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Belmont Selectmen appoint grant administrator for Solar Village water project

By JIM CLARK

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BELMONT—Selectmen on Monday appointed veteran consultant Donna Lane to administer federal grant money that will go toward water and sewer infrastructure improvements at Solar Village, a residential subdivision located off Ladd Hill Road.

Lane will oversee a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) in the amount of \$327,373 for the Solar Village project. The CDBG comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and is administered by the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority.

Lane is based in Madison and has over 30 years of experience working as an independent consultant on projects which receive CDBG funds, including many local ones.

The town of Belmont sought the CDBG for Solar Village. Lane made application for the grant in January and it was awarded last month. The town will subgrant the funds to the Solar Village Association, made up of a board of directors. The association will seek public bids and award the project to a contractor. The town will then pay the contractor directly from the grant.

Lane's role will be to work with the association and to make sure that the myriad of federal regulations and requirements for the project are met. She will be paid out of the grant allocation.

Final approval of the project still has to be given by the governor and governor's council, which will meet next month.

Community Development Block Grants are designed to provide decent housing for low and moderate income persons. They fall into two categories-- grants for "entitlement" communities, which are big cities, and "non-entitlement" communities, which are small towns.

A "non-entitlement" CDBG must go through a state agency such as NHCDFR.

Lane said the Solar Village project will involve extensive infrastructure work on the water and sewer systems.

Residents have complained about poor water quality, odor, bad taste, and insufficient water pressure. The community has its own water well. Water storage tanks built up with sediment and sludge will be cleaned. Also new shut-off valves will be installed throughout individual homes and within a line in the neighborhood itself. Water meters for each residence will also be installed.

There also will be major improvements to the subdivision's sewer system. The town owns the sewer system serving Solar Village but the association owns the sewer pump station. Mapping must be done of electric and cable lines before any work can be done.

Solar Village consists of single family units, many of them manufactured homes. The subdivision totals 48 lots, with 42 currently occupied.

Lane said a preliminary engineering study has already been made and a final one still needs to be completed. After the contracting bid has been awarded it is hoped that work on the project will commence sometime in the fall.

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