

December, 2016

I grew up in rural southwestern Rhode Island. By the time I was ready to start out as an adult, it was no longer rural, so I looked elsewhere.

In 1968 I found a 186 acre woodlot in Deerfield, NH, which fulfilled all my dreams—quiet, a clean brook, an old cemetery, overgrown cellar holes and stone walls, a small town that welcomed civility and participation, nice neighbors.

I cleared two fields and built my house, but a short time later, transmission towers appeared in my new views to both east and south. At the same time, a buzzing sound began to occur on low pressure days from the power substation about one mile away.

A few years later the owners of some acres between me and the substation divided their land into four house lots, sold them, and moved to western NH. Immediately the owner across the road divided his land into six lots and sold them.

I can't see the resulting piece of suburbia from most of my land, but I can hear the lawn movers, leaf blowers, dogs, arguments, calls for supper, etc. These are nice people, but they don't seem to appreciate, respect, or become involved in Deerfield as a town.

Rural New England towns have a reputation for self-reliance, self-governance, neighborliness, resourcefulness, independence, and commitment to place. I don't see it here. Perhaps the new people in my valley could develop these values with time, but what I have seen for about 30 years is transition and lack of commitment. There is almost always a for sale sign on one or another of these houses.

I believe that if the wide open power lines and transformer hum hadn't caused the first landowner to give up and leave their land, this corner of Deerfield would have remained rural with rural values.

Sincerely,

Al Jaeger
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P.S. 111 acres of my land is in conservation easement. I sometimes think about dividing and selling the remaining acres, closer to the noisy substation and moving to the quieter western edge of Deerfield.

(Transcribed from a handwritten letter)