

BANANA REPUBLIC 10/27/06

The Gardiner Open Space bond referendum which will appear on the ballot this November, and the Open Space Plan which it will fund, are anti-development to the extreme. They are perfect examples of the BANANA attitude - Build Almost Nothing Anywhere Near Anything.

According to the Gardiner Open Space Committee, the bond will be used as seed money to fund purchases of land to keep it undeveloped. And as "seed money," it will spark grants for further purchases and start the snowball effect of keeping more and more land undeveloped. No cap has been set on how much of Gardiner will be "undeveloped." Estimates have between 18 and 25 percent of Gardiner already permanently protected from development.

Up to now the owner of a sizeable piece of land could look forward either to continuing to pay taxes on it for the privilege of having all that space around him, or he could plan to develop and allow homes to be built where people could live. Now, the pressure is on him either to go into some kind of preservation/conservation scheme, or risk losing out on his development potential when the new zoning laws are passed. These new laws are presently being written, and promise to be restrictive and exclusionary. And just to insure that no "bad-guy" developer can sneak in before these new laws are enacted, the moratorium now in effect, is about to be extended.

In addition to the \$1.5 million bond, Gardiner's open space plan calls for setting up a town fund dedicated to purchasing ever more land for the purpose of keeping it undeveloped. Tax money could be funneled into the fund without a by your leave from taxpayers.

This is the nifty way the town of Gardiner plans to keep new folks from realizing the American dream within our borders.

Marion Kells
Former Gardiner town supervisor