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## **Man wants to replace mobile homes with houses**

**KEITH WHITCOMB JR.**

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POWNA -- Mark Grise said he would like to turn things around at Royal Pine Villa, but standing in his way is a lack of funding.

Grise is president and general manager for Royal Pine Villa Inc. The mobile home park is owned by Grise's father-in-law, Marcine Roy, and was managed by him up until 2008 when his health forced him to take it easy.

Grise said the plan is to start constructing affordable, energy-efficient homes, and to that end he has built and placed on the market a "proof of concept" home, which he hopes to sell for around \$130,000. He said he designed and built the home himself without borrowing money from a bank. The outside materials are vinyl and aluminum, making for little maintenance, while the interior is crafted using materials at the mid-range of the cost spectrum. The foundation uses a type of foam to retain heat while the one real expense is a Boderus Boiler, a type of water heater that measures the temperature outside to maximize energy efficiency.

He said the home is 95 percent energy efficient, and estimates it would cost a person \$535 per month, without utilities, to live there. In the winter, a person might see their heating costs up to around \$80 per month, as the home is heated using propane.

Like many of Pownal's mobile home parks, Royal Pine was built to provide housing to people connected with the former Green Mountain Race Track, which ceased racing operations in 1992.

Grise said the youngest home is a 1990 model, while the majority of the homes are from the 1960s and 1970s. Not built to last, most of the homes are beyond their life expectancy and the maintenance costs can be expensive.

Grise said the 70-lot park began with 23 lots but quickly expanded. Currently, there are 14 empty lots, nine "junk" trailers, and four that are abandoned. He said his family owns all but 12 of the mobile homes in the park, as the revenue from renting just the lot would not cover expenses. He said even the current business model isn't working.

The park's revenue comes from 26 park-owned homes, two permanent homes, and the 12 rental lots.

He said the old homes are not energy efficient, and can cost tenants between \$1,500 and \$1,800 during heating season.

What Grise wants to do is build five more homes on a 12.5 acre parcel across from the 38.5-acre main park area, which is off Jackson Crossing Road. He said there are five different floor layouts in mind, but all will have the same rectangular footprint. He hopes to phase them in over the next seven or so years, building when there is funding available and keeping it in phases so he can stop should it become cost prohibitive.

Ultimately, he would like the park to be a mix of rental duplexes and owned homes, so a person could move into a lower-cost home and work their way up over time. He said the challenge is getting the money to do these building projects and transition the people in existing mobile homes to energy efficient low-moderate income housing. He said there is a shortage of such housing in the state, and in this day and age mobile homes are not that great of an investment.

#### Wastewater system

The park has its own water system, he said, and recently received a loan from the Department of Environmental Conservation Water Supply Division to do an upgrade. Other issues exist with the sewer system, he said.

Grise said that in 2005, Roy agreed to have the park hooked up to the town's sewer system, which was finally completed in 2008. While the wastewater lines were a boon to the park, he said Roy agreed to more hookups than he really needed, paying for 69 hookups, many not being used. He said the park ends up paying for about \$11,500 in hookups that are not disposing of waste. He said he is trying to work with the town to see if he can have some of the connections moved without having to pay high transitional costs.

Grise, a resident of Pepperell, Mass., said he was formerly in the tech industry, designing software. He said he formed a company that made data warehousing software and sold it. A more recent project was creating software that would monitor the diet and health of United States military personnel. He said the status of that project is in limbo currently and in the meantime lives in Pownal managing the park for his father-in-law. He said his wife plans to help him once she retires from a teaching position.