

VERMONT'S VOICE

AGRICULTURE

GOVERNMENT

NATURAL BEAUTY

Options for Landowners

By Bruce Ellarson

Vermont Township is blessed with thousands of acres of agricultural fields and pastures, woodlands, wetlands and prairie remnants. Many of us moved here to be closer to the farms, forests and other natural lands and to have a piece of property to enjoy year-round. What we often don't consider when we buy land is what we will do with it when our name is on the deed.

I began to realize when the first tax bill arrived that this luxury of property ownership is quite expensive. Fortunately there are ways to defray some of the costs of owning rural land. Some land is very desirable for crop or pasture land and can be rented out as such to area farmers. The state has a program that is known as the Managed Forest Law or MFL and is administered by the Department of Natural Resources. Another program is the Conservation Reserve Program or CRP. It is administered by the County Land Conservation Department and is devoted to prevention of erosion in cropland and wetlands. Timber harvests can be arranged with logging companies that operate in the area. I am not an expert on any of these options but believe each has its place depending on your property and needs.

MFL allows property owners to manage their woodlands for a crop of trees. There is a minimum enrollment of 10 acres. In return for reduced taxes the property owner is required to perform approved forestry management practices on their woods. These may include things like cutting poor quality trees to allow more valuable trees to grow, planting trees, and removing harmful invasive plant species. The program also limits landowner options with what they can do with the enrolled parcel. The landowner is also required to conduct timber harvests within a predetermined timeframe and split a portion of the earnings with the state. To learn more about MFL contact the Dane County DNR forester.

CRP is a federally funded program that helps owners of cropland and wetlands that tend to erode badly by providing grants as incentives to not hold the land in agriculture or pasturage. These grants vary with each piece of property and from year to year. They also carry restrictions on what can be done with the property such as when control mowing can be done and ensuring that the mowed fields are not harvested as forage. To learn more about this program contact the Dane County Conservation Agent.

Timber harvests are a source of income for some properties. The presence of trees does not mean that they are valuable. They need to be the right species, size and shape to bring the high prices that are possible. Sometimes, in order to grow valuable trees, the timber of lower quality must be cut first. There may be little or no profit in this preliminary cutting. The prices of lumber vary with the market demand. For instance, red oak was a very valuable wood for many years and just recently we've seen the value of it drop substantially and be replaced with a high demand for walnut and cherry. I strongly recommend that anyone considering a timber harvest contact a consulting forester before signing a contract with a logging company.

Farming has been in the town far longer than anyone reading this and is one main of the reasons that Vermont is as beautiful and wonderful a place to live as it is. Many of us own land that is vital to the remaining farms in and around the Township. With all the pressures on the dairy and livestock industry the local farmers need to be able to farm land close by to save on time and fuel. Take the time to meet your farming neighbors. They are knowledgeable about the land and the town and may possibly be interested in renting some of your property.

Owning rural land is a joy and a privilege and is getting more expensive. These are by no means all the options we have as income potential and tax savings. You should not expect to go into any of these options and make a bundle of cash but with careful consideration of what your land management goals are you may be able to ease the financial burden of owning rural land.

DID YOU KNOW?

About 53% of the residents of the Town of Vermont responded to the Comprehensive Planning survey that was mailed out.

VERMONT'S VOICE

Artist In The Woods

By Johanna Solms

As we drive slowly along the ridge top before dipping down into the autumnal woods, we see a row of silos—ceramic silos, in subtle colors, carefully placed among the spruce trees. It's our first look at Don Hunt's art.

Don greets us with clay on his hands, leading us directly into his studio for a quick tour, and then works at his potter's wheel while he talks. He is above all a master teacher, engaging and challenging listeners as he ranges over topics from aesthetics to faith to wood.

Don and his colleague, Randy Becker, built the studio they share, with the help of students, in order to have a place to do Raku, salt and soda firing—traditional wood firing techniques. Don favors wood firing both for its aesthetics and for its economics. Ash from different types of woods produces different effects, as do different types of kilns. A single firing uses four (yes, four!) cords of wood to maintain temperatures well over 1,000 degrees for up to 48 hours. The studio location is ideal—Harold Norslein runs a wood business right at the bottom of the hill.

Don “retired” in 2002 after 34 years teaching sculpture and ceramics at West High School in Madison. Teaching, commuting, raising a family, and building and maintaining a home in the country would keep most of us busy enough. Don's amazing energy has sustained an astonishing number of other undertakings.

Don was the leading advocate for Path of Voices, an anti-violence installation by sculptor and West High graduate Bradley McCallum at four Madison high schools, funded by \$400,000 in donations. All four high schools in Madison have art galleries, thanks to Don's leadership. At West High, Don was a cofounder of Fine Arts Week. He served on the Madison Metropolitan School District Visual Arts Standards Committee. He was honored as Art Educator of the Year by the Wisconsin Art Education Association, and received the UW-Madison distinguished teacher of the year award and the Madison School District's Distinguished Service Award and Kohl Fellowship.

The first land Don bought in Vermont was the old Doc Foster Farm, across Moen Valley Road, which he bought from the Brabenders. The saltbox house Don designed and built still stands on that property. In 1977, he bought 40 acres from Bob and Carol Zander and began another life-long project, a winged house built into the steep hillside, overlooking a secluded, heavily wooded little valley. Don and architect Ed Linville worked on the design for 3 years; it took 6 years to build. Wrightsonian tradition and Don's Bauhaus training around form and function are evident. Sod grows on the roof, and weathered cedar decks extend the indoor spaces. The house is long and low, built before the rules about cliffs; all the windows face south to take advantage of the sun. It's designed in a circle, with the kitchen as the center.

The house is filled with delightful details, each a story in itself. Other artists have contributed their work, like the hand-carved stair handrails. Tom Cowan taught Don to lay the local limestone, quarried over on Sutcliffe. Floors and doors are recycled. Bricks from the old trolley lines. Salt glazed bricks from the old rail yards. Bricks from Door County that were used as the ballast for ships. A log wall from Idaho. Marble from the West High boy's bathroom remodel. Floors from the old Zor shrine apartment. Roll-top cupboard doors from Lincoln School. The huge glass windows, carefully used to “bring the outside in and the inside out,” are all “misfits.”

As our conversation ends, I remark that many artists live in Vermont Township. “The hills just bring us together...Artists are looking for something that is not superficial...This keeps us grounded...I couldn't imagine living any other place.” Hear, hear.

Note: You can see Don's work at Jura Silverman Gallery in Spring Green.

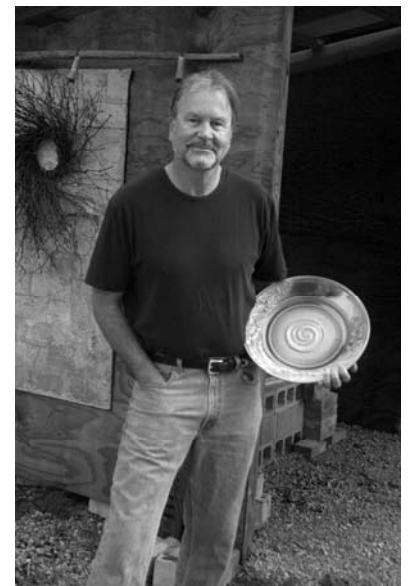


Photo by David Anderson

VERMONT'S VOICE

THE VERMONT GALLOPERS

Bill Hanson

The Vermont Gallopers, a 4H group that my wife started, has been a hit with the local teenagers. My wife, Jane, has rescued many horses that were no longer wanted and the group now has 31 horses with which to work. The Gallopers has 11 members; they learn to take care of, saddle, ride, and train horses. They have taken over our old granary and made it into a clubhouse with refrigerator, microwave, beds and couches donated by parents. Earlier this year (in 10-degree weather,) several girls slept in the barn to watch the mares about to foal. After a week of sleeping on hay, the girls were wisely dragged home by their parents. We had four baby horses that the girls halter trained. The Gallopers gave carriage and wagon rides during Black Earth Field Days with suggested donations accepted for rescue horse care.



A note about horse rescue: Just like dogs and cats, there are far too many horses in the U.S. Every year, tens of thousands of horses are sold for slaughter, to be eaten by European and Japanese diners. Some of these horses are old, but most are young and vigorous. Last year, the Waverly auction featured over 100 5-month old Belgian and Percheron weanlings brought to auction en route to Quebec. If they were not sold at auction for at least \$175, they were loaded back on the meat truck with the other slaughter horses. These babies were the byproduct of Premarin farms where pregnant mare urine is collected to produce a hormone treatment pill for menopausal women. These mares are confined to small stalls for their entire pregnancy and the foals produced have nowhere to go. Most women who use Premarin are unaware of the misery caused by their consumption and that a vegetable byproduct is used to make equally effective pills.

Horses that do not sell for a sufficient amount of money can be, and too frequently are, sent to the meat pen. Of our 34 horses, 13 were destined for the meat pen. Each of our horses receives annual vaccinations as well as deworming and foot care several times a year. It is for this care that the Vermont Gallopers are raising funds.

Squash Flan By Barbara Perkins

1 small butternut squash (about 1 pound)
3 large eggs
2 cups evaporated milk
1/8 tsp. Salt

3/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup firmly packed dark brown sugar
1/2 tsp vanilla
1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated sweet, dark chocolate

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees
2. Cut squash in half length wise; discard the seeds and membrane. Place squash halves, cut side down, in a baking dish. Bake at 350 for 45 minutes or until tender. Scoop squash into food processor (or blender); process until pureed. Set 3/4 cup puree aside. Reserve remaining squash for another use.
3. Place sugar in a small heavy saucepan over medium-high heat; cook until sugar dissolves, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium; continue cooking until golden, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to medium; continue cooking until golden, stirring frequently. Immediately pour into an 8-inch round pan, tipping quickly until caramelized sugar coats bottom of cake pan.
4. Place eggs in a large bowl; stir with a whisk. Stir in brown sugar. Add milk, vanilla and salt; stir well. Add 3/4 cup pureed squash; stir until will blended.
5. Pour into prepared pan. Place pan in a shallow roasting pan; add hot water to roasting pan to a depth of 1 inch. Bake at 350 for 50 minutes or until a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. Remove cake pan from water; let cool completely on a wire rack. Cover surface of flan with plastic wrap; chill 8 hours.
6. Loosen edges of flan with a knife or rubber spatula. Place a large plate upside down on top of cake pan, invert flan onto plate. Drizzle any remaining syrup over flan. Cut into wedges, place on dessert plates. Top with grated chocolate.

VERMONT'S VOICE

How to reach us:

Editor: Lisa Orman, 9504 Union Valley Road; 767-1102, office; 767-4930, home; 767-1103, fax; lisa@kidstuffpr.com, e-mail
Committee: Earl Brandt: 4670 Cedar Hill Lane; 767-3030; esranch@merr.com
Ann Albert, 3963 Ryan Road, 767-3135; malbert@merr.com

Mission Statement: It is the mission of Vermont's Voice to provide information about our town and articles of interest to the residents of our town in order to promote a sense of community, encourage participation in and understanding of town government, and improve communication among residents. Vermont's Voice is a volunteer, citizen-run publication that encourages and depends on citizen participation in providing information, articles, or suggestions for articles, photos, criticism, and help with mailings. The cost of printing and postage is included in the town budget. Vermont's Voice is not the official voice or viewpoint of the town government.

Look for this issue of the Vermont Voice on the Vermont Web Page! Check it out at <http://www.vermonttown.com>.

Town Officials

Chair Steve Cowan 767-4616
Supervisor #1 Bill Hanson 767-5050
Supervisor #2 Dave Dybdahl 767-3674
Supervisor #3 Mark Sherven 437-3732
Supervisor #4 Barb Grenlie 437-5856
Town Clerk Marc Robertson 767-2457
Town Treasurer Sarah Danz 767-6017

Town Patrolman Dave Haugen 767-3313
Building Inspector Jim Ludolph 767-2272

Don McKay 437-4071
David Stanfield 767-3449
Mark Sherven 437-3732

Plan Commission Members

Chair Barb Grenlie 437-5856
Secretary Marian Swoboda 767-2357
Jim Elleson 767-3553
Marc Robertson 437-3762

Fire Wardens
Frank Hinze 767-3827
Fern Frame 767-3915

Fall 2005

VERMONT'S VOICE

AGRICULTURE GOVERNMENT NATURAL BEAUTY

4670 Cedar Hill Lane
Black Earth, WI 53515

PRESORTED
STANDARD
Permit #5
Black Earth
WI 53515

Address Service
Requested

Designed and edited by

KidStuff
PUBLIC RELATIONS