

NEWS FEATURE

CASTINE

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First 'affordable housing' unit in Castine nears completion

by Anne Berleant

While popular wisdom advises adding 50 percent to any contractor estimate for construction work, the same may be true from a builder's perspective as to when a project will finish.

Doug Koos, approved in 2014 to build an eight-building, 16-unit subdivision within the Hancock Village Mobile Home Park on The Shore Road, is near completing the first house. The three units inside will be rented as affordable housing, as defined by ordinance, or not more than about \$1,400 per month.

"This is affordable housing at the level Castine needs [and supports]," Koos said.

Designed by architect Eric Chase of Brooksville, the new building rises three stories, including two garage bays (one which Koos will use for storage). Two 1,600 square foot, three-bedroom apartments and one one-bedroom unit each have a separate entrance, and the larger apartments have 3.5 bathrooms. Heat, water and sewer will be included under lease agreements.

Koos plans seven more, but these will be modular. "It's a simpler process," he said.

In 2013, the town voted to approve a contract zone for the subdivision, allowing a density of 12,000 square feet per building on 4.5 acres, with half of the 16 rental units required to be affordable housing.

Koos' is invested in providing housing to working families in Castine, he said. He currently rents about 20 mobile homes in his 40-acre park.

"I've owned this property 30 years. I've watched people grow up here," he said. "The biggest problem [in Castine] is quality of housing. This is a step."

Castine has discussed affordable housing for years but, as a town, has not agreed on land use changes to help make it happen. Rather it has been up to individuals, such as Koos and Pedric and Johanna Sweet, who built a one-family, modular home on-neck to rent to a working family in 2016.

"We have a vested interest in this community," Koos said. "Castine's high value of real estate is a double-edged sword. It has had a negative impact of making it harder for new families to settle here."

Affordable housing in Castine is defined, by ordinance, as costing not more than 30 percent annually of 125 percent of the Hancock County median income, or about \$1,400 per month. Koos said he would be renting "below the peak" rent permitted.

"The need for workforce-type housing is still acute," Town Manager James Goodson said. "If Doug were to build out all 16 units, I still think there would be a need."

Goodson said that contract or "spot" zoning is the best way to bring affordable housing to Castine.



The back and side view of the three-unit building, which should be finished in January.

Photo by Anne Berleant

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“Anyone who comes to the town with a well-thought plan consistent with our land use goals would get a fair shake,” he said.

Koos noted his thanks to the “trust and support of the town’s people in this development,” and to architect Chase and Machias Savings Bank.

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GALLERY — Hancock Village Square



The living room and kitchen area looks out on a rural setting.

Photo by Anne Berleant



The back and side view of the three-unit building, which should be finished in January.

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