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January 2020

Cohousing Now!

Zooming Together

by Karen Gimnig

Our oldest community members remember party lines and long distance so expensive that letters were the only reasonable option. Our youngest have only known a world in which video conferencing around the world is at our fingertips. Technology is wonderful and it changes things.

The cohousing world is shifting with the times and figuring out how to make the best of the new and the old. When it comes to the use of video conferencing there is a dilemma: Tech-assisted communication is efficient and accessible and has the potential to increase participation. AND It can't replace all the benefits of face to face communication. Video calls work well for communication of cognitive information, facts and figures, but less so for emotional information that is the primary source for relationship building. People in the same room are likely to exchange touch (handshakes and hugs) and to extend connection into side conversations before and after meetings. These are valuable moments that technology cannot yet replace. In addition, it is far easier to read emotions in person. We humans may be primarily visual and auditory, but our relational antenna are attuned to all sorts of things that don't come through a Zoom call.

Forming communities are increasingly utilizing zoom. Lacking a shared physical space, these groups benefit from the ability to hold business meetings, committee meetings, and even info meetings, online. They also use it to confer with consultants and sometimes members across the country. The technology increases the time they can spend together and supports collaboration. Groups balance the tech-assisted meetings with frequent in person events where major decisions are discussed, new members are welcomed and socialization and community building occur.

This balance has the potential to be the sweet spot where connection and efficiency

are achieved at once. Even established communities are finding it useful to use technology to include parents of young children or anyone who finds it difficult to leave home in the evening.

At a national level, CohoUS is seeking that same balance. We love our bi-annual conferences. The energy, hugs and unplanned connections are fabulous. We also hear from plenty of folks that the costs of travel and the conference registration itself make these events inaccessible, not to mention the huge investment of staff and volunteer time that goes into making them amazing. So this year, we are expanding our use of video conferencing to offer conference experiences online. We're excited to explore all that Zoom has to offer and see how much of the in-person magic can be achieved online.

Our upcoming **Affordable Conference on Affordable Cohousing** (AConAC) on February 22, 2020 will include a variety of experiences. We will all be together in the "ballroom" for our opening, closing and keynote sessions. We'll breakout into random small groups for a networking experience, a chance to meet others from around the country. The 3 main session times will each offer 4 options and participants will choose the room they wish to attend. Unlike a traditional conference where you inevitably miss a session your interested in because another session is occurring at the same time, all content is being recorded so you can watch those sessions later. In fact, you can miss the whole event to attend your cousin's wedding and view all of it when recordings are posted for conference registrants. We'll even have a place where you can skip a session and hang out in a small room with a few friends to have a side conversation or continue a discussion started in session. It's amazing what technology can do for us.

Never fear, our **2020 Simple Series** program will also have several small in person events so you can get your hugs. See the full series program [here](#) .

As we integrate new technology we want to hear from you. What is working? What is not working? What ideas do you have to use technology to grow cohousing? How would you like to help? From Zoom to social media, from circle meetings to marketing, from websites to teamwork platforms, new opportunities are springing up faster than we can learn about them. Fortunately in community we have each other to help us keep up and make the most of all of them.

Thank you Communities!

In addition to the long list of communities listed in the Dec 31 eNews, we want to make sure to express our gratitude to these Communities who also donated in 2019:

Elderspirit Community
Frog Pond Commons

Yalupa Cohousing
Mountain View Cohousing
Nevada City Cohousing
Rosewind Cohousing
Southern Nevada Cohousing
Sunnyside Village
Swan's Market Cohousing
Yulupa Cohousing

The 2020 Simple Series has begun! Our online KickOff event, "What is Cohousing?" was a great success. Even better, it's not too late to register and access the recordings of the five content sessions. February will include our first ever online conference and registration will open soon for in person events around the country. Watch our [website for more Simple Series events](#) as details are confirmed. It's going to be a great year for learning and sharing ideas about cohousing. Click [here](#) to register for any (or all) the upcoming events, including the recent online "What is Cohousing?" event all on one simple form.

An Affordable Conference on Affordable Cohousing

CohoUS's first ever online conference . We'll gather in Zoom rooms for a 6 hour event including a keynote with the National Housing Conference's David Dworkin, breakout sessions, opportunities for smaller conversations, and more.

Recordings of all sessions available after the conference are included in your paid registration. If you can't come on the day,

Rocky Corner Cohousing

Simple Series Event
in Bethany, CT

April 25, 2020

[click here for details](#)

Fair Oaks EcoHousing

Simple Series Event
near Sacramento, CA

Sept 12-13, 2020

[watch here for details](#)

The Commons on The Alameda

Simple Series Event
in Santa Fe, NM

Oct 9-11, 2020

[watch here for details](#)

register anyway and watch the recordings at your leisure.

February 22, 2020
10am-4pm MST

[for more info, click here](#)

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT ENDS
FEB 14TH
[click here to register!](#)

Betsy Morris and Katie McCamant will prepare us for our Affordable Conference with a pair of WebChats on Affordability.

Betsy Morris

"Affordability: Building Blocks"

February 12, 2020

5pm Pac, 6pm Mnt, 7pm Cent, 8pm East

As a Cohousing California regional organizer Betsy has surveyed strategies for increasing affordability in cohousing.

What are the basic building blocks of affordability? What strategies have different communities employed to reduce costs and bring in outside funding as they develop? What kinds of partnerships make it possible to economically diversify and extend the range of the movement? How can we overcome the market realities and stereotypes, slay the myths of shortcuts and engage proven paths to true affordability?

zoom room at

<https://zoom.us/j/202941610>

Katie McCamant

"Affordability: Lessons Learned"

February 19, 2020

5pm Pac, 6pm Mnt, 7pm Cent, 8pm East

As the person who has worked more cohousing project budgets (and seen them thru to completion) than perhaps anyone else in the US, Katie will review what makes it so hard to keep projects affordable. Almost every community starts out wanting to keep costs low and to be able to offer more affordable options. Katie will help us understand why they aren't more successful in that aim. Katie is also very familiar with the affordable housing world of subsidies and the opportunities and limitations of that world. Katie's goal, in all of her work, is to help cohousing groups increase their likelihood of success by building on the knowledge gained from the cohousing development over the last 30 years,

Previous WebChats are available for view at the link below.

[View Recordings](#)

while adapting to the needs of future communities.

zoom room at

<https://zoom.us/j/202941610>

National Cohousing Open House Day Sunday April 26, 2020

Register your community

[here](#)

For more information, click

[here](#)

MADISON, WISCONSIN HERE WE COME!!!

We are thrilled to announce the 2021 National Cohousing Conference will be in Madison, Wisconsin!

[watch here for details](#)

Spotlight Bay State Commons: Walls Come Down, Community Still Growing

Back in December, the members of Bay State Commons donned hard hats, armed themselves with mallets, and gleefully set to work demolishing a village of gingerbread. Why would they have such joy in crumbling pastry? Because they know that a little levity can make all the difference as a group works through a challenging development process. The gingerbread carnage was a cathartic pre-celebration of a major milestone that kept getting delayed: the demolition of the vacant building on their site of just under an acre in Malden, MA, a few miles north of Boston. When a clerical error by Malden's government delayed approval of the demolition permit yet again, members decided that some demolition needed to happen *then*, even if it was just of baked goods.

It's been a long and often frustrating path for this still-growing group of 40 communitarians. For more than seven years they have worked together to find land, design a building and make their way through an unfortunate number of regulatory roadblocks. With all that behind them, it was a joy indeed to be looking toward demolition. (Their demolition permit was later approved in early January and the vacant building came down at the end of the month).

Along the way, the membership (which currently accounts for 23 out of an eventual 30 households) has succeeded in building the most important part of any cohousing neighborhood - a strong and bonded community. One of their earliest investments was to hire a process consultant to help them set up their consensus process and learn to collaborate well. Throughout their journey, they have continued to invest time and money in improving their governance and relationship skills. They know that it is the connection between them that is the real goal of cohousing.

In addition to consensus workshops and ongoing process support, the group invests in monthly socials varying from candlepin bowling and picnics to an upcoming visit to Boston's New England Aquarium. These are times to relax and enjoy one another in casual conversation and plenty of laughter.

It's that laughter that has carried them through to a very exciting time in development. Groundbreaking for the new building will take place in mid-February, and then construction begins. With most of the group currently residing in the local area, they will be watching closely as their structure takes form. In the end, it will be a 3-story building of 30 units and 5,000 square feet of common space where there will be abundant opportunities for gathering.

Environmental concerns have been a top priority for this community with an active Eco Committee. They've researched every element of sustainable building and incorporated all the energy saving measures and sustainably sourced materials they can afford into their plans. One of the most exciting features for sustainability may be the location itself, 750 feet from a subway, commuter rail and bus station for Boston's MBTA system. With many amenities available locally and downtown Boston a 20-minute subway ride away, members of Bay State Commons will have the option to access all that an urban life has to offer without owning a car.

As the group ramps up for the start of construction there are many decisions to make using their well-practiced consensus process. It speaks to the strength of the group, however, that the most common disputes may be about who is next in line to cuddle Miles and Alexander, the two newest members of the community, who will be toddlers when they move in to their new building during the second half of 2021. It's clear that by then there will be no shortage of loving neighbors to supervise as the little ones lick out dessert bowls in the common house kitchen and race each other down corridors.

A truly multi-generational community, Bay State Commons is looking for the last few members to join as construction begins. The remaining units (studio, one bedroom, and one bedroom plus) are ideal for couples or singles and are sure to be claimed soon. For more information, or to continue to follow the project, take a look at the

website www.baystatecommons.org or contact Tom at baystatecommons@gmail.com .

Blog

We Welcome Your Stories

Some of our favorite blogs are stories by people just like you. Tell us about your favorite community experience, your biggest learning, the beautiful thing your neighbor did. We'd love to share it. Submit to: karencohous@gmail.com

Hosting a Great Zoom Meeting

~Karen Gimnig

Video conferencing seems here to stay and it's a great tool for cohousing communities, especially for forming communities that do not yet live together. Even established communities are finding they can get increased participation when attending from home is an option. This is particularly true for parents of young children and adults with physical conditions that make it hard to leave home.

[Click here to read more](#)

Google Docs for Community

~Karen Gimnig

For nearly three decades now, communities have been using the tools of cohousing to live more collaborative lives. Google Docs may be the tech world equivalent for collaborating around text. Like any new tool, there can be a bit of a learning curve which will be more challenging for some people than others. I believe the collaborative potential is worth the investment.

[Click here to read more](#)

Classified Ads

Forming Communities and Communities Seeking Members

[Can you Hear the River Calling?](#)

[Bloomington Cohousing is seeking new friends and families to join us in beautifully wooded Monroe County, Indiana](#)

Bay State Commons has studios, 1BR and 1BR+ units available in advance of groundbreaking outside Boston!

Last Home Claimed

Multigenerational, environmentally responsible, cottage homes, 4.75 acres with organic garden

Riverside Living in Eugene, OR Growing rapidly - come aboard now!

Heartwood Commons – a new 55+ Community in Tulsa, OK. Won't you be our neighbor?

Skagit Cohousing -- our design is in process!

First Cohousing in Connecticut!

Homes for Sale

Wolf Creek Lodge Senior Cohousing in Grass Valley, CA

Award-winning Iowa City Cohousing homes available.

Beautiful and Energy-Efficient Homes for Sale in New Hampshire Co-housing and Farming Community

3 co ndo units for sale at Bull City Commons Cohousing – Join our urban Durham community: walkable, diverse, and vibrant

Reserve a home at Juniper Hill Commons – a multigenerational community in a progressive small city located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia

Rare Trillium Hollow Townhouse for sale 4 Bedrooms / 2 Baths

2BR/1.5BA - Cozy tree house atmosphere with front and back patios in vibrant, multi-generational Pleasant Hill Cohousing

55+ LGBTQ, Friends, & Allies Cohousing currently under construction in progressive Durham, NC

Cohousing Professionals

Caddis Collaborative

[McCamant & Durrett Architects](#)
[The Cohousing Company](#)

[Wonderland Hill](#)
[Development Company](#)

[Fitch Architecture](#)
[& Community Design](#)

[Cohousing Solutions](#)

[Cohousing Opportunities](#)
[Group](#)

Directory - Find your community now!

[Click Here](#) for the **Cohousing Directory**

If your community has not created a new and accurate listing for the new website, please do that now. As part of that process you will need to create a new user account which will allow you to update your directory listing and access other website features.

Huge Heaps of Gratitude to our
Association Supporters:

[McCamant & Durrett Architects](#)
[Caddis Collective](#)
[Wonderland Hill Development Company](#)
[Fitch Architects & Community Design](#)
[Cohousing Solutions](#)

Together We are Creating Community, One Neighborhood at a Time

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cohousing!

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