

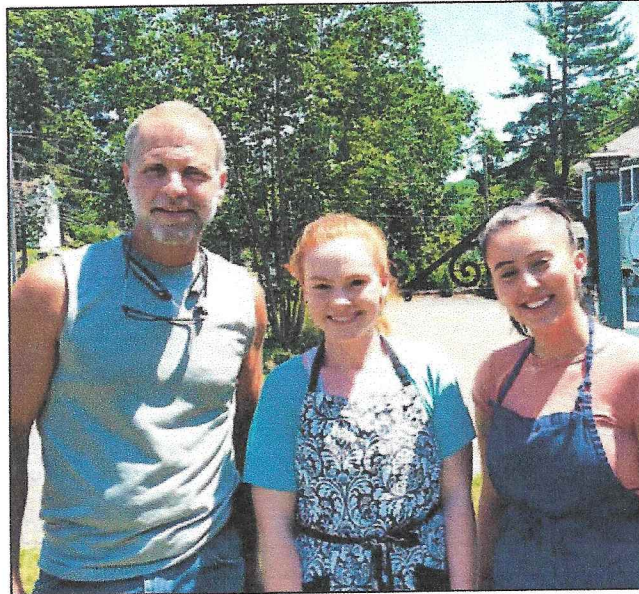
Oxford wants to pretty up Route 67

BY BILL BITTAR
REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

OXFORD — Town officials envision a beautification of Route 67 with sidewalks, benches, crosswalks, islands, linear parks and a new Little River Nature Preserve on a scenic tract of open space.

Kathleen O'Neil, grant administrator/writer for the town, said the route would begin with a walking bridge taking pedestrians over Dutton Road.

O'Neil said the project would slow traffic along Route 67 and benefit businesses. For instance, walkers could stop by The Ole Dog Tavern for lunch and hikers coming from the nature preserve could stop for



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The Oxford Baking Co. is one of the small businesses that stands to benefit from the Oxford Main Street project, which would beautify Route 67 in Oxford, slow traffic with islands, increase foot traffic with sidewalks and crosswalks, and establish the Little River Nature Preserve. From left is Norm Cloutier, co-owner of the bakery, with employees Kyra Donaldson and Megan Zacchia.

a cold drink at Oxford Baking Company.

"We would love to have a connection with other businesses, where it is safe for people to walk," said Norm Cloutier, who owns the bakery with his wife, Donna, and their daughter, Briana. "If it's done right, I think people are really go-

ing to enjoy it."

Cloutier said he wants to organize a block party with the Ole Tavern and with the Grange across the street, encouraging people to have dinner at the restaurant and enjoy dessert and live music at the bakery.

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OXFORD: Hoping for foot traffic

"I think it's going to define the town," First Selectman George R. Temple said of the project. "Route 67 is our main road and this is going to be beautiful. It won't be just a highway. It's going to be something aesthetically pleasing. I think it's going to be a great addition to the town. It will be a great place for leisure activities. I'm really excited about it."

O'Neil, who is also chairwoman of the Oxford Main Street Project Committee, said the town already secured federal funding for the bridge replacement project on Dutton Road, which will cost between \$1.5 million to \$2 million with the town paying 20 percent.

Meanwhile, O'Neil is applying for a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program grant from the Connecticut Department of Transportation to defray the costs for the four phases of the "Main Street" project.

Phase one would establish the Little River Nature Preserve on 18-acres of town property running behind buildings on the same side of the street as St. Peter's

Church. The phase include crosswalks along Route 67 and traffic islands.

O'Neil said Oxford Center School could serve as a satellite building for the nature preserve with experiments and movies for visitors. She also expressed her hope the project will enhance safety by slowing traffic on Route 67, where many vehicles travel at highway speeds.

Phase two would connect the nature preserve to Larkin State Bridle Trail. Phase three would establish a multiuse walkway from Pies & Pints restaurant to Quarry Walk and phase four would connect everything from the Seymour Railroad to the bridle trail.

O'Neil said all new businesses along Route 67 would be required to build a sidewalk in front.

The committee hired Aris Studio LLC, owned by Aris Stalis, as the landscape architect, as well as Attorney Peter Donnelly for the project. After a conceptual design is complete, public input will be sought at a meeting.

The committee is establishing itself as a 501(c)(3) non-

profit, so it can accept donations. O'Neil said benefactors include the Community Support Group formed by the CPV Towantic Energy Center, the Katherine Matthews Foundation and the Valley Foundation.

Boy Scouts will make trails and birdhouses and Thule Inc., a Seymour firm, will send volunteers under the coordination of the Housatonic Valley Association Inc., according to O'Neil.

If the project goes forward, Cloutier said he wants to build a bridge over part of the river, where his family owns land on both sides, to bring foot traffic from the preserve to the bakery parking lot. Of the town project, he said, "it's good for everyone."

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