more important than land. I don't think it would hurt the beauty of the countryside at all.

Clifford Blinn

I don't see any reason to think the road might change right now. I don't think it's important. I hadn't really thought of it that much.

Peter Steve

I think a lot of the people in town would not mind narrow roads with curves. They object to state standards that a road has to be so wide and clear of trees within so many feet and have a radius curve of 400 feet.

Basically Depot Road was acceptable to us as we found it. It was dusty and it had potholes, but we accepted it when we moved here. And we expected other people who would want to live in a town like this also to accept it. I would not want to see this sort of Chapter 90 construction throughout the town of Leverett in the name of progress. I think it would be a step backwards, not a step forward. In the future, any road that's up for construction should be considered in all aspects. And where it can be left alone, leave it alone.

Nick Lenz

People obviously want to build on a road. So your roads get all built up and look bad. And still there's all this open space in behind. I suppose that isn't bad because kids can walk up into that open space and have a wonderful time, but the appearances of the community sure become trashy.

Of course, you can increase your speed so you don't have to notice anything.

Fred Muehle

If you abandon a road, the town has no more authority. If you discontinue it, the town doesn't get any money (Chapter 81) for it, but the town still maintains the right-of-way for whatever purpose you want to use it. And there's all kinds of hassles as to what the status of many of these roads are. I personally don't like abandonment, because the town loses control.

There's also what they call unofficial discontinuance. That's when the town is still getting money for a piece of road, but they figure nobody lives there. You know, it hasn't seen a chainsaw in 10 years, let alone a snowplow. The problem you get into there is that if I can find that, and I can prove that's a town way that was never officially discontinued or abandoned, I can force the town to get that road up to Chapter 81 standards, and they got to do it.

Clifford Graves

The big change that I can see is the roads. See when I started out they were just sand and mud. In the spring, it was mud and a car couldn't possibly--when the cars first came around, well, you were stuck everywhere, right in the main road, and you'd have to hire somebody to pull you out. Take an old model T, they might churn their way through and get home.

Then we worked what we called an all-season road, which was dug out and gravelled. But they'd be rougher than the devil, but you still wouldn't have mud in the spring. And then people got where they were so rough, of course, they kicked, and you kept going till you got the blacktop.

And now, we thought we had a wonderful road here, you know--but now people are not satisfied because it's too crooked. You got to keep going all the time.

You straighten a road and more people get killed and hurt than do on a crooked road. Because the speed doubles. There's quite an argument there. But down here there's parking on the side of the road you know. It isn't the road's fault so much as parking in the road. Up on your corner is a dangerous spot, but you don't see many smash-ups there. . .

I went with my father with just two common dirt plows on the sled with horses to plow roads. You just simply broke a track. That's all you did. And then you had two or three men shoveling to get the horses through. Then you had little trucks to start out with. The first truck I had was a one-ton truck.

I was working down at Leverett one time, and I was suppose to plow snow up here. And I was hung up down there with a team of horses, and it was snowing something awful. I had a hell of a time hitching those horses up, you know, cause the wind's blowing so. And when I came over the hill with a buggy--the wheels that high, you know--I plowed snow right ahead of the dasher all the way home. And I was the only track over the hill for three days.

Larry LaClaire

I came on steady in '67 driving truck for them. It was in the spring, you know, and I'd rather work outside, instead of being cooped up in a shop, you know, where you see that nice sunshine out there and the temperature's up to 70.

This time of year, driving around, you look for potholes. Mud can come overnight on some roads. Up above North Leverett, you've got a section in there where the ledge runs right out under the road. That's the reason you're getting all those frost heaves up through there. The water follows the ledge right out of the mountain.

And you're looking at the trees to see which ones are dying. You can go down a road four or five times a day for a year, and there's one tree on the side you might not ever see that's dead. And one day you come along and look in and there it is, you know.

On dirt roads when it came to muddy season in years past, they'd close them. Well, nowadays you can't do that, because you're getting a house every quarter of a mile. Now we're putting what they call a crushed gravel in. It's expensive, but it makes a good road. Once in a while you have someone come in and say, why don't you surface that road? Well, as quick as you go out there with some asphalt, why you'd have everyone in town over there. Because the people who live on the road don't want it. They don't want a tar road going by their house. They want more gravel all the time. We spent more money on the dirt roads this spring than we have probably ever.

On the main roads, if you had a lot of money, I'd like to blacktop them all. We do have some blacktop right in the center of town. It costs about three times what a hone mix will cost. That's what's out here. Put a tenth of asphalt down, then put roughly an inch of three-eighths stone, and then we put two tenths of asphalt over top of the stone. Then we take a grader and mix it and then level it out again and then put stone on top.

It's better than a seal. A seal is just giving it one quarter of a gallon and then covering it. Whatever's underneath, if there's a bump there, the bump stays there. The cost of a hone job is about double a seal job. Looking at a seal job, the road looks real light, but a hone job is darker. And most generally in a hone job, where the grader goes through and levels it, you'll see ridges where it ran out of mix in some spots.

Fannie Taylor — Well, there's greater care taken of the roads, therefore the roadsides look better. I've been impressed by the fact that years ago when somebody cut off a field of timber, they put on a steam mill and took off everything. And that made the roadsides or the hills beside the roads, made them look very bare and very, well unsavory, perhaps. But now the roadsides practically all look very well kept. There's more care to have the trees kept growing along the side of the road. And there's less appearance of kind of moving out.

Homer Germain — I've always thought this main road to Shutesbury should have gone the January Hill Road. That's pretty near a straight line. Then there wouldn't be anybody here, only the people that live here.

You'd be surprised. You take a hot day in the summertime, from here up to Shutesbury is a cool drive along that brook and through the woods. You'd be surprised at the people that come out of Amherst just to ride up through here in the evening to get cooled off. It's real nice up here.

Portia Weiskel — I was happy to hear at town meeting two years ago, someone stand up and say. . . we should do some preventive medicine on those trees. To find out what maybe those trees need to eat, and maybe they're not getting enough. Make sure that nothing happens to them, instead of waiting to see if they make it. And they probably will. Trees are pretty sturdy. But that's an incredible asset to this town.

David Fife — I should think there have been half a dozen or ten public street lamps since we've been here put up. Which at night tend to detract from the country point of view.

Clifford Graves — This spot here I wouldn't sell to anybody. I suspect my grandfather built that wall down there. They've been talking about widening this road this year. Now if they do that, boy I want some help. I don't want them to take that wall. I'd hate awful to have that wall go, you know. I know I could stop it. They can widen the other side. Cause if you look at that wall you'll realize what I mean.

possible public places

Phillip Woodard	The Rattlesnake Gutter project, it looks like quite a thing. But in one sense it's kind of a frightening thing to the people here. . . It might bring out the very nice point of interest which it is. It might make a lot of people more appreciative of that point of interest. And it might make a lot of us just curse the day that anybody ever heard of it. You could have quite an influx of people there.
Robert Douglas	A thing that should really be preserved is Rattlesnake Gutter. When we went down there we found cans and bottles.
Matthew LaClaire	It's nifty when you ride along there in a car. My father likes to scare my mother. He drives real close to the side. Another cool thing is when you ride down there on a bike. So long as you know how to drive a bike.
Jonathan Field	Also that waterfall's fun to go down.
Matthew LaClaire	Up at the top of the ledges there's a big forest you can get lost in. And you have to be pretty sure footed. There's some old Indian footholds you can climb up.
Donald Wise	It's a scenic area with very recent collapse resulting from the over steepening of the walls while the glacial melt waters were going down.
Chester Woodard	I think the Gutter should be preserved if possible. As is. Before they start building over there.

Portia Weiskel — Possibly down here on the lake, it would seem awfully nice if we had a beach front, a swimming place. . . I say that with some reluctance personally because I know it would mean a lot of cars going down there, but I relegate that to a less important place in my vision of what should happen in Leverett. I don't think my desires are all that important.

Edward Field, Sr. — I like it the way it is. With a spotting scope you can see so much life going on on that pond. Waterfowl, snakes, turtles. I hate snakes, but in their place they're part of the picture. I have had a good deal of pleasure out of watching. Yet the feeling persists that for the good of the town, something possibly should be developed. . . I feel it should be in the hands of the Conservation Commission. I have a lot of confidence in them.

Loyce Dunbar — We have no place in town for kids to swim. Nothing here in the Center. I think that would be fine here on the lake.

Peter Robinson — Leverett Pond is a valuable resource that I don't think is being carefully looked at in terms of pollution. I'm not aware of what the chemistry of the pond is. It's pretty obvious there are a lot of septic tanks draining into it.

Donald Wise — It has no recharge area other than the area right around it. It's basically a glacially gouged puddle. There is very little volumn of water flowing through there. So what you're doing with all the houses around there is pumping the ground water up through, adding whatever nutrients there are, putting it back in the pond--and the pond is probably recharging its own ground water table. You're simply filtering the water. So you're going to increase its nutrient content.

I've taken a canoe out there and there are some bedrock ledges almost at the surface. If it were cleaned out it would be a broad area of nice swimming and some rocks to sit on.

Portia Weiskel — There's this land down here that goes between the Heath's red house and the church. I think town greens are psychologically very important, and that would be the obvious place. I'd like to see that left the way it is.

Frances King — I'd like the town to buy the land up along Roaring Brook, where they're already starting to build houses. This breaks my heart, to see houses on that brook. You're going to destroy the purity of that brook--which in turn will destroy the life in it. It's going to destroy its aesthetics. Because to see that pure water tumbling through those black rocks under those hemlocks. And to drive along that road--you know that road goes within six feet of that brook. And just see it or fish it. We used to take our kids up to Shutesbury, and they'd fish their way all the way down that brook. And these are things the human spirit needs.

Charles Roys — Yes, that's very beautiful up there.

Barry Schonhaut — I shot some beautiful film at Roaring Brook. Just very transcendental. I can't describe it. Just a lot of different wildflowers you find, different grasses, ferns, rocks, moss. Stuff that's not especially happening only in Leverett, but that is what Leverett is--the geological and physical structures which make up the town.

Charles Roys — Dad often talked about that piece up Roaring Brook for town use. But if it's going to be a refuge for beer cans, I'm against it. A good number of people used to swim up along the stream, before there were so many swimming pools.

Ursula Roys — Dad had said he'd like to see that piece turned into a park or something.

Charles Roys — I'd lean towards the use of it in a natural sense rather than picnicking, because that changes the whole complexion of a property. That's not saying they can't go up there and picnic, but nothing formal. It's bordered by the brook, and there's a smaller brook down through it. There are beaver in there now.

Peter Robinson — We own quite a long stretch along Mountain Brook. We've thought ultimately we would make some arrangement with the town for a conservation area. Chester Woodard, who owns some of the opposite bank, may have a similar mind.

Chester Woodard — Been thinking about it. Still thinking.

David Fife — There are quite a few children in North Leverett. And there aren't too many places where they can really skate or even play. . . There are plenty of areas that could be fairly easily turned into a baseball diamond or a tennis court. We've skated down on the millpond, but that's not exactly very safe. And perhaps swimming. There are some swimming holes down along the river. There again I don't know how safe they are.

If we personally want any recreation, we have to go to the University. Which once again attracts the community towards Amherst. Even on some of these little things if the community could develop its own it would keep people back here. The parents have to take the children down, so everybody leaves. .

Alice Levenson — When kids don't play around their own homes we see them a lot back here. One of the things we hope to be doing with the kids this spring is planning and designing and then constructing some playground equipment that would meet their needs.

(Where would you put a park?)

Chester Woodard — That's the point.

I wonder if the disadvantages are more than the advantages of it. Taking care of it and all. Of course with the automobile, anybody in town can go anywhere they want to. . . I've been down to Hartford. Nice park down there.

Paul Woodard — I'd like to see the Conservation Commission take over more land to keep it natural. But I don't know whether they want to put the taxes to that. I wish that years ago they could have latched onto more land. It's too late now. But it'll be more too late in a few years.

Dorothy King — Anything I don't sell--now if I were to sell those three lots down there that would come out of it, those three acres--but anything I don't sell is to be left to the town for conservation. Nothing to be built on it, to be kept forever as it is now.

Edward Field, Sr. Right now I'm working on a story about a sawmill that was located in a woodsy part of town east of what's now Route 63. It was the most unlikely place for a sawmill. It was a member of my family that built it. All my life I've been hearing about it. To me, here is one opportunity for a hiking trail. It would be a spot worthwhile. The best part of the dam is still there. It's in native rock. And part of the foundation. It's quite plain what went on.

It was the imagination of the man who built it which intrigued me. There was an old road that went by there, and I suspect that he walked that road often, working up his ideas.

Right down here was a one-horse-power cider mill. It was a platform along side of the road. They dumped apples on it. The horse walked around on top and operated the machine that cut the apples up and also worked the screws that crushed them. I don't think anybody in town knows that now. When I was growing up the remains were still there, and I was always told, this was the cider mill. My dad explained part of the operation.

Another one was a barrel and wooden pail shop down on Long Plain. On the brook out in back of the Mitchell apple farm. No one would ever suspect it now.

Then down below was another sawmill, originally an up-and-down saw. This was right next to Route 63. In order to get enough water they dug a ditch all the way across Bull Hill Road over to the Long Plain Brook. The remains of the ditch are still visible.

Fannie Taylor

Carlyle Field, he has 2 daughters and 3 sons. Four of them have built houses or bought trailers into that section, on that land. There was quite a large farm, I guess it was over 200 acres. . . But some of it's been sold for building lots, some of it's been sold for woodlots. But to me it's interesting because they have, that whole family has kept together enough so that its gone from one generation to another. Some children lived there awhile and they were the 6th generation. I don't know how long since it was a Field place. It wasn't built by the Fields, but it was occupied by the Fields shortly after that. . .

I don't know much about the other family places. There are some in North Leverett that. . . have been in the family quite awhile. But I don't know those people so well. But they're interesting places because of the fact they're old and have been restored some of them.

Clifford Blinn

I've been in the Historical Society since before it started, cause this building was started as a recreation for this part of town. To start with, the building was going to be torn down. And a group got together and met with the selectmen to see if they couldn't get permission to fix it up. We fixed it up as a North Leverett Recreation Building, which was then used as a library also. After that, the Historical Society was started and the two groups combined. The library was used for 3-4 years. After that, people lost interest.

It's used now for Historical Society meetings and any group that wants to use it--they have showers here. It's still a community building. The boy scouts and the girl scouts started using it just this week. I guess they'll meet one month up here and one month down at the other end of town. We still feel that the community made it possible to start with to renovate the building. . .

The only thing I can say is distinctive (about Moore's Corner) is this building. Everybody just gets together and if there's something to be done, they do it. They help each other out. Somebody needs something done, why, they go help them. That's it. They don't ask to be paid for it. They just volunteer to help them. I think this is something that's unusual in a lot of other places. When the work was done on the building, all of the families pitched in and helped.

Charles Linscott

There's celler holes up through there. There used to be a community up through there you know. 5 or 6 holes. Years ago, people used to live there, farmed there. A couple of fellows from that section there went off down to Connecticut. Worked for a man who kept his money in a little safe. Two brothers. One night they took that safe, run off with it, came back here.

The sheriff down here was expecting them. Someone does something like that, always come back to their own roost. Set a boy up there, said, when you see those two come, you come down and let me know. When they come, one laid down there beside the road, went to sleep, and the other took the safe and hid it somewhere. Sheriff came by, both of them sleeping. And when they woke up, they was in chains. In jail for 20 years.

All that time the safe was hidden. The one who hid it wouldn't even tell his brother where. He died in prison. Just as he knew he was going to die, he told him. But by the time he got out, got back here, the place had changed so, he couldn't find it. Whether anybody else ever found it or not, nobody knows. They say that there's $5,000 in it.

75-80 years ago. Dan Glazier down here told me he was 12 years old when that heppened. Said he went up there the next morning and people were out there rolling the stone walls right down onto the road. . .

If they had a history of how these places got started, it would make interesting reading. I don't know how they ever made a living up there. They raised more things that they ate themselves. More self-sufficient. Made their own clothes to a considerable extent.

Clifford Graves

I was in the other celebration they had. We made a float right here in the dooryard. We had an old-fashioned square dance. My father drove a pair of horses, you know, we had them all decorated up, and we made a big platform--16 feet long by about 8 feet. We had 2 or 3 musicians on there and a gallon of cider. I was a tree during that thing.

trails

Georgene Bramlage The Conservation Commission essentially has a blank town to work with. If we stop the building--the undesirable building--now, then we have that much more. So, logically, I think we are the ones who should be doing the planning. . .

I'd like to take the Natural Resources Team study as a basis of planning. Let's say there's a beaver site. Obviously, you can't build a house there. You can back this up with our zoning right now or the Inland Wetlands Act. So you take sites like this and say, OK this is what we would like to see saved in Leverett. And then go about procuring these sites, whether by outright buying or by getting the owner to say he will open this land for people to use and then have the Conservation Commission regulate its use.

(I would wonder how much acreage the town would be willing to get--which means how much tax money might be spent and how much taxable land set aside. And secondly I wonder how effective land acquisition is as a planning technique. Though acquisition may traditionally be the main thing Conservation Commissions do, if this one's undertaking more of a planning and lang-range interest, I wonder what other techniques it might devise to this end.)

Ok. Leverett has a lot of old roads, some of which the town owns, some of which are old logging roads. It's a beautiful system of trails, which I understand the utility company already has marked out for hiking, snowmobiles and such. So we can incorporate this. . . But you have to get people in town to realize the need for it. If you don't do something now, ten years from now, it's going to be worse. You've got to let snowmobiles go somewhere. You're not going to get rid of them completely. You're not going to get rid of people completely. A function of the Commission, too, is education.

(Could a trail system be a priority for the Commission? If your aim is to have a finger on the whole town's growth, this might best be accomplished through an open space network extending throughout the town. Rather than one or two big public landholdings.)

Georgene Bramlage — Yes. I think that would be easier at this point, really. Because a lot of these woodroads are still under town control. This gives us a basis.

William Bramlage — The Selectmen are afraid of someone building a house up on an old road and saying, Ok, here I am, now maintain the road.

(Perhaps there could be a system of designations of town ways: some for bridle ways, some for walkers, some for snowmobiles, some for cars. Instead of the automotive monopoly that now exists. This could limit the reactivation of woodroads to car traffic. After all, these roads were not originally devised for cars. I don't see why, as the town landscape is revitalized, it has to be totally in terms of the automobile's values. . . A trail system might also use the town's natural drainage system for corridors.)

Georgene Bramlage — It would help disperse recreational use throughout the town's landscape. It could maybe control where people go.

Phillip Woodard — You don't have to contend here, as you do in many small towns, with large amounts of tourists. It's at a minimum. So there's not the scramble, there's not big gift shops. . . Of course, we don't have any real attraction. . . And this is maybe to our advantage, not to attract too many people.

Other than those that perhaps just like to meander through and take walks through the woods and relax. Which a lot of people do. It's surprising if you've been here any length of time and know people--well, of course, we don't know them as well as we used to--but you see people just come into town, they'll park their car somewhere and walk around town. I'm sure it's just for relaxation, many of these people from Amherst.

(In light of such low-intensity recreational use and the fact that most open space in town is going to remain in private ownership, I feel the town should try to preserve and enhance its roadsides and formalize a trail system.)

Phillip Woodard Yeh, I would go along with that to the point that by doing this we don't make it too attractive, which then defeats its own purpose. . .

There's been talk of using some of the old town ways, which may or may not be--and I don't know how we'll ever prove it--town property. There's been talk of using these as trail areas. My only caution there is we don't want to make these trails too good to the point where we'll have a steady stream of--for instance if they're bridle trails--a steady stream of cars and horse trailers coming by the dozens and literally the hundreds to utilize these areas. Because once you do, you've defeated your purpose.

Without seeming selfish. . . you want to preserve an area like this primarily for the people that are here. I don't think we should feel an obligation to make it very comfortable and attractive to someone who has really no basic interest in the town. Say you have 1,000 people in town and we customarily attracted several thousand people from out of town in here to utilize our facilities, then we've defeated our whole purpose.

It's fine for those coming. They can enjoy themselves, but the more people that come into an area, the less the people already here can enjoy their peaceful existence. This is very hard to pin down--to what degree should these things be developed?

(Do you think they're developed to the right degree now?)

No, I don't. It's very haphazard as it is now. And there's no set pattern of use or control of the use. And I think control of the use is very important.

(I'd hope that formalizing trails somewhat, perhaps with agreements between landowners and the Conservation Commission, would give people a central point of information and a place where landowners could take any complaints about abuse. . .)

Fannie Taylor — Some people find that walking or riding a bicycle or even just riding an automobile or riding a horse. . keeps them out of the house and broadens their interest. And perhaps it broadens their social life somewhat.

(Does lack of transportation keep children from getting together?)

Loyce Dunbar — If you really want to go somewhere, you can walk. . . I suppose it isn't transportation as much as the parents don't like to have their children on the highways perhaps, walking alone. These kids do commute. On the average, I get three notes a day from kids saying they want to go to a friend's house.

Homer Germain — They used to have a path, and everybody who came up here, they didn't go on the road here. They always took the path. My wife's afraid to go out there on the road. A car brushed her coat one day.

Elizabeth Germain — I was just as tight to the bank as I could. Well, that scared me. I know I couldn't jump up that bank. I'm not that limber. We need someplace that is safe to walk, where the cars can't go.

(How would you feel about a town trail over your land along the Sawmill River?)

Charles Linscott — That'd be alright. Couldn't do any harm. People use it already. I'm not using it.

Vernon Aiken — The only trouble is you always have a few that are kind of careless. Certain times of the year there's a lot of danger of fires. And in the summertime I have it fenced to pasture right along the river.

Clifford Blinn — I don't see the advantage of a trail for the dam sites. They're all right beside the road.

Mrs. Walter Carey — I think it would be great to have hiking trails. Healthful. People are too sedentary now. They sit around watching TV. I think if they had something like that, it would really be to everyone's advantage. I would really love to see that, I really would.

the public landscape

Frances King — We were in Germany on sabbatical. Sometimes there'll be a great park, and you keep looking for the park. It's simply farms the way they've always been, but they've put a ban on doing anything but farming. Which keeps the land open. And the government subsidizes these farmers so that they won't leave the land. They have footpaths through parts of it. But people do not misuse the land they are allowed to hike on.

(Is anything in that model applicable to Leverett? We seem to be dealing with an environment at least as valuable for its cultural aspects as its natural features. How do you keep that alive and make it accessible? To what degree can the whole Leverett landscape be considered a park or at least a resource meriting public attention?)

The state would have to provide subsidies or incentives.

(Preferential taxation of farmland is a start.)

It sure is. We hope it will be enough.

(I would pick up on the footpath part of your model as something that could be accomplished on the town level--by the Conservation Commission. Use and appreciation is your best argument for preservation.)

The M&M trail, which Gordon maintains with student help, is an example of this. It goes entirely through private land. They got permission from all the landowners. . .

Gordon King — The best way to keep a trail open is to use it.

Frances King — Unfortunately, our own people aren't educated yet to hike. The great bulk of people want to drive somewhere in a car and maybe get out and have a picnic. We really have to educate our people to use this kind of land. We can't just let them loose. Maybe you ought to have a license to use public lands. And to get one you have to take a little course on outdoor manners.

Gordon King — Holland has this in some of its parks.

(Applying your model further, I wonder if the town could develop its public interest in the use of rural resources. Beef to keep the fields open. Sugaring to keep the roadside maples. Advising people how to manage their land for timber, wildlife, aesthetics. There are existing means of encouraging these activities through extension service and the like, but those agencies are perhaps a bit distant from the perspective of the local landowner. Are there other means of public involvement with private land uses?)

Frances King — They might develop in time, but this is really quite a large order. For a town in the old New England tradition, where your land was yours and you did what you liked with it. The idea of controlling land is still difficult for us New Englanders to accept. But I think it is necessary. What makes it difficult is that the necessity for it doesn't show yet. Most everybody's backyard runs into the woods.

The kids from the neighborhood over near our pasture all run down and look at the cows. As long as they don't leave the gate open, we don't mind. And most Leverett folk are like that. They're all hospitable. But I can see with the influx of a new kind of person--just new people--and people who on a fine day are looking for a place like Leverett, we've got somehow to be prepared for this. Because they're going to come.

Edward Field, Sr. — I am very much in favor of opening up vistas and cleaning out brush. I like the idea of picnic sites. I think the general public is becoming educated to taking care of these sites themselves. I don't think that in the near future you're going to need the caretakers you had to have at one time. I think the general public will police those places.

(I share that optimism. While in England I was very impressed by the public paths, which often cross private property, even working farms, with very little vandalism or the like.)

This is one of my problems. I'm afraid I don't have the sense of ownership that a lot of people have. I feel that, well, I have it for a while, my lifetime, and it's great to feel that I possess it possibly. But if people want to use my property and know how to take care of it, I have no objections. Fences I don't like.

Clifford Blinn

I guess I'm old fashioned. I feel it's my own land, why should I ask for trouble? Years back a lot of people from Chicopee and Springfield cleaned out all the game here. When they did this, they were cutting fences and being destructive. People got sick of it.

So they formed the North Leverett Sportsmen Club. This consists of four square miles, goes from Lake Wyola down to Montague Woods, which is this side of the railroad. When it was formed all the landowners were members and posted their lands. We stocked fish, white hares, pheasants. There's still good fish in the brook. Had regular meetings all the time. 20-30 people.

It's what I call controlled posting. Each landowner had a membership card and two guest cards. Anyone wanted to come in, just had to see a member and get a guest card, which was good for one day.

Frances King

We've already had that brook down there destroyed by people, by overuse. At one time there was a beautiful old milldam down there with a deep swimming pool--it was 14 feet deep where the waterfall kind of gouged it out. And I guess for 200 years that had been Leverett's swimming hole for all the kids around.

As soon as Amherst began to grow, students discovered it. And they didn't care so much about its beauty or its swimming, but they found they could hide up behind the dam and break the drinking laws and have big bashes up there. Then they'd smash their bottles to get rid of the evidence, and when the Leverett children went swimming, they'd cut their feet on the glass.

Then the mothers from the new housing developments in Amherst would come out in droves--with their children move into the backyard down here, dump their garbage all over the place. Gordon and I used to go down every Sunday afternoon and pick up bushel basketsful.

Students and children would push the big stones off the dam to hear them splash. When they finally pushed out the keystones, one day there was a big rainstorm, and the whole dam fell down. So now there's no more swimming hole. The place is ruined.

David Fife

(Could you compare this landscape to the English countryside? Which has I would say a longer history of sort of intimate human involvement with the land, and perhaps at this point a stronger sense of what might be called the public landscape or public rights or interests in the landscape--the idea of private ownership being somewhat moderated there compared to the American scene.)

Well, I think the thing that impressed me most about America is there is so much land. I mean you talk of all these problems, which are very real, but then you go to England where there are so many people on such a little island, comparatively speaking. Folk just have to give a little for everyone to live harmoniously. . . So I think there's more willingness to let some sort of authority dictate in some areas.

(Would you expect that sort of consciousness to develop among Americans faced with the pressures of growth?)

I think it is developing, even nationally in the last ten years. But it has to be a give and take. . . The public footpaths I'm thinking about, near London where we lived, are across fields where people are farming and have animals. If you leave a can around, some cow is going to be mutilated on the can. If you leave the gate open, it's going to stray right out. These things work together. The landowners realize, over the centuries, they have a sort of concern for people who don't own the land. And the people in turn respond, hopefully, by just using it as pleasure.

Then there are government lands that people can graze their animals over. It's always give and take. My favorite golf course was one where once or twice you'd hit a cow or a sheep. It was an old common.

openness

David Fife

(Are there differences in visual character between English and New England landscapes?)

A thing that struck us when we came here was to see all these hills covered with trees. In fact, you'd prefer if there were some open spaces on a purely human level so you could look at some landscape once you climb the hills.

Portia Weiskel

Coming out from Amherst, just as you pass the intersection of Teewaddle Hill Road and Juggler Meadow Road, coming this way on the left is a very beautiful expanse of pasture and field with stone wall. It's just exquisite and I would hate to see that go. And it's always beautiful, no matter what the season, no matter what the time of day, it's beautiful.

The view from the top of Cave Hill Road looking into North Leverett is exquisite.

Clifford Graves

You can hire tractors with old big rotaries--they don't cost much--to go in and cut it. It's awful to have them close in cause they close in faster than you think they do. It gradually creeps in.

You know when we used to run a farm--anybody--they'd go around those edges and get every single spear of grass there was with a hand scythe. And you'd go around with a rake and rake it just as clean as could be. The whole thing would be clean when you got done. Now when they hay, they leave the stuff scattered all over the fields you know, bunches of stuff that the bailer leaves.

No, I should like awful well to see them keep the mowings open. Now mine started to crowd two years ago, and I got a tractor in there and he got all he could get. There's a few alders over there he didn't get. Cause that was going to be just a mess of alders over there in a short time.

Chester Woodard — It's growing up now to brush. You don't see many nice pastures and open land anymore. Course I can't say much. I planted trees on mine.

(Are any lands in Leverett affected by the new preferential taxation of agriculture?)

No farmers.

But I should think if they managed the land as farmland, they could keep the value down. Of course, there's always the possibility of putting it under forestry law. $10 value on the land, per acre. Just got our second one. . . I read the laws 2-3 times, but it didn't sink in too much. I didn't think anybody'd try it. It's a state law, just remodeled two years ago.

(Will more people be taking advantage of it?)

Too complicated.

Vernon Aiken — The pasturing (of horses) keeps it down pretty well. You should clip in every year, too. Last year I didn't get to it because I work six days a week at the University. We hope to do a little more. My neighbor raises a few goats, and he grows some corn on my land.

I have thought some about beef cattle. You just have to have a shed they can go in. . . Most everyone has fields and would rather have them stay open. It's hard work to find anyone to mow.

Constantine Kamansky — When we had cattle we had acres and acres of pasture clean. I go up in the pasture now, I don't even know where the hell I'm going. I think I'm not on my own land. Trees up there 30 feet high. And that's since '48. You got to keep that clean. If you don't, it grows up.

Charles Roys — With that five acres up on Broad Hill Road, we're toying around with the idea of getting a couple of white-faces and fence that off and just pasture them up there.

Gordon King

We keep 3-4 white-face. We raise pigs. The kids come home to do the slaughtering and butchering. It's mainly for the meat. The fencing'll kill you, though. This is the biggest problem. We're probably putting in six more acres of Christmas trees.

(Could the town go into beef as a management technique to preserve open fields?)

Many parks raise beef to cut down on brush control. It would really be up to the property owner. I don't see how the town could afford it. The fencing would be prohibitive. Now for an individual to do it, I think it would pay. If he has the interest. But you'd almost have to get someone who's never been raised on a farm who'd be foolish enough to try it.

John Paczkowski

People come up, and they'll cut the hay for us. If they need it, we just make some kind of arrangement for them taking it and then giving me some.

If the town wants them to keep cutting the land as much as possible they should offer them some assistance. Maybe something to help the people find someone to take care of the land for them.

Rhody McCoy

Most horse owners around here rent people's pastures. So with horses out there, it's green and pretty all summer. You don't have to worry about it growing up. .

But you got to get booked months in advance to get mown. And they've got to do it at the right time, too. Yeh, guys go all up and down the road here and have a hell of a problem getting their hay cut. . .

Have your group, through the town, buy the necessary equipment.

The University is the biggest damn free resource you got. Untouched. . . It's a state institution. I pay taxes for that. Why couldn't some of all those graduate students there adopt pieces of land out here and give some advice on managing them?

Charles Linscott — Well, I think the country would be better off if we had some farmers around here that cultivated the soil. Don't you?

Constantine Kamansky — Farmers are getting better prices now than they were ten years ago. Farms'll come back. But the young people, they don't want to farm. The farm stands there. The old guy kicks off, and that's it. But I told the kids, don't sell this place. Because someday maybe you'll need it. Everything'll be so damn high.

(What determines what you grow?)

The easiest thing you can get away with. Years ago, they used to grow a little bit of everything, do it the hard way. Used to be down on their knees all day. Now you raise sweet corn, there's no work in that. You raise potatoes, there's no work in that. One guy can take care of 100 acres.

Fellow down there used to peddle his own stuff, a lot of stuff. Now he goes to Springfield farmers market and buys it. He don't raise it cause he's got no help. He buys it, and he's still peddling.

Edward Field, Sr. — There's a potential sugar bush here. It's so hard to get around, we gave it up. It would be an excellent location for a tube and spigot operation.

Vernon Aiken — I loved working here for myself. The last of my working for myself, I worked in the woods, selective cutting. The only reason I stopped was in certain kinds of weather I'd get so lame I could hardly move. I thought I better get a job indoors.

Walter Carey

I know they do it different now than they used to. When we cut off lots years ago, we'd cut down pretty small. But now the lots are marked trees. We need just so much, so we say, well, maybe 25-30 years, there'll be another cutting. And maybe quicker than that. Because they leave some big trees to seed in. And it does make it look a lot better. It doesn't make it look, you know, stripped.

A lot of them, particularly the state, are kicking about having you on their lots with some of these big machines that, you know, pull the trees up. . . They maybe can get them out cheaper, but it destroys so much young growth, you lose in the long run. . .

(What's the preferred timber species?)

Well, of course the pine grows much faster.

(So from a lumbering point of view you'd rather see a young stand of pine?)

That's right. . .

(What's it used for eventually?)

Well, they sell it everywhere. Boston, all around. I wouldn't say what they make it into. Of course, it isn't building material, because pine is so much softer than hemlock.

(So there's quite a demand for hemlock?)

Yes, there is. And of course it makes a much stronger house. Once in a while they do use pine, but it doesn't have the strength.

(How has that sawmill being revitalized affected North Leverett?)

Clifford Graves

Well, it's put it back the way it used to be. It keeps one of the oldest things around. See that mill is one that people drew long timbers for miles around to have sawed, because it would saw a longer timber than any mill in the entire area--like that board there hanging up with the sign on it. Oh, I think that's a great improvement. It keeps the old village back the way it should be.

the regional context

James Cope

I expect the area population will continue to increase but perhaps at a somewhat lesser rate. I think the University is serious about limiting its own size. At least for a period, I would say for a decade. Once they hit 25,000 I think they probably would have put on so many brakes that that will tend to level them off--have them at a plateau for at least 10 years. Beyond that, no one can really predict what would happen. They're now at about 23,000.

(Is the present physical environment of Amherst caught up to those numbers--are there enough facilities, housing, highways, etc?)

I think it's pretty much kept pace, although not everybody wants to live in Amherst, of course. There are apartment vacancies at present. So as the University grows, this next small increment, that housing will perhaps absorb most of that.

(Have those vacancies dampened the tendency to build?)

Oh yes, absolutely. But at the same time that that was happening, the town made a zoning change that no longer permitted apartments in the neighborhood resident zone, which is one of the very large zones in the town. So this really put a damper on apartment construction.

(Would you see in the future any possibility of sharing facilities with Leverett?)

I would think in terms of solid waste that's a strong possibility.

The school system already is partly combined.

I'm not sure what kinds of agreements may or may not exist among police departments and fire departments for mutual assistance, etc.

James Cope

I think the operational problems--if several towns get together and buy a road grader, snow plows or other equipment--may outweigh the savings. But then again that may depend on the specific location, and perhaps those kinds of things can be worked out.

(How soon would Amherst be looking for a new landfill? A need 5-10 years from now has been mentioned to me in Leverett.)

We're looking at a system that will handle both sewage sludge and solid waste and combine them and turn them into a fuel for the University steam plant. Which is a pretty exciting kind of proposal, and one which may require a lot of solid waste in order to operate efficiently. So Leverett's problem may be solved by this system. But I'm not sure about that. They're just starting the study.

(Does Amherst have sufficient recreational facilities?)

When the North Amherst recreation area is done we'll probably be in pretty good shape. The thing we're deficient in is water-based recreation, and you're pretty limited in how to do something about that if you don't have any lakes in the town. Developments are providing more and more recreation areas within their boundaries, so the demand is a little different than it used to be when everybody was in a single family house.

One reason for the SCOG Report's recommendations on clustering and open space is that we didn't want to ultimately get into a situation like Springfield, where the only place to find open space is outside the town boundaries.

(What's your attitude toward outsiders--people from Leverett--coming and using Amherst parks?)

As long as they don't prevent Amherst people from coming up and cross-country skiing in Leverett. I think the best situation is where you have a reciprocal arrangement. It may not have to be a formal agreement of any kind. It can just be a live and let live kind of thing.

James Cope

I think the most important thing is attitude. One of good will and cooperation. With that, then maybe the Leverett Conservation Commission might be able to get things like trespass rights from certain landowners for hiking and skiing trails, etc. I think that that's an important thing to try and put across.

(Is there any possibility of Amherst sewer and water lines ever being extended into the southern part of Leverett?)

I think a lot of thought would have to be given to that beforehand. We just finished a study, the report of the Select Committee on Goals (SCOG). And it recommended there be limited extensions of utilities, essentially in order to prevent the kind of sprawl situation that we tend to get when sewers are just extended willy-nilly, or water or whatever.

I personally would like to see what Leverett's intentions are in terms of growth. If they are interested in undertaking some kind of study of what the future pattern of land use ought to be or might be. And after looking at alternatives, arrive at some kind of pattern that's consistent with what Amherst has chosen to do--that is concentrating on villages rather than endless amoebic sprawl. Then something might be worked out.

Everything is tied together and all of the villages that have been designated essentially have some water and sewer provided already. What is going to happen, I think, is that extensions of utilities in areas outside the villages will be discouraged, if not eliminated. And in the villages, they'll be improved and enlarged to accommodate growth at these places. That's the way it's worked.

If there were to be a--let's make believe that Amherst's boundaries didn't exist--a new village that has no utility support at the present time, then I expect that there would be some kind of a connection made.

After studying the potential effects of various policies, Amherst would be reluctant to extend sewers to Leverett and permit Leverett to permit uncontrolled, sprawling development. If there were some committment made by Leverett to work toward a land use pattern that is consistent with Amherst's then there may very well be a good chance that utilities could be extended.

James Cope

(The goal that I've been able to gather from most people in Leverett is to keep things the way they are now. To a degree there's something functioning in the private sector to preserve large parcels--what you might call the privacy factor. The people that are getting into Leverett at this point in time--that have money and can buy fairly large tracts--want to keep their places open for their own use. And as long as taxes or something else doesn't push them too much, they likely would. So one might think in terms of restraining the general growth of the town in order to keep the taxes low and to keep the pressure low on these people. The question would become, do you see the pressures in this region as becoming so great in the next 15 or 20 years that that natural pattern would be disrupted by market pressures?)

I think it would be. I think that even if the University levels off there's going to be a continued growth in migration of people.

(Why?)

I think the general area offers a way of life that people desire.

A kind of balance. You have the amenities of urban areas. Such as a lot of movies to choose from or big libraries and cultural activities. And yet you have a small scale environment, one that you can deal with very easily.

It may be that there would be no jobs or too few jobs. But employers as well as employees would be interested in locating here. We've got improving transportation. You wind up with a work force that's happy in general. I think these are some real attractions to establishing a place of employment in the area.

I don't think that there's a likelihood that Leverett will decline--it's not in Appalachia. The rate of growth for the whole region may be slower than the past 20 years, say, but that doesn't mean that the processes won't occur. It just may take them a bit longer.

I think the people in Amherst like Leverett just the way it is, too, and would be disappointed to see it wrecked by one form or another.

James Cope

(Would there be a market for a subdivision in Leverett right now?)

I don't know. Land is expensive and getting more expensive just about everywhere. In Amherst, building lots are going for $10,000 and up. Steve Puffer, who owns some lots in North Amherst, has been offered $10,000 and has refused since he thinks he's going to be able to get $12,000. And he knows what's going on. So the high cost of land serves as a dampener on development of single family houses, I would say.

There's really a limited market. The land costs $10,000, it would cost you $25,000 to build. Then you've got a $35,000 house. And there aren't all that many people that can afford a mortgage with today's interest rates.

So I think there'll be sort of a constant production of single family houses at a relatively low rate. But that doesn't help the young families who want to buy a house because when production of single family new houses is either low, or the prices of them are high, that drives up the price of existing houses, and so all housing becomes expensive.

I don't know quite how to solve that one. I can't figure out how it's going to continue.

(Is there enough building space left in Amherst?)

There's becoming less space in Amherst right now because people are uptight about how big the town has grown and so they're erecting barriers of various kinds. And I think this will cause spillover to a greater extent in other towns.

(Town utilities being perhaps the main advantage of building here, how much sewered space is left--space within your designated villages?)

That has yet to be determined. All we've done so far is locate the general location of these villages. This summer we're creating a position called SCOG Implementer to specifically study North Amherst and Cushman villages first to see what land is suitable for development, what kinds of development should best be located there. So we don't really know quite yet.

Fred Muehle

One of the things we were supposed to do this year was to look at regional water and sewer supply. There might have been the possibility that Leverett may have been tied in with a larger geographical area. They could have been put into a system where instead of one town supporting the cost, four or five are. When you look at regionalization, those kinds of facilities, you can get all sorts of different kinds of growth patterns going if you want to. I would think that if Leverett could satisfy its sewerage and water requirements, it could accept more growth than without it. Politically, that may be a disaster.

It's difficult among hilltowns. I'm not saying it's going to happen. But I'm saying you might have been able to feed villages, and let villages act as growth centers, if you wanted that.

(Who is to determine whether a town wants that?)

Well, at this stage of the game, the group that determines it under the home-rule system in Massachusetts is the local community. I'm not going to propose that that be changed. I'm just wondering if home-rule isn't dying, not because it is not a good way to do business in theory, but under a practical situation you can't do business, because there are so many influences that spill over into other towns.

For example, you know, why should Sunderland be taking the heat as much as they are, when Leverett, for example, can say, No, we don't want any of this kind of stuff. So OK, then they say, Sunderland should do the same thing Leverett's doing. But I just wonder how long you can stop the sea, OK? I think that thinking is going to have to become more intertwined over a larger area. People are going to have to start taking down their town bounds on some things.

(What regional factors should Leverett consider?)

Certain sorts of zoning decisions, I would say, would probably have to be done with regional thinking involved. A classic example is, you know, somebody comes in and puts up a 60-unit development on the edge of Leverett, up towards Montague. Montague's going to get a piece of the action in terms of traffic, dogs, kids.

Fred Muehle

Maybe Shutesbury will get it--Lake Wyola--they'll all be flocking over there to go swimming. They'll be riding back and forth to Amherst, so Amherst is going to have to do something. When it comes to that kind of scale, I think we ought to open up the decision making process to more than just one community because the guy next door is affected.

And then we get the situation that let's say Leverett had the last piece of Whooping Crane habitat in New England. Does Leverett really have the option to say, Well, so what if that's Whooping Crane habitat, we'll let a guy put a housing unit on it. There are other people that care about that thing, OK? That whole decision making system has got to be broadened.

I'm getting paid to try to do something like that this year. The direction I'm going in is I'd like to define certain natural things that serve a regional interest. Examples of that are flood plains, significant wetlands, the hills over so many feet. Another critical thing is not an area itself, but a magnitude or type of operation. We talked about the major development that spills over into two towns, but you can also have very small things. When the bituminous plant down in Sunderland is belching smoke all over the place, I classify that as a regional influence, because you can sit down at UMass and smell it.

Tax rates still do a lot of talking around here, OK? And if it's in my town, I'm willing to put up with a little bit more soot in the air because my taxes are down two dollars. But how about the guy downwind of that? Should his taxes not go down two dollars also? Or maybe mine should go down a buck and his should go down a buck.

(So would there be a county board that would pass on local zoning decisions?)

I would like to see some kind of regional board. Just how it's going to be structured or how strong it's going to be, I don't know. And the reason I don't know is that we'll need special legislation.

Fred Muehle (What other regional services do you offer?)

There are services not in the hardware style. For example, by 1974, state law says that all communities in the Commonwealth will have a building inspector who will be registered and certified. And it's just foolish in my opinion to see Shutesbury have a $10,000 building inspector, Leverett have a $10,000 building inspector, Warwick having one, etc. and so forth. So I've proposed a regional building inspector group.

We give a lot of technical assistance on grant applications, things like that, because we've got statistics here that those boxes want. We won't do local planning per se, but we will provide guidance on local planning. For example, they want their zoning law changed around or updated, I'll help them. If they want to do a master plan, we've got a couple of ways of doing that. We'll review subdivision control ordinances, and we may even almost write one for a town.

We haven't gotten around yet, I'm not even sure we're going to, to making plans that say this area is that. We've sort of stayed with what we call a policy plan. For the simple reason that in Franklin County, where you have a relatively undefined situation, you get into all sorts of troubles saying this should be that. How do you say in Leverett, for example, this should be an industrial area, when it looks like the piece of land across the street that you just zoned single family residence because there's no sewerage, no water, no decent road.

So we've made a policy plan. The policy plan says we should maintain Franklin County character. That's pretty weak, I'll admit that. But the point is at least it says, you know, listen, when something happens in your town, one of the things that you like around here--and we found this out--you like the way Franklin County looks. I guess we're forcing these people to make subjective judgements as to what they like and what they don't like. But I don't know how to honestly do it any other way, because the county is so homogeneous in a way that nothing really stands out as saying this should happen here.

Fred Muehle (It seems that that fact might also give you the chance to ask whether you want growth.)

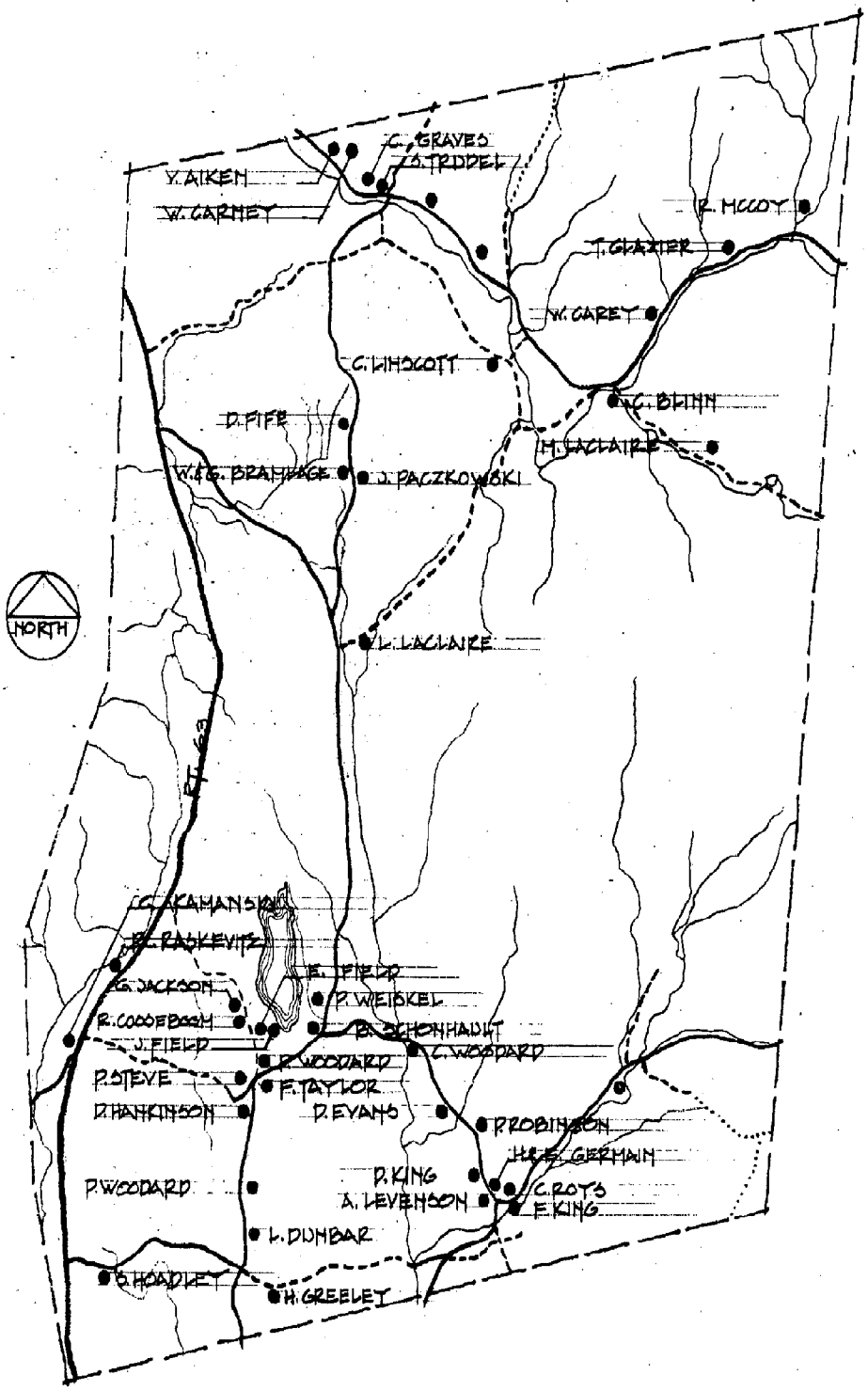
I guess I'd have to say that county thinking wants growth, but growth that's acceptable. One of the good things about growth is that we've got in the county a 8.5% unemployment rate, which is fairly high. Certain pockets such as Greenfield and Montague, the industrialized areas, are running in the 10% category. If we all had secure jobs and were all making good money, you probably could say we don't want any more growth, we're all set. But what are we going to do with these people who aren't set and need a job? One of the ways to get jobs is to get certain types of growth.

There are also certain amenities in life that you can't get around here. I always say there's not a decent delicatessen in the whole of Franklin County, if you want to use that as a criterion for choice.

(What would you like to know from Leverett?)

I'd like to know if they think the region is a legitimate way for doing business, more than anything else. If they'd be cooperative in expanding their decision making process to outside their bounds.

I would like to know what they want to be tomorrow. I don't think I know that. But I would like to see a consensus, and a legitimate consensus. I want the guy that cuts wood up on Rattlesnake Gutter Road to have an equal amount of say and weight in a decision as some guy who's a Ph.D. down at UMass who's making good money. I suppose I'd like to see Leverett sit down and say this is what we're going to be. Let them hash it over in there and then let their neighbors hash it over. And I classify myself as one of their neighbors.



C. GRAVES
S. TRUDEL
V. AIKEN
W. CARNEY
R. MCCOY
T. GLAZIER
W. CAREY
C. LINSCOTT
C. BLINN
D. FIFE
M. LACLAIRE
W. & G. BRAMLAGE
J. PACZKOWSKI
NORTH
L. LACLAIRE
RT. 63
C. KAMANSKI
R. RASKEVITZ
E. FIELD
G. JACKSON
P. WEISKEL
R. COOSEBOOM
B. SCHONHAULT
J. FIELD
C. WOODARD
P. WOODARD
P. STEVE
F. TAYLOR
D. HANKINSON
D. EVANS
P. ROBINSON
H. & E. GERMAIN
D. KING
P. WOODARD
C. ROYS
A. LEVENSON
F. KING
L. DUNBAR
S. HOADLEY
H. GREELEY

profiles

Vernon Aiken was born in Leverett and has lived here all his life, 61 years. He owns 77 acres on North Leverett Road, which he used to farm. He now works at the University of Massachusetts.

Clifford Blinn is a life-long Moore's Corner resident. He is chairman of the Leverett School Committee and the Leverett Historical Society and has been a selectman.

Georgene Bramlage is a botanist at UMass, as well as a housewife and mother. She is secretary of the Conservation Commission. Born and schooled in Ohio, she has also lived in Amherst. The Bramlages reside on 5.5 acres on Cave Hill Road.

William Bramlage, like his wife, teaches at UMass. He is 37, has lived in Leverett nine years, and is secretary of the Planning Board. Previously, he has lived in California, Maryland and Ohio, where he was born.

Robert Brown is an Amherst realtor.

Walter Carey is a lumberman who lives in Moore's Corner.

Mrs. Walter Carey works outside of town, as well as being a housewife.

Pat Conklin, 28, has lived in North Leverett four years. Born in Nebraska, she has lived in New Jersey, Providence, Boston, Winthrop and Belchertown. She helps farm the ten acres she owns and writes for the Amherst Record.

Raymond Cosseboom came here nine years ago to retire. He is minister of the Congregational Church in Leverett Center and owns land on Long Hill Road.

James Cope, 28, is Amherst's town planner. Before moving there, he had lived in Cambridge, Mass; Connecticut, New York and Michigan, his home state.

Loyce Dunbar retired this year at 65, after many years of teaching in the Leverett Elementary School. She owns seven acres on Amherst Road.

David Evans is a selectman, Leverett Civil Defense Director and chairman of the Board of Health. 41 years old, he has lived in Leverett nine years and owns 6.3 acres on Shutesbury Road. He was born in Pennsylvania and has lived in Arizona. He teaches at UMass.

Edward Field, Sr. is a retired locomotive engineer who lives on Long Hill Road. He has lived in Leverett 30 years and owns 100 acres. His family was among the town's first settlers, and he is on the Bicentennial Committee.

Jonathan Field is nine years old and a student at Leverett Elementary School. He has also lived elsewhere in New England.

Linda Field is a student at Leverett Elementary School.

David Fife, who is minister of the North Leverett Baptist Church, was born in England. He has lived here six years and is 32.

William Floge is 62 and has lived in Leverett 13 years. He is pastor of the Moore's Corner Church.

Homer Germain, a carpenter, has lived in East Leverett 40 years. He was born in Somerville.

Elizabeth Adams Germain was born in Leverett. The Germains own 60 acres.

Terry Glazier, 25, runs the Leverett Post Office. She grew up in Leverett.

Clifford Graves was born in 1906 in North Leverett, where he has lived all his life. He was Leverett's first fire chief and was tree warden and roads superintendent for 20 years. He owns 11 acres.

Holly Greeley, who has lived in Leverett all her life, is a student at Leverett Elementary School.

Denzel Hankinson, 58, teaches at UMass. A town resident for 25 years, he has been a Selectman. He owns 102 acres on Amherst Road. He also has lived in New Jersey, Connecticut, Texas, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, where he was born.

Susan Hoadley, nine years old and a student at Leverett Elementary School, has lived here all her life.

Gerald Jackson, owns 130 acres on Route 63, where he is selling house lots.

Constantine Kamansky farms on Long Plain, where he owns 20 acres in Leverett. Although born in Sunderland, he has lived here since he was two years old. He is 63.

Dorothy King, 85 years old, came to Leverett 44 years ago. She has built or restored 21 houses in town. She was born in Connecticut, and has lived in New York and Arizona. She owns 77 acres.

Frances King is a housewife and former teacher who has lived in East Leverett 23 years. She has served on the School Committee and Finance Committee.

Gordon King, 56, teaches Landscape Architecture at UMass. Born in New Jersey, he has lived in West Africa and Michigan. The Kings own 70 acres. He is Town Fire Chief.

Larry LaClaire, who lives on Rattlesnake Gutter Road, is Leverett's Road Superintendent.

Matthew LaClaire, of Dudleyville Road, is twelve years old and a student.

Nick Lenz is a bricklayer and trainer of bonsai, who owns 13.8 acres on North Leverett Road. He is 33 and has lived here six years. Born in Illinois, he has also lived in California, Wisconsin and Germany.

Alice Levenson, 29, is Principal of the Leverett Elementary School. She has lived in East Leverett five years, and before that in Illinois, Virginia, Hawaii, California, New York and Ohio, where she was born and educated.

Charles Linscott owns 38 acres in North Leverett, which he once farmed. He now works in a lumber yard in North Amherst. He has lived here since 1938.

James Lumley is an Amherst realtor.

Rhody McCoy has lived in Moore's Corner about two years, where he owns about 100 acres. He teaches Education at UMass.

Fred Muehle is Franklin County's regional planner.

John Paczkowski has lived on 200 acres on Cave Hill Road for 12 years. He is an electrician.

Nancy Parr lives on North Leverett Road.

Robert Raskevitz, recent Planning Board Chairman and Constable, is a heavy equipment operator. He is 34 and has lived here 11 years, owning 85 acres. Born in Northampton, while in the Navy he also lived in Illinois, Virginia, Rhode Island and Boston. He resides on Long Plain Road.

Peter Robinson is a UMass geologist, aged 41. He has lived on Shutesbury Road ten years and owns 50 acres. He is on the Conservation Commission. Born in New Hampshire, he has also lived in New Zealand, Utah, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Charles Roys teaches physical education in Springfield.

Ursula Roys, his mother, owns about 150 acres in East Leverett, where she resides. She is on the Bicentennial Committee.

Barry Schonhaut, 25, is a film-maker who has lived in Leverett Center for three years. He is from New York.

Joanna Stone, a silversmith, is vice-president of Leverett Craftsmen and Artists, Inc. She is 28 and has lived in North Leverett two years. Born in Washington, D.C., she has also lived in New Hampshire, New York, Michigan and Denmark.

Peter Steve teaches in Greenfield and lives on Depot Road. He is on the Finance Committee.

Fannie Taylor is 90 years old. She has lived in Leverett 79 years and long served as Town Clerk and Treasurer. She was born in Pelham, Mass. Until recently, she owned 40 acres on Amherst Road.

Stephen Trudel has lived here two years and owns two acres in the center of North Leverett. Born in Williamstown, he has also lived in New York and New Jersey. He is 23. He is a town Field Driver.

Portia Weiskel, 31, is a high school teacher and a mother. She has lived in Leverett Center three years. She was born in Berkeley, California, and has lived in Arlington, Belmont, Belchertown, New York, Ohio, New Hampshire and France.

Donald Wise, 42, teaches Geology at UMass. He has lived on five acres on Shutesbury Road for three years. He was born in Pennsylvania and has also lived in Virginia.

Chester Woodard is a retired builder who has lived in Leverett all his 76 years. He is a Town Assessor and has served on the Planning Board and Conservation Commission and as Constable. He owns 109 acres.

Paul Woodard has lived in Leverett all his life, 52 years. He is a school bus contractor and coppersmith. He owns 17 acres on Amherst Road.

Phillip Woodard is head Selectman and a life-long Leverett resident. He owns 23.5 acres and lives on Long Hill Road. He is a carpenter.

William Carney, the interviewer, presently lives in North Leverett, where he continues environmental research. Born in Nebraska, he has also lived in Bermuda, Virginia, Ohio, Hawaii, New Mexico and North Carolina. He has traveled extensively in Europe and worked extensively in the Berkshires. He is 25.

next steps

insight and concensus: a summary of the interviews

Key Phrases Used

"I like Leverett just the way it is right now--with a couple of less people."

"One-horse farms up through here." "Everybody knew everybody." "A country town, where people have room to stretch." "Most everybody's backyard runs into the woods."

"Independent-minded."

"Essentially, a blank town to work with." "An influx of newer people." "Not the scramble."

"They don't even know what Leverett is." "A random public driving by on their way to somewhere else."

"A place to make a profit." "Something to hold on to." "Something to fall back on." "A focus for my travel."

"No one's out in the open." "Developments, no, never." "Ledge." "Slow growth."

"Something in common." "Want the same things we do." "Commonality by recognizing and fostering diversity."

"I don't mean avoid by restriction, but by attraction, perhaps." "I don't think they're interested in money as much as in their way of life here." "Now you're living just the way you live in the city."

"Discontent with their own immediate environment." "Taxes. Tax them out of it." "Intruded upon nature itself." "Don't mean a thing."

"Too complicated." "You sort of see folk looking as though they might be thinking of building there." "I have a great deal to learn from the people."

Key Pattern Perceived

Three social types are recognized in town: the oldtimers; the professionals, mostly professors; the students and communalists. Farming is out; work is elsewhere; the trees are closing in. The ideal house is set well back in the woods: birch for a yard; more contact with nature than people; problems with ledge.

Land is held, large parcels of it, because that way it won't change. 20 acre, 200 acre backyards. It is held for one's protection, one's septic tank, one's retirement, one's children. Nothing of much value grows there, except equity.

Community grows from daily contacts and tangible tasks. The school and the churches help, but the center store was a definite loss. Sometimes the defense of the land in a good zoning battle can help build community. Diversity in the town is appreciated, but perhaps not as much as smallness--which perhaps permits diversity to be appreciated. The facts that Route 63 virtually by-passes the town and that Amherst appears to have overbuilt are reasons for optimism. But growth will probably come.

Contrasts

Leverett people contrast the country against the city, and the contrast has various versions: nature versus people, individual lots versus tract developments, bedroom versus work, life-style versus profit, seclusion versus services, rootedness versus mobility.

They prize the paradox that each new homebuilder wishes to be the last in Leverett. They contrast the integrity of the individual and his or her right

to alter land with the right of the town to preserve the integrity of the environment. They contrast the means of preserving the quality of life here with the morality of sharing that quality with more people.

And they contrast nice versus too nice, shying from the publicity and rigidity which might adhere to too good a place.

Analogies

The University of Massachusetts represents urban pressure. Sunderland apartment complexes and Hadley strip development embody sprawl and land ruination. In Leverett, Depot Road demonstrates the effects of Chapter 90 widening and straightening. Former farms and mills symbolize the involvement of people with the local landscape. Nature, history or beauty are epitomized by Rattlesnake Gutter, the Brushy Mountain cellar holes, Roaring Brook, Leverett Pond, the Amherst Road Maples, the fields on Cave Hill, and the villages of Leverett Center and North Leverett.

Attitudes

In dealing with land, Leverett people practice a basic conservatism, and in dealing with each other, a basic agreeableness.

Insight and Consensus

Such ways of thinking about Leverett--such key phrases, patterns, paradoxes, analogies, points of reference, attitudes and tones--are the fundamental tools townspeople use to manage their environment. These are perceptual tools; they organize places in people's minds. This mental management is basic to all other environmental management; people act the way they think.

In a more direct and important sense, these tools extract the land's chief resource: satisfaction. For while the environment fulfills people's physical needs, it also supplies the kind of spiritual energy which stems from effective involvement with something larger than oneself.

The diversity of viewpoint recorded in these interviews gives all the people of Leverett a chance to expand their personal appreciation of this place by expanding their ways of looking at it. At the same time, the interviews show that many townspeople share many ideas about what makes Leverett a satisfying place. As more people read the interviews, this consensus will grow.

Backed by a strong consensus, townspeople can further increase their involvement in Leverett's landscape by effective public action to preserve the values they perceive there.

action: the committees

By March, 1973, most of the interviews were complete. The Planning Board and Conservation Commission now considered how to move from consensus to concerted action. The two groups decided to delve further into the areas of agreement revealed by the interviews, in order to frame particular environmental proposals.

The boards established an ad hoc Plan Committee to set up and coordinate special committees on Water Resources, Roads and Access, Educational Resources, and Rural Resources. The Historical Commission, Bicentennial Community Planning Committee and Leverett Pond group also agreed to contribute work to the town's planning process.

The Plan Committee, chaired by Hugh and Lloyd Kirley and assisted by William Carney, included the chairmen of the special committees and representatives from the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Bicentennial Committee and Selectmen. This group met twice in early April to discuss Leverett's character. Their ideas were presented to the fifty committee volunteers in the form of a slide show. By mid-May, the committee chairmen reported preliminary findings to the Plan Committee. These reports were refined over the summer and filed with the Conservation Commission.

The committees recommended two dozen specific measures to improve Leverett's environment. Most of these suggestions were geared to tie into the work of an existing town board. The proposed actions are

aimed not only at immediate results. Water, roads, trails, educational and historical sites, and rural land uses are so extensive throughout Leverett's landscape that the proper management of any one of them calls for attention to the whole environment--and assures that environment of a basic structure.

Major Recommendations

1). That the Health Board submit the following article to Town Meeting:

To see if the town will vote to raise and appropriate or transfer from available funds, a sum of $1,000 to the Board of Health to conduct a hydrological survey of certain portions of the town containing large quantities of ground water in order to determine the amounts, sources and susceptibility to pollution of such water supplies and to recommend ways of protecting the town's ground water resource from potential over-use or contamination.

2). That the Conservation Commission complete a wetlands map of Leverett.

3). That the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Health Board compile and distribute to potential land buyers in Leverett, a flyer explaining the legal and natural constraints on building within the town.

4). That the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Health Board, through their powers of acquisition and regulation, pay particular attention to preserving the purity and scenic quality of Roaring Brook along Shutesbury Road, of the Sawmill River along North Leverett Road, of the stream along Jackson Hill Road, and of Long Plain Brook along Route 63.

5). That the Conservation Commission continue to encourage the idea of a Leverett beef grazing association.

6). That the Conservation Commission budget approximately $200 to cover publication costs of a directory to the natural, agricultural, technological and human resources available within Leverett, or other materials relating to planning and resource education. And that the Commission continue to seek contributions from the school for such materials.

7). That the Leverett school staff continue to incorporate environmental concepts and approaches especially the use of local sites and residents, into its curriculum wherever they prove effective.

8). That Leverett school children work with the Conservation Commission, the Selectmen and other groups to see that the town meets their needs for play space and transportation, perhaps in part by helping children lay out a bike trail from the school to the center of town.

9). That the School Committee make the school building and grounds more accessible to teenagers and adults, perhaps by providing supervision or custodial services for evening and summer use.

10). That the town encourage a coffee shop/snack bar concession to provide an informal Leverett meeting place.

11). That the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Historical Commission jointly submit the following article to Town Meeting:

To see if the town will vote to designate all roads within the town of Leverett, excepting State Highway Route 63, to be scenic roads pursuant to Chapter 40, Section 15C of the General Laws of Massachusetts, as follows:

'After a road has been designated as a scenic road any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done with respect there to shall not involve or include the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, except with the prior written consent of the planning board. . . after a public hearing. . .'

12). That the Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Historical Commission jointly submit the following article to Town Meeting:

To see if the town will vote to accept the following by-law:

No public way or portion of any public way within the town of Leverett which is unpaved at the time of the adoption of this by-law shall be paved at any future time except upon town meeting vote.

13). That the town shall maintain unpaved roads in the best condition possible to reduce traffic hazards and the subsequent need for paving.

14). That representatives of the Selectmen, Planning Board, Conservation Commission and Historical Commission attend upcoming hearings on proposed standards for rural roads in order to understand their potential impact on the town's environmental character, and voice objections if deemed necessary.

15). That the Planning Board examine the desirability of requiring grassed areas, tree planting and supervised pole placement under the town's Subdivision Control Regulations.

16). That the Planning Board examine the junctions of Route 63 with Juggler Meadow Road, Depot Road, Montague Road and Jackson Hill Road to contemplate zoning measures should rapid growth ensue at these spots.

17). That the Conservation Commission establish and administer a tree maintenance fund.

18). That the Conservation Commission acquire key vantage points along roadsides to protect scenic views from the incursion of buildings.

19). That the Conservation Commission immediately acquire the available lot at the foot of Rattlesnake Gutter, allowing citizens to park legally while traversing the Gutter, and continue to seek additional lands on either side of the Gutter for preservation.

20). That the Conservation Commission continue investigations concerning the legal status of 'abandoned' and 'discontinued' roads in Leverett and that such records as may exist be chronicled.

21). That the inventory of Leverett historical sites prepared by the Historical Commission be consulted by the Planning Board and Selectmen in issuing building permits or decisions which may otherwise alter Leverett's landscape.

22). That the Historical Commission consider establishing an historical district in the village of North Leverett, as well as Leverett Center.

23). That the town consider ways to provide swimming and ice skating in Leverett as soon as possible.

24). That individual landowners consider bicentennial land gifts which would provide a legacy of open space to future generations.

continuance: town meeting proposals

At the 1974 annual Town Meeting, February 16th, Leverett's planning process will be expanded to include the whole town. Citizens will act on several warrant articles drafted by the sub-committees of the Plan Committee--for example, whether or not to classify Leverett's roads as scenic and to authorize a survey of certain groundwaters in the town. But beyond such specifics, voters will be asked to take a stand on the broad issues posed to the town by a changing environment and to endorse a continuing effort to cope with that change.

On the warrant will be a Statement of Leverett Goals, which summarizes feelings about the town's environment expressed by the one hundred residents who have contributed their thoughts and energies to this report. To back up this consensus, a second article will call upon the town to establish a permanent Goals Committee. This group would carry on the work of this year's Plan Committee by seeking ways to further town goals through specific town actions and by expanding and revising the goals as necessary.

The past year has demonstrated a planning process which can be applied in future years for as long as Leverett wants to guide the changes occurring in its landscape. In broad terms, this process consists of two phases: articulation and action. This year, intensive interviewing helped articulate what the town wanted, and special committees followed up on this consensus with specific proposals. In the future,

the Statement of Leverett Goals would provide the town with a formal articulation of its objectives, while an on-going Goals Committee would continue to seek public action to accomplish these objectives.

Function of a Goals Statement

The Statement of Leverett Goals poses some basic assumptions about the town's character, mainly in regard to open space and settlement patterns. And it points out which parts of this character need attention if the town is to control its future shape.

The statement grew out of the early interviews with townspeople and three autumn meetings of the Plan Committee. Since the ideas it contains are so vital to Leverett's future, they were reviewed with the full Conservation Commission and Planning Board, the Selectmen, and a joint meeting of all town boards.

The goals are in the format of a "policy plan" or outline of overall objectives which the town hopes to further in all its public actions. This format is now used in many planning efforts, including the Franklin County Regional Plan. Perhaps its chief advantage over a traditional "master plan" is that a Goals Statement is brief and broad enough to be adopted by Town Meeting vote, thus involving everyone in crystalizing what the town wants.

Another advantage is that the Goals do not lock town boards into a particular course of action, but rather grant them the flexibility to respond to changing opportunities and pressures, working these particulars into long-range patterns. The Goals can back up a board's stand on given issues and provide a checklist of considerations which should affect every decision the board makes.

PROPOSED STATEMENT OF LEVERETT GOALS

To see if the town will vote to accept the following resolution, or act otherwise thereon:

Recognizing that pressures of change and population within the Connecticut Valley will continue to affect Leverett, and asserting the town's desire to shape its own future, the people of Leverett agree that all public action in the town shall seek to preserve and enhance certain values held in common and residing in the shared experience of this environment.

Specifically, recognizing that much of the town's character is due to a rural landscape, which inspires a sense of freedom and acquaintance with the earth, and which permits opportunities for a diversity of employment and passive recreation within the town, it shall be the goal of public policy in Leverett:

--to promote the stewardship of agricultural, timber, recreational and other renewable natural resources;

--to encourage the preservation of rural roadside landscapes;

--to conserve areas of backland, especially mountain flanks, for open land uses such as watershed protection, wildlife production, forestry, recreation and visual amenity;

--to protect the town's streams, wetlands, and subsurface waters from pollution;

--to foster the preservation of the town's historical resources and the use of its educational potential.

Further recognizing that much of the town's character relies on the smallness and diversity of its population, which allow people the chance for both isolation and community interaction, it shall be the goal of public policy in Leverett:

--to maintain a range of earning levels and housing types in town;

--to insure that all building conforms to the natural constraints of the terrain, especially those affecting water supply and waste disposal;

--to continue the town's traditions of small rural roads and hamlets;

--to further the town's visual quality;

--to foster individual involvement in the school, the town government, and other institutions which in turn foster a feeling of identity with the town.

PROPOSED LEVERETT GOALS COMMITTEE

To see if the town will vote to establish a permanent Goals Committee, which would function in lieu of a written town plan:

--to administer, and when necessary refine and revise the town's Statement of Goals;

--to provide a continuing public forum for defining Leverett's overall interests and long-range aims;

--to place the activities of the individual town agencies and the effects of particular events within the perspective of the town's overall interests and long-range aims, the functions of other agencies, and the pressures of the future;

--to initiate studies and suggestions and encourage action on specific improvements in Leverett.

Such Goals Committee is to consist of at least nine members at large, one of whom would serve as chairman and one as secretary, and of the chairmen or representatives of the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Health Board, Finance Committee, School Committee, Board of Appeals, and Board of Assessors. In 1974, the nine members at large are to be appointed by the Selectmen, three for one year terms, three for two year terms, and three for three year terms; thereafter, three members are to be elected at each annual town meeting, to serve three year terms. Such Committee is to meet at least quarterly and be enabled to appoint ad hoc subcommittees to assist its work.

A number of specific means might be employed to accomplish each goal. These include land acquisition; zoning; and regulatory powers over wetlands, septic systems, scenic roads, and historical districts. It should be noted that most of these measures require additional deliberation and approval, either by Town Meeting or individual boards. The Goals Statement is simply meant to stimulate their use.

Function of a Goals Committee

The Goals Committee would work to make Leverett's Statement of Goals an effective point of reference in the real life of the community.

It would collect data on the natural, technological, legal and social frameworks within which the town operates, and insert this information into the local decision-making process. It would propose specific environmental improvement projects and actions, and follow through on them. It would place the daily decisions of separate boards and individuals within the perspective of the town's overall interest and long-range aims. It would encourage thought and discussion about the town's goals, and revise and refine those goals as necessary.

The group would consist of between fifteen and twenty members, divided into a steering component and an advisory component. The steering members would be primarily people not otherwise connected with town government; they would therefore have the time and detachment needed to creatively assess the current means and long-term ends of the town and to advocate particular measures. They would be elected at Town Meeting, would include the committee's chairman and secretary, and would meet as often as the committee's work required.

The advisory members would be the chairmen or representatives from various other boards in town; they would bring to the committee their knowledge and experience of town government and provide a direct link between the committee's deliberations and actual public actions.

The full Goals Committee would meet at least quarterly, and everyone interested would be encouraged to attend. Some of the particular projects the group might undertake over the next year include:

--hosting a series of neighborhood meetings around the town to get feedback on Leverett's Statement of Goals and discuss how they could be achieved in each neighborhood landscape;

--working with the Planning Board to review Leverett's zoning by-laws in light of the Goals Statement, especially its portions on settlement patterns;

--working with the Conservation Commission and Bicentennial Committee for land gifts and acquisitions which would further the town's Goals regarding open space patterns;

--developing a fiscal component to the Goals Statement;

--following up on proposals for a Leverett beef grazing association, a published inventory of human resources in the town, and other work of this year's committees.

People and Process

Plans sit on office shelves, untouched, because their contents are static. The very reason they were written--the changability of the landscape--works against their effectiveness. Yet change must be dealt with if the future environment it creates is to satisfy basic human needs like health, beauty, efficiency and economy. The problem is to find a means of managing landscapes which is as dynamic as the change occuring there.

To deal with change, there must be a clear idea of what is valued in a place and constant attention to conditions which affect what is valued, either positively or negatively. The surest source of value in an essentially residential landscape is the people who live there. They are, moreover, in the best position to watch what is happening around them.

One way to deal with change, then, is to frame for people a process which helps them to articulate the values they find in a place, to keep abreast of the conditions fostering or threatening those values, and finally to do what they can to determine the conditions and thus increase the values. It is such a dynamic and on-going process that Leverett has framed for itself this year.

Ultimately, it may be that what's most valuable in a place is precisely this kind of involvement. It is the interaction of people and place that produces environment. Far from dispersing them, change may well increase the values of New England's landscape by increasing people's creative involvement with their localities. Certainly, New England's pioneers would have felt that way about change as they first cleared, ploughed and humanized this environment.

People and process have been the touchstones of Leverett's planning effort to date. The town can continue this effort by endorsing a Statement of Leverett Goals and establishing a permanent Goals Committee.

end notes

notes on the interview technique

In 1969 the Leverett Planning Board conducted a town-wide survey on growth and planning, population density, business and industry, roads, recreation, and conservation. One hundred twenty-two questionaires were returned. They revealed widespread support of planning and conservation measures and general agreement that Leverett's rural character is its most valuable asset. The strength of the survey was that it reached everyone in town, but due to this fact, it necessarily lacked detail.

The interviews conducted in 1973 tried to give substance to the overall feelings and statistical break-downs provided by the earlier survey. Mainly, the interviews provide a more detailed account of how people think about their environment. And by tying this thought to particular landscapes and individuals, the interviews open the way to greater environmental perception and action in Leverett.

About 40 interviews were conducted, involving almost 60 people. Of these people, roughly 40 agreed to have their comments published. This represents less than five percent of Leverett's 1,005 inhabitants (1970 census), and about ten percent of the town's households (380).

Thirteen of these people were from Leverett Center; seven each from East Leverett and North Leverett; three each from Moore's Corner and Route 63; and three from outside of town.

Of Leverett residents interviewed, seventeen were large landowners with holdings of more than ten

acres a piece and a thousand acres collectively. Ten people interviewed owned house lots of less than ten acres, and three residents owned no land in Leverett.

Fifteen of the residents were public figures, including town officials and employees, school staff, ministers and spokesmen for organizations.

A predominance of large landowners and public figures is apparent in these statistics. With only a limited amount of time to be spent interviewing, and a major interest in those perceptions which might lead to actions affecting the town's future landscape, these two groups seemed the logical sources. Their decisions can influence the landscape most directly, and their perceptions were therefore of immediate interest.

Nonetheless, the impulse to expand perception and to portray and perhaps help produce as democratic a landscape as possible, led to a real effort to represent a range of viewpoints.

From the time of the interviews to the time of publication, another crucial process of selection took place as hours of tape and a ream of transcript were gleaned for significant statement. The challenge of this process--and it is the challenge of much environmental perception--was to avoid neglecting the ordinary, and attempt instead to bring out its significance. If the interviews have met this challenge they should result in rich reading and enriched participation in Leverett's landscape.

notes on the planning philosophy behind the interviews

The ecological principle that the landscape is interconnected can be translated into the political premise that the landscape is shared. Water, air, roads, visual quality, a sense of history--these are aspects of the environment which cannot be fully contained nor properly managed within individual property lines. Yet they are aspects which any land-use decision ultimately affects. This connectedness adds to the satisfaction possible from private decisions by amplifying their significance. It also adds to the need for public tools which assure shape and structure to the landscape.

The interviews approach ecological interconnection through language, the basis of human interconnection. Language embodies certain perceptual tools which, from an ecological perspective, are simply adaptations: they enable people to relate to their surroundings. Since language is also the way people relate to people, from a political perspective it is the initial tool of community interaction.

In approaching the environment through this medium, the interviews attempt not only to marshall and sharpen the ways in which individuals relate to this landscape, but to lay the ground work for the concerted involvement of the whole town with its environment. The thrust is to replicate ecological interconnection with political consensus: a consensus, it should be noted, that like the soundest ecosystem, is most dynamic when most diverse.

credits

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