

Plan Revisions Suggested by Kennebunkport Residents and Town Officials

Comment
<p data-bbox="203 432 1146 464">Dear members of the Growth Planning Committee and staff, including Werner Gilliam,</p> <p data-bbox="203 495 1396 590">You've done a remarkable job assembling the Draft 2030 Comprehensive Plan. These comments concern two subjects: a zone change to permit food trucks and farmers market at the 30 North Street parking lot and clarification of several statements in the Historic Resources Section.</p> <p data-bbox="203 621 1122 653">FOOD TRUCKS AND FARMER'S MARKET AT the 30 NORTH STREET PARKING LOT</p> <p data-bbox="203 684 1344 747">It is discouraging that the Growth Planning Committee would recommend a zone change for any reason, especially for such a frivolous perceived need: food trucks and a farmer's market.</p> <p data-bbox="203 779 1328 842">These uses could only happen at your recommended location if the zoning ordinance is revised to allow commercial uses in a residential zone.</p> <p data-bbox="203 873 1328 905">Do you propose creating a spot zone for the specific property or for the entire Village Residential Zone?</p> <p data-bbox="203 936 1304 968">Does this signal a long-range plan to expand the commercial district into a residential neighborhood?</p> <p data-bbox="203 999 1438 1094">The North Street parking lot is located within the Village Residential Zone. It is about a half mile from the Dock Square commercial zone. The boundaries of the Dock Square zone include the south side of Temple Street. From the north side of Temple Street going up North Street is all Village Residential Zone.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1125 1450 1220">This residential area is part of the Village National Register Historic District, one of two National Register Historic Districts in Kennebunkport. As the author of the Historic Resources Section of the Draft 2030 Comprehensive Plan so painstakingly points out, this area is steeped in architectural resources.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1251 1451 1388">The North Street parking lot was the subject of a lawsuit 20 years ago. The resident property owners, about 50 of us, prevailed in court to overturn a Planning Board decision permitting commercial uses contained in an application submitted by the Town. This was a very contentious period for the community. It's hard to believe that the GPC wants to revive this issue by once again proposing commercial uses in this location.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1419 1438 1482">There are many other commercially-zoned locations in Kennebunkport that are more appropriate for food trucks and a farmer's market, none of which would require a radical zoning change from residential to commercial.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1514 1446 1577">The Dock Square Parking Lot or Cape Porpoise commercial area, for example, are the best locations for both food trucks and a farmer's market. An area within either square would support a food truck.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1608 1446 1745">It should not be long before Alisons and Hurricane can remove their tents from the parking spaces that the Town allowed be used for their patrons. Those parking spaces are the best location where food trucks and a farmer's market can set up. Residents are allowed to park in the municipal lot for free for either an hour or half hour. There is a public restroom nearby, something that the North Street site lacks.</p> <p data-bbox="203 1776 1433 1892">In my opinion, the suggestion that the land use ordinance be changed for a commercial use in the Village Residential Zone is an insult to property tax payers. It amounts to an assault on the quality of life of residents in the neighborhood around the North Street parking lot, an anomaly within this residential zone that should never have been permitted to be built in the first place.</p>

Why would the Growth Planning Committee open this can of worms over such a trivial perceived need?

Any suggestion to introduce commercial uses within the residential zone within the village is a serious mistake. In my opinion, it rises to the level of a failure in oversight of one of the Town's most valuable resources, residential property, which carries most of the property tax burden. This move will undermine property values. To many people, our homes are our most valuable financial resource.

If your goal is to encourage the sale of locally produced food, this can be addressed by removing provisions in the zoning ordinance that interfere with farm stands. Wasn't this taken care of 20 years ago?

If you talk with farm stand owners you might find out that having a farm stand on their property is a much better use of their time than spending a day packing their products and travelling to and from a farmer's market.

It isn't so easy to set up and successfully operate farmer's markets. Kennebunk has been able to do this successfully. There's no need to duplicate this in Kennebunkport.

HISTORIC RESOURCES SECTION

There are a couple of typos or areas needing clarification:

Page 15. The sentence begins, "For a town of its size...a usually large number" of homes. Should this be 'unusually' rather than 'usually'? There are an unusually large number of homes, etc.

Page 14. Under the heading 'Local District,' should the term 'exterior' be inserted? This was the way the concept was presented earlier, that a local preservation ordinance concerns exterior changes to properties.

Page 47. At one time there was a three-ring binder at the Kennebunkport Historical Society that contained descriptions of the properties in the Village Historic District with photographs. It may be that the author is unaware of this or the binder may have been lost.

Page 47, this seems to recommend that the Town consider the relatively small expense of documenting historic properties outside the 2 existing National Register Districts. That is something that should be endorsed by the GPC. There are school houses all over town, for example, that deserve recognition as historic structures.

I did not see a statement that the GPC recommends that no effort be made to establish a local historic preservation ordinance. I am not advocating one way or another on that topic. Is your position mentioned? Do you mean to say that you suggest that the town not initiate this effort? The time may come when property owners might initiate a local referendum. This issue deserves some clarity.

Overall, this Historic Resources section is comprehensive and was written by someone familiar with historic architecture. It may go into too much detail describing the architectural styles of properties. The narration would be more meaningful if it recognized the bigger picture, how the historic buildings collectively define a neighborhood and contribute to the character of the town. This focus on architectural periods and examples of styles may be an unintentional bias of the person who wrote this section of the Comprehensive Plan.

It would be beneficial to describe in greater detail why these inner village streets and neighborhoods are integral to the character of the town and make a shared contribution to the town beyond the intrinsic value of the individual properties. More could be written about the history of settlement along the Kennebunk River, where our oldest residential property is located. The Perkins house, pictured on page 20, may have been built in 1720 rather than 1730. The property owner would know the correct date.

More could be said about the rivers and ocean serving as the 'highways' in the colonial period which is why lots of homes were built along waterways, and about the agricultural areas of town. My overall impression is that the section pays 'short shrift' to these districts.

On Page 14, the statement is made that the historic committee appointed by Selectmen in 2001 concluded that there was no support for a preservation ordinance. The reader is left with the possibly misguided impression that even the committee charged with looking into historic properties thought that having a historic preservation ordinance was a bad idea. I don't believe that is a fair description of the Committee's work.

It is my recollection that the committee members realized that the town would probably vote down the concept of a historic preservation ordinance, based on the town's history of several times voting against zoning.

I recall that the Committee thought the best course would be to submit a ballot question to voters, asking whether they wanted to spend \$8,000 to hire an expert to draft a historic preservation ordinance. That measure passed. That the funding provision passed was an indication of interest in the town, an endorsement of the idea of the preservation ordinance.

The plan was to hire someone to draft the ordinance. The historic preservation ordinance language would then go before voters. My memories are fresh on this because I served on the Board of Selectmen March, 2000 until June, 2003, and attended most of the Historic Committee meetings.

I don't have the Committee report at hand to consult.

After I went off the Board in June, 2003, with two new members, the Board of Selectmen took no action on that voter-authorized expenditure. The \$8,000 was allowed to roll over to the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year, unspent. This was a political decision.

It would be a disservice to that 2001 Historic Committee and a distortion of facts to write that they didn't want a preservation ordinance. They wanted to go about it in a careful way, working with property owners. Selectmen put the kibosh on the idea.

To summarize, the Comprehensive Plan has documented that Kennebunkport has an unusually large number of historic buildings and two National Register Historic Districts, which contribute to the character of the town and should be protected, but not through a local historic preservation ordinance.

The GPC perceives an urgent need to allow food trucks and a farmer's market somewhere in Kennebunkport. The only logical location for these commercial uses would be in the middle of one of the two residential National Register Historic Districts. The need for these uses is so profound that a zone change is proposed to allow these commercial uses, even though there are several commercial areas that would permit these uses without changing the zoning ordinance.

Do you understand why people become cynical?

Thank you.

Consultants' Response

The Growth Planning Committee (GPC) decided in late 2021 to revise the recommendation in favor of a farmers' market and food truck(s) by removing references to specific locations in Town. The locations, if any, will be determined by other Town officials at some future date. The consultants deleted location specific references in Chapter 19, and will do likewise in Chapter 12.

Spot zoning is unlawful. We are not proposing spot zoning.

We favor farm stands, but acknowledge that for a farm stand to be successful, it must be located on a well-traveled road.

Page 14, Historic Resources. Clarified that the authority of local historic districts is limited to review of exterior alterations.

Page 14, Historic Resources. The GPC does not recommend the establishment of a local historic district at this time. Clarified that it was the Selectmen who decided against a local historic district.

Page 15, Historic Resources chapter. We fixed the typo. Now reads unusually.

Page 20, Historic Resources. Changed Perkins House date from c. 1730 to c. 1720-1730.

Page 47, Historic Resources. The Town has done a commendable job in documenting buildings located in the two National Register districts that were built prior to 1850 (1910 at Cape Arundel). We propose a town-wide survey, one that would include all structures constructed prior to the mid-20th century.

We agree that a discussion of the contribution of individual structures to the community's character and history is important. The two National Register nominations do that quite well, as does the National Register determination for Dock Square. These documents are referenced in the plan's Historic Resources chapter.

Comment

To the Kennebunkport Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, Growth Committee and anyone involved in ratifying Kennebunkport and Cape Porpoise STR Permits:

1/25/2022

Dear all concerned,

I am writing to ask you to deny the STR permit(s) requested by the Kennebunkport Resort Collection (KRC) for "The Langsford," at 15 Langsford Road in Cape Porpoise. Their STR application is in line for review. There are multiple reasons to deny this application which I urgently request you to consider.

Some background: Many of you know about the 30 letters the Langsford Rd neighbors sent to the Planning Board prior to their 1/19/22 meeting objecting to KRC's application for "converting to Inn designation" from The Langsford's current Declaration of Condos classification. Those letters documented clear adverse neighborhood impact, and questionable if not illegal use of The Langsford being operated as an inn under the guise of short term rentals under the KRC umbrella.

Among those 30 letters were letters from lawyers and an experienced local real estate agent establishing reasons to categorically reject the "Inn" application.

All of the objections regarding the already experienced adverse impact to the neighborhood are still relevant. I implore you to review all those on-record letters to get the full measure of the adverse impacts of KRC's "The Langsford," already demonstrated, and which would continue under STR use.

Additionally, I would direct your attention to a few short passages, included below, in the STR Ordinance. I will raise my points about them first, and then you can scroll down to read them at the end of my letter.

1.) I would posit: as in the Ordinance Article 1, our neighborhood *will be* unduly impacted by the use of The Langsford as an STR collective. It has been unduly impacted already. Again, see the 30 letters.

2.) In § 116-8. Suspension and revocation of license there is a clause (item B) requiring the Code Enforcement Officer to register and record any and all complaints about an offending STR use and to act to correct them (or

consider suspension and revocation of license.) As neighbors we have *already* submitted a whole raft of complaints. Again, please refer to those 30 letters submitted just last week prior to the 1/19/22 Board meeting.

If KRC's The Langsford does get granted the STR permit(s) nothing will change. It will still function as it has, and all the attendant noise, traffic, general disruption and loss of property value will remain more or less the same.

As further argument against granting The Langsford STRs I would point out four line-items from Paragraph 13 in the Finding Of Fact Document regarding the Declaration of Condo that The Langsford currently enjoys. These items alone would likely have prevented the granting of "inn" status. I submit that they, along with many other factors, should be considered grounds for denying STR permits for this complex of buildings with its noisy activity and attendant traffic and people problems that took place in 2021. (See below as well please.)

In Closing: KRC operated and advertised The Langsford as an Inn in 2021 under the guise of being a collection of STRs. After the Town told them their behavior was against ordinance they applied for "Inn" status, but such a stink was raised by the neighbors that KRC withdrew the application. Now they are hoping to achieve STR permits and go back to operating as before but this time with the blessing of the Town. How is this fair? I would point out that if you grant KRC's The Langsford STR status you would establish a precedent you might regret. What would then prevent dozens or hundreds of other "entities" (ie hotel chains, resort chains, big business etc) from turning apartment buildings, other old rooming houses, Moose clubs or whatever they like into STRs? Here then is the overarching question: will the Town allow big business potentially unlimited access to the limited STRs whose very purpose is to prevent big business from taking over the STR market? We already have a working example at The Langsford of how this is a bad idea.

I find this is a particularly wrenching notion given the heart felt questions I remember reading in the Kennebunkport Town Review a year or two ago. They went more or less like this: "What are we going to do about all these out of town buyers who are snapping up homes and real estate and creating an excess of short term rentals, and changing the character of the town? And how can we attract young families to move here, send kids to our schools and become a permanent and stable part of the community?"

Thank you, for your attention. I don't envy your position. Respectfully, Kinloch Nelson - 16-R Langsford Rd. Cape Porpoise

ARTICLE I

Short-Term Rentals [Adopted 6-8-2021]

The purpose of this article is to require the disclosure and licensing of short-term rentals operated within the Town of Kennebunkport. Furthermore, this article is intended to ensure that residential neighborhoods are not unduly impacted by the operation of short-term rentals within the Town. This will be accomplished by a licensing program that enables the Town to monitor and track the proliferation of short-term rentals within its borders, includes modest *performance standards* intended to protect property owners, renters, and neighbors along with *limits to the numbers of short-term rentals* within the community.

§ 116-8. Suspension and revocation of license.

B. Complaints concerning short-term rentals. The Code Enforcement Officer shall establish and maintain a log of all complaints for each short-term rental received and substantiated by the Town. The Code Enforcement Officer shall seek the correction of all substantiated complaints by the short-term rental license holder.

From the Finding Of Fact Document

Paragraph 13 reads: "*Pursuant to the requirements of articles 10.10. A. of the Land Use Ordinance ("Guidelines For Decisions") the Planning Board shall approve an application unless it makes a negative ruling on one or more of the following identified findings which would otherwise compel denial.*"

Of the 16 items under paragraph 13 categorized in the affirmative I argue that at least four should now be in the negative. These are items c, e, g, and o under paragraph 13. And they read, with my comments after them (in parentheses):

Item c. "Lighting will not ... damage the value and diminish the use of adjacent properties." (-- some neighbors are already complaining about the bright lights that shine through the night at 15 Langsford.)

Item e.: "the proposed use will not have significant detrimental effect on use & peaceful enjoyment of abutting property as a result of noise, vibrations, fumes, odors, dust, glare & other cause." -- (neighbors are already complaining in multiple letters about much of this.)

Such detrimental effects include: early morning truck noises with their beeping in reverse, trucks & cars on the noisy gravel driveway (much noisier than on blacktop), delivery vehicles, hotel guests in the parking lot talking and making noise, noisy children in the the swimming pool that can be heard all the way up to the street and beyond, people talking and laughing sometimes into the late evening on the four thousand square feet of porches and decks that abut the street, plus similar people noise from the big side deck. There are also service people who sometimes play boom boxes while they work. I can hear porch conversation funneling between the houses and all the way down my driveway, even sometimes as far as to the waterfront.

item g. "the proposed use will not have a detrimental effect on the value of adjacent properties which could be avoided by reasonable modification of the plan." -- (Two properties in the immediate neighborhood took way too long to sell in a very hot housing market and sold notably at less than asking price. This is unheard of in today's market. These are concrete examples of the diminished value of neighboring properties from filling these condos and houses with renters.)

item o. : "The proposed use will not cause unreasonable highway or public road congestion." -- (Again there is plenty of submitted testimony detailing the problems.)

The quiet, and relatively private feeling of the neighborhood surrounding The Langsford is now gone. And by the way a perfectly good residential enclave is also gone. There is now, day and night - save perhaps in the slow season of winter - a whole new level of congestion and noise all around 15 Langsford Road that is driving the neighbors nuts.

To the best of my knowledge there has been little or no supervision or policing of any of this. How could there be? There is no office on site with someone on duty. This policing is now left up to the neighborhood residents who frankly resent the chore.

Further, it should be noted The Langsford is still being marketed and run as a commercial hospitality business to this day. While KRC has taken The Langsford's listing of their KRC website, there are still pictures of it on their website now, and there is an active website dedicated to The Langsford which sports an aerial-view video-introduction, a full display of tour-the-site photographs, and the usual on-line booking links with dates-for-your-visit boxes and all the rest of what is normal for commercially run hotels and resort destination websites. Just visit <https://www.thelangsfordkpt.com/>

Comment

I looked through the Historic Resources section and only had a few comments. On page 39, there is a blank for the cemetery name with the Credifords; the cemetery is the Village cemetery, or Bass Cove. It's had many names over the years. Also on page 39, it says that the Town owns no cemeteries, but there are quite a few on Town lots such as Merrill, Cape Porpoise, and Village cemeteries to name a few.

On pg 41 for table 2-4, I found enough small errors that I'm in the process of verifying all the lots,

addresses, and names. I hope to have that for you in a few weeks.

On the Public Facilities section, it mentions that the Town has over 70 cemeteries; you could change it say over 80 private cemeteries. Lastly, it states that "the cemetery committee anticipates that..." when speaking about the Arundel Cemetery, but it really should say that the Arundel cemetery committee anticipates. We are the same, but different. They are an active cemetery, but the Town Cemetery Committee manages the 80 plus ancient and private burial grounds.

Consultants' Response

We made all of the proposed revisions.

Comment

RE: Planning Questions for the K'port Growth Planning Committee

I am enclosing a series of focused questions that address some aspects of the contentious issue of "tax-exempt land" in Kennebunkport. I request that this email be shared with committee members before the meeting tonight at 6pm. The questions arise from observations of the Growth Planning Committee discussions. Many of these issues I've also discussed previously with a wide range of friends in Kennebunkport and elsewhere. I recently wrote an opinion piece for "Maine Voices" in the Portland Press Herald, which has attracted considerable attention, both pro and con. However, none of the responses addressed, in any way, any of the several questions I asked; therefore, I am including these questions, stripped of the "Maine Voices" text. My questions are classic planning questions, eminently suitable for a public Land Use Committee's attention, thought and problem-solving. Some issues may not be answerable by a committee without back-up research/support. Some issues may need enabling legislation from our legislature. While I naturally have a personal point of view as a 45 year resident of Kennebunkport, I have tried to frame the questions in such a way as to be suitable for open planning discussion and solutions.

I shall be sharing this email with interested friends (and legislators), who will be watching the Land Use Committee as it proceeds with its deliberations. We all hope for a "product" from the committee that is fair, balanced and that represents the diverse needs of our citizens.

Herewith are my concerns:

"REAL QUESTIONS" ABOUT TAX-EXEMPT LAND FOR GROWTH PLANNING COMMITTEE:

(a) GROWTH OF TAX-EXEMPT BASE: A growing tax-exempt land inventory reduces any town's tax base, and, in order to compensate for loss of tax revenues, the town must raise taxes- in this tax-exempt situation - or find other sources of revenue to make up lost revenues and meet expenses. So far, this activity is largely done without a taxpayer input, or vote or awareness. Should all taxpayers be notified every time when land becomes tax-exempt, and what the tax implications will be for them? Or should this increase tax information be kept secret from taxpayers?

(b) WOODLAND FIRE HAZARD: Pristine, unmanaged tax-exempt woodland can easily become a fire hazard for a town and its residents. There is the potential danger of replicating California's wildfires - or, in a dry summer, of repeating Maine's 1947 wildfires. For the public safety of all, should the town initiate an annual, formal "fire danger evaluation" of all such woodland? And require a plan for fire prevention? Should tax-exempt woodland be required to have its own fire emergency crews and equipment, or should they continue to avail themselves of town fire services paid for by taxpayers?

(c) CLAIMS OF CLIMATE CHANGE PREVENTION: Claims that land trusts are on the frontiers of preventing "climate change" badly need quantification: by how much of what element, per acre? Has a significant growth in Kennebunkport Land Trust acreage caused a measurable drop in temperatures and air quality in Kennebunkport? Do land trusts in Kennebunkport have actual, meaningful, Kennebunkport-related, climate data? Without hard

data, the claim seems disingenuous or fanciful. Are such claims "marketing", political or are they local fact based? Let's have the data.

(d) TAX-EXEMPT GROWTH- RESTRICTED OR UNRESTRICTED? How much tax-exempt land is enough for Kennebunkport? Should the growth of tax-exempt entitie's land be limitless? Is there a quantitative tax-exempt "boundary" that will so radically increase tax-payer taxes and, thereby, so radically decrease the ability of middle class resident to live in this town, as to be undesirable? What is the impact of a reduced tax base in Kennebunkport on the concept of "affordable housing? Where are our limits for this type of tax-exemption? 15%? 25%? 50%? More? What percentage of all forms of tax-exempt land would be too much? Should taxes be imposed when this boundary is crossed by tax-exempt entities? Should sales of land take place, once an entity crosses this percentage in order to bring such land into conformity with the limits?

(e) FINAL QUESTION: COMMITTEE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST: Objectivity of committee members on the question of tax exempt land is of great concern to all Kennebunkport citizens and tax-payers, who follow the deliberations. Do any members of the land use committee have a formal relationship with the KCT or other entities that involve tax-exempt land growth? How is the committee (and the town) defining conflicts of interest in this situation- and recusal from voting on such issues? Shouldn't the town of Kennebunkport exercise some form of oversight of all tax-exempt land since it provides public services to such land? When a tax--Kennebunkport exercise some form of oversight of all tax-exempt land since it provides public services to such land? When a tax--exempt entity is said to hold 22% of all of the land in town, it is truly "a powerful elephant in the room" and needs public awareness and oversight.

I would ask that this memo and final responses to it be included as a part of the Committee's final report.

Happy New Year to all!

Comments

Thanks to the kindness and expertise of Sharon Cummins, KPT Historian,

History of Patten's Berry Farm

<https://www.facebook.com/KennebunkportHistoricalSociety/posts/2841357315886418>

Freedom Farm attached. Use any parts of them you find useful.

You might want to also mention the Kennebunkport Poor Farm which existed for many years in various locations on North St. The last poor farm was up at Town House Corners. That one is now in Arundel but there were at least two other locations on North St in the area of the Municipal Parking lot. One was the house at the corner of West St and the other was in the blue house at the North Street end of Wesmore Lane. Bothe houses are still standing.

There were so many farms in town that nobody ever thought to enumerate them. Everyone had a garden and farm animals at one time. There were farms on North St., River Rd., Beachwood Rd., Goose Rocks Rd, Arundel Rd., Old Cape Rd., Stone Rd, Guinea Rd., Oak Ridge, School St, Mills Rd. Wildes District, Turbats Creek, South Main St., and even in the villages. I'm sure I have missed some of the streets but suffice it to say they were ubiquitous in Kennebunkport.

I'll keep my eyes open for research materials on specific farms and send them along if I find any.



OLD NEWS
SHARON
CUMMINS

Freedom Farm assisted displaced WW II families

Life as a refugee was all 10-year-old Lembi Parna knew when she arrived at Kennebunkport's Freedom Farm in June of 1949.

Ethar Milliken had read about the plight of Eastern European refugees of World War II and decided to donate one of the two farms he owned on Arundel Road to the United Baptist Convention of Maine. The farm was to serve as a temporary home for "Displaced Persons" or DPs where they could become acclimated to American culture. The Parna family was the first of many families to benefit from Milliken's extraordinary generosity.

Before the war the Parnas lived in the ancient city of Tallinn, Estonia, located on the Gulf of Finland. Theirs was a middle-class cosmopolitan existence. Ants Parna, Lembi's father, had a white collar job as a technical advisor at a large shoe factory there. In the summer of 1940 the city of Tallinn was occupied by Russian soldiers, ostensibly to protect it from German invasion but within a year the Estonians were stripped of their liberties. In one night alone, more than 60,000 civilians were deported to Siberia and other remote areas of the Soviet Union.

Fearing that he would be sent to a Russian work camp Lembi's father gathered his extended family and slipped out of the city. Depending on him were his baby daughter, his wife Agnes, her sister, her mother and her 85-year-old grandmother. They sailed to Poland and then traveled 500 miles south to Linz, Austria, where finding no other haven, they entered a German prison camp.

Ants managed to find a job and the family of six had just left the prison camp when they heard that the Russians were advancing toward Austria. They were compelled to move again. Starving and



According to records, at least six families left displaced during World War II transitioned to self-determination at the Freedom Farm.

were weary from travel, the refugees secretly boarded a freight car from Linz to Muhldorf, Germany. The train traveled less than two miles a day and between stops, Ants toured the mountain area in search of food for the family. In a 1949 interview with a reporter for the Portsmouth Herald, Agnes Parna described the hardships the family had faced.

"He begged food from the mountain people. Sometimes he returned with five potatoes for six of us. Sometimes he returned with no food." Agnes grimly recalled. "We could not boil the potatoes so we ate them raw. It was the only food we had."

Nazi Germany was defeated and the family ended up in an American camp for DPs at Dillingen, Germany, where they remained for four years. Life at the DP camp was not much better but, Mrs. Parna reported "We were too happy to be with Americans to complain. We had no place to bathe, only a place to wash our hands and face," Agnes

recounted. "Thirty cents a day was allotted for food. Before each meal we stood in line for 1 or 1 and a half hours hoping we would be in time to get the food before it was all gone. Sometimes the people on the end of the line got little or no food. For dinner we were given soup. Not as you in America know as soup. The soup there in camp was just water with a few vegetables like carrots, peas or beets in it. It was mostly water." Little Lembi suffered from a vitamin A deficiency and was nearly blind.

Ants, Agnes and Lembi arrived in Kennebunkport travel-weary and overwhelmed in June of 1949. After nearly a decade of suffering they did not immediately trust how their lives had changed. Within a few months the well-nourished Lembi, whose eyesight had been restored, chattered away in English as if she had been in America for years. Two additional DP families were welcomed to the Freedom Farm that fall. Christmas of 1949 was celebrated in the

town of Kennebunkport with profound hope for the future and a mixture of American and Eastern European Holiday traditions.

In 1951, Ants Parna found a job at Deering Lumber Company moved his family out of the Freedom Farm to make room for others in need. After a couple of years the family moved from Saco to Illinois and then to New York. When she was 20 years old Lembi married a man named Joseph S. Sinatra in Los Angeles.

At least five other DP families transitioned to self-determination at the Freedom Farm. Each had its own stories of suffering and of triumph. The house was sold in 1963 and burned to the ground on Jan. 28, 1968.

Only the barn remains to remind us of Ethar Milliken's gift and the lives it changed.

Sharon Cummins is a historical research professional in Southern Maine. She can be reached by email at sharonlynn@roadrunner.com
