



REAL VALUE



CLICK HERE FOR DISPLAY AD INFO

MaineToday.com

Portland Press Herald / Maine Sunday Telegram KENNEBEC JOURNAL Morning Sentinel

HOME

MAINEJOBS

HOMES

WHEELS

MARKETPLACE

NEWS

- Local and State
- Midday/4PM Reports
- AP Wire
- Base Closings
- InDepth
- Week in Photos

WEATHER

- 5-day Forecast
- On the Ocean

SPORTS

- High Schools
- Red Sox
- Sea Dogs
- Running

BUSINESS

- News
- Doghouse Kitchen
- Virtually Organized
- Maine News Direct
- Classifieds

ENTERTAINMENT

- Calendar
- Movies
- Dining
- Music
- Theater
- Art

TRAVEL

- Maine Regions
- From Away
- Vacation Rentals
- Lodging Guide

OUTDOORS

- Fishing
- Hiking
- Paddling Trips
- With Children
- Campground Guide

BLOGS

Portland Press Herald



Maine Sunday Telegram

Home • News • Sports • Business • Editorials • Nemitz
Obituaries • Special Reports • Classifieds • Home Delivery

Wednesday, August 31, 2005

[E-mail this story to a friend](#)

COLUMN: *Bill Nemitz*

Also on this page:
[Reader Comments](#)

A village green for free, yet may cost too much

[Copyright](#) © 2005 Blethen Maine Newspapers Inc.

WINTER HARBOR — It all seemed so simple at first. Not only did Roxanne Quimby have the vision for a world-class village green smack dab in the middle of picturesque Winter Harbor, but she also had the land. And Lord knows, after she sold most of her rags-to-riches Burt's Bees empire for \$175 million last fall, Quimby had the money.

So why has this thing become so . . . complicated?

"I would call it 'reservations.' People have reservations because the future is somewhat uncertain," Quimby said Monday as a late-summer downpour pounded the awning outside her specialty food store, J.M. Gerrish Provisions. What's more, she said, "I am

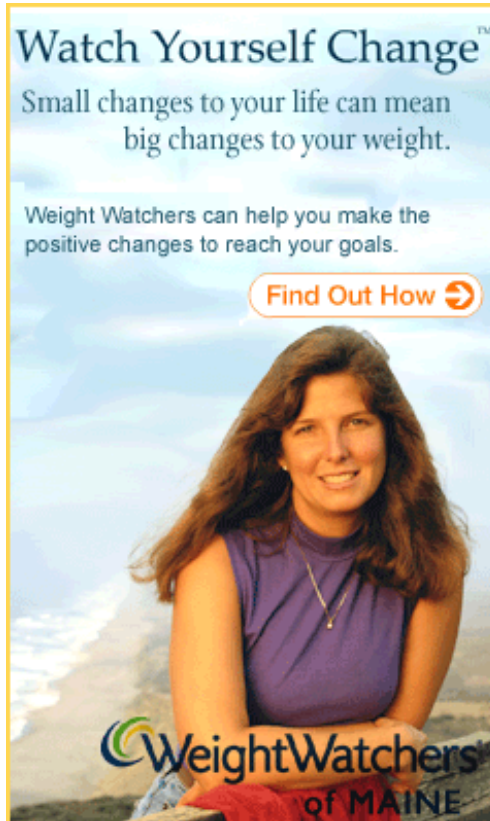
ADVERTISEMENT

Watch Yourself Change™

Small changes to your life can mean big changes to your weight.

Weight Watchers can help you make the positive changes to reach your goals.

[Find Out How](#) ➔



Weight Watchers of MAINE

Your Next Meeting



Can have an ocean view.
innbythesea.com

2005 FALL

JOB FAIR

presented by
MaineJobs



Click here to learn more.

Food for Thought
Doghouse Kitchen
Trail Head
More blogs

20 BELOW

Teen Blogs
20 Below 20
Bulletin Board

MAINEJOBS

Search Jobs
Post a Job
News and Resources
Employer Profiles

HOMES

Classifieds
Advice and Info
Featured Agents
Moving to Maine
Retiring in Maine

WHEELS

Classifieds
Resources and Info
Featured Dealers

MILESTONES

Celebrations
Obituaries

MARKETPLACE

Classifieds
Special Sections

ADVERTISING

5 Reasons
Advertising Products

HELP CENTER

Press Herald
Sunday Telegram
Kennebec Journal
Morning Sentinel
MaineToday.com



Network Affiliate

known. I am a somewhat controversial figure. My activities with land preservation are well-known."

That they are - especially in Maine's north woods, where Quimby is loved by some and reviled by many more for her ongoing efforts to acquire vast tracts of forest and someday turn them into a national park.

But down in Winter Harbor, the 55-year-old

multimillionaire has a much different public relations challenge on her hands. She wants to build a town center on land she recently purchased next to her store. She also wants the townsfolk to help her design it. Through one of her charitable foundations, she'll even build it and maintain it - at no cost whatsoever to the town.

So why are some people, particularly those who were here long before Quimby decided in 1998 to make Winter Harbor her summer home, feeling a little, shall we say, skittish about the whole idea?

Because, as Allan Smallidge noted from his front porch a few doors up Main Street, times have changed. And in this picturesque village separated by Frenchman's Bay from the hustle and bustle of Bar Harbor, so has philanthropy.

"It used to be that Big Bucks would come into town and the town would say, 'We need something,' " said Smallidge, who was born here and served as Winter Harbor's town manager from 1984-97. "And then the Big Bucks would say, 'OK, we'll do it.' "

And now?

"This is different," Smallidge said. "This is a case of Big Bucks saying, 'This is what the town needs' and then doing it.' "

Meaning the deepest roots no longer dictate how and where the town will grow. Three years after the Navy closed its station here and left Winter Harbor drifting somewhere between a blue-collar fishing village and Bar Harbor East, the community's future increasingly revolves - for better or worse - around Roxanne Quimby.

And her focus groups.

Quimby, to her credit, considers this as much the community's project as her own.

Soon after she purchased and renovated J.M. Gerrish Provisions and then acquired two adjacent lots - both with houses in various states of disrepair that Quimby promptly demolished - Quimby



Staff photo by John Ewing

Roxanne Quimby has proposed creating a village green on two acres of land, seen behind her, that she owns on Main Street in Winter Harbor. She has invited the public to help design the green, but her idea has still met some resistance.

hired Coplon Associates of Bar Harbor to design her a four-acre village green.

Landscape architect Sam Coplon's first words of advice: Hold a community meeting to solicit ideas for what the relatively wide-open space (Bar Harbor's village green is a paltry one acre) should look like.

The fliers went up, and on Aug. 3, Quimby and Coplon were astonished to find at least 100 people - summer folk and year-rounders alike - packed into the local school gymnasium. The question for the evening: "What would a village green mean to Winter Harbor?"

Lots of talking, for starters.

The brainstorming session, led by Coplon while Quimby and a helper set out the cake and lemonade, produced a cavalcade of ideas: an arboretum interlaced with perennial gardens, a bandstand, a fountain, a clock, bike racks, an information booth, benches and picnic tables, walking paths, an ice-skating rink (Quimby likes that one), a playground with a lobster boat and lighthouse (Quimby proposed that one) . . . and, oh, yes, don't forget the parking and the public restrooms!

"We filled up page after page of the audience's ideas until they started to get repetitive," Quimby said. Then Coplon divided the crowd into four groups, handed each a site map of the property and asked each group to go ahead and design the darned thing.

"Then they each elected a spokesperson and we went back to the big group and the spokesperson for each small committee reported to the larger group what their committee wanted," Quimby said. "That was to accommodate people who may not have wanted to speak up in front of 100 people or who needed to talk a little bit about their idea before they could present it."

One of those people was Smallidge. He thought about tossing a year-round community center into the mix of ideas - he thinks many of the older folks in town could use a place to gather indoors long after the tourists and summer people go home. But in the end, he just listened to his small group deliberate and kept his mouth shut.

"The question was never, 'Do you want a village green?' " Smallidge said. Among the old-timers, he added, "This seems to be something that's sort of getting away from us somehow. And nobody is sure how that happened or what to do about it."

Over the next month or two, Coplon and Quimby will complete a final design for the town's perusal - if not its approval. It won't be easy - a recent survey of the site reveals that Quimby has just under two acres, not the four she thought she'd bought. So much for the parking.

"That's the town's problem - not necessarily my problem," she said. "I'm not going to take my vacant lots and turn them into parking when what I really want is a park for people, not for cars. That is something the town is obviously going to have to deal

with."

Small wonder that current Town Manager Roger Barto has come up with a nickname for the changes - including, at his count, five buildings torn down and two new ones put up - since Quimby came to town.

One of those buildings was the Main Stay Inn, which Barto owned before Quimby bought it and called in the wrecking crew. In its place now stands the brand-new Mama's Boy Bistro.

"I call it urban renewal," Barto said dryly. "Roxanne style."

Staff Writer Bill Nemitz can be contacted at 791-6323 or at:

bnemitz@pressherald.com

Reader Comments

What do you think of Roxanne Quimby's plan?

Juni of Miami, FL

Sep 2, 2005 1:21 PM

A Village Green..., instead of a BIB BOX retail outlet mall with parking for 20,000 cars, miles of asphalt all around to pollute the ground water with toxins!!! How un-American!!! I cannot believe in this day in age of hyper-consumerism reaching peak oil and you are thinking of building a Village Green, how selfish. Think about all those little boys and girls in "developing" countries working in sweat shops, they will probably end up losing their jobs. Not only that but miss the opportunity to place another American architectural marvel: the "BIG BOX", in the center of your community. It could be an icon for generations to come. And what about those minimum wage jobs that may not be available for the resident of the community. It is an outrage! I cannot believe it and you're giving the residents a voice on how to shape it, now that is just preposterous. Do the right thing and that is the American thing, just pave it over!

Kevin of Standish, ME

Sep 2, 2005 1:06 PM

Allan Smallidge says "Big Bucks" did not ask the community for their input as to whether they were interested in her proposal. Yet they take her money for ideas they propose. That sounds as if they are quick to take other's money but not flexible to listen to new ideas, only their own. Is she only welcome as long as her bank account is open to Smallidge's agenda?

Steve Anderson of Tucson, AZ

Sep 1, 2005 11:57 PM

Kudos to Roxanne. She's offering to fund a significant quality of life enhancement for this town, and is letting the citizens design it too. What more could they ask for? Seems like a handful of grumps is getting in the way of a terrific project. As long as the project respects the character of the town and the community, what's not to like?

Marilyn of Otisfield, ME

Sep 1, 2005 7:15 AM

If Roxanne wants her land to be a park, good for her. Let her fix it up, put it into the "open space" tax category, and let folks use it, and Roxanne can continue to pay tax on it. The town can see how it goes and at a town meeting down the road folks can decide whether to accept the land as a gift or not, through a warrant article. If they don't accept it, Roxanne can continue to pay tax on it and maintain it.

What would Maine be without the 'outsiders' moving here and "renewing us"? Probably Maine. In 1820 we became a separate state from Massachusetts because we wanted to do things the "Maine" way, and we're still a separate

state today.

It's precisely that 'out-of-state' attitude that they bring with them. . . that THEY know how to do things the 'right' way, because the Maine way is no longer the way THEY want it.

[Show all 25 comments](#)

Post a Comment

Please complete all information. Your e-mail address is collected for recording purposes only and will not be displayed on web pages. Your comments will be reviewed by MaineToday.com and posted within one business day. [Guidelines](#)

Your name

Your town & state

Your e-mail

(will not be displayed)

Your Comment

Questions to invite reader comments are written and edited by the MaineToday.com staff. If you have questions, concerns or ideas about the reader comments on this or any other article, [e-mail us](#) or call Editor Scott Hersey at 207-822-4061.

[To top of page](#)

Credibility is our business, and we strive for accurate and complete reports.

If you were interviewed as a source for this news story, you are invited to [fill out an accuracy survey](#). We have been mailing such surveys to news sources for years and now offer this online option as well. All surveys will be verified, so please include the requested personal information.

Portland Press Herald / Maine Sunday Telegram

Today's Top News Headlines

- [Maine Republicans: Suspend fuel taxes](#)
- [Collins says panel will probe 'inadequate' initial response](#)
- [Scotia Prince to house Hurricane Katrina evacuees](#)
- [Victim recalled as kind, helpful](#)
- [New school of thought](#)
- [Sheehan cancels trip to BNAS](#)

[More news headlines](#)

 Sign up for **daily headlines** by e-mail from the Portland Press Herald/Maine Sunday Telegram.

or visit the [signup page](#)

 Search the **archives** of the Portland Press Herald/Maine

Home Delivery

Subscribe to the Maine Sunday Telegram for just \$1.25 a week for 12 weeks and save 44% off the newstand price!



Sunday Telegram

Check out the inventory at dozens of Maine auto dealers without leaving your chair.

SEE FEATURED DEALERS
IN THE WHEELS SECTION

MaineToday.com

[Questions/Comments?](#)

[Copyright](#) © 2005, Blethen Maine Newspapers, Inc.