



My wife, Elaine, and I have lived on McKinley St. for 5 years, but our connection to Montpelier and Central Vermont goes back more than 50 years to 1969, when we came here as college undergrads. We married in 1975, built a house in East Calais, and raised two children. I ran my own custom home building and remodeling company for 12 years during the '70s and '80s. While still a contractor, I began writing feature articles on business best practices, and in 1991 I took a full-time job on the editorial staff of *JLC (The Journal of Light Construction)*. Two years later I was promoted to editor-in-chief, and in 2001, after a national media company had acquired *JLC*, I accepted a position at their corporate headquarters and we moved to Washington, D.C. We enjoyed our time in the DC-metro area (we have family there), but after more than 15 years as editorial director of a series of trade magazines with a national audience of residential builders and remodelers, the opportunity arose to move back home to Vermont. We didn't think twice.

When our kids were young, I coached Little League and elementary school basketball. I also served several terms on the Calais school board, which faced several difficult decisions, including approval of an innovative sand filtration system to replace the school's failing septic system. (I recently confirmed that it's still working as planned.) Around the same time, I also served on the board of the Central Vermont Community Land Trust. Since returning to Vermont, I served for 2-plus years on the board of Living Well Group, which operates Heaton Woods Residence.

Business Management Experience

Residential new construction is a complex undertaking, as is home remodeling in particular. It requires knowledge of the technical elements of sound construction practices as well business fundamentals. And it requires the ability to manage customer expectations, something that's particularly challenging when remodeling a home while the owners are still living in it.

Over my 20 years as a carpenter and contractor, I learned (mostly in the school of hard knocks) the value of attention to detail, carefully prepared cost estimates and budgets, long-term planning, and properly sequenced schedules. I also learned the value of Plan B and how to recognize when it was time to use it. My experience supervising employees and building relationships with subcontractors and material suppliers served me well when I switched to a career in magazine publishing, where I supervised several teams of in-house and freelance writers and editors, and worked with graphic designers, product manufacturers, ad agencies, event planners, web designers, and sales reps, all while meeting tight budgets and even tighter deadlines.

Why I'm Running

In my talks with neighbors, both while considering a run for Council and while campaigning, a couple of issues are top of mind.

Infrastructure. In virtually every conversation I have around town, the condition of the roads and the frequency of repairs to water mains has been high on the list of concerns. I'm still catching up on the history of how we ended up here, but I think we can all agree that maintaining reliable water, sewer, and road systems is a basic function of city government. The poor condition of many roads and the frequent need for costly emergency water system repairs make it clear that something is not working. I'm ready to help explore the reasons behind the present state of affairs, and collaborate with DPW to find ways to turn things around, even if it means reexamining how scheduled work is prioritized.

Housing. I've been engaged with housing, both directly and indirectly, for more than 50 years. I'm a long-time student of building science and an early adopter of energy efficient building materials and techniques. I also believe that "affordability," which has become a watchword for housing, applies not only to the initial cost of housing, but also to operating costs. Equally important is a plan to preserve that affordability for successive generations of occupants, whether buyers or renters.

Current labor and supply chain problems are complicating this issue, but there are steps we can take with design and zoning requirements to increase density and allow for more multi-story structures, and with permitting and inspection to streamline the process and reduce the regulatory burden for both new construction and remodeling while still meeting safety and energy efficiency standards.

Country Club Road. In the next year, the City Council will make decisions on the direction of development at its Country Club Road property that will affect our community for decades to come. What first gained attention as the best available site for a new recreation building and sports fields has led to a lengthy information-gathering process to explore how it might also integrate affordable housing and preserve open land. We are a long way from having all the data we need to produce a final plan, but even at this early stage, several things seem clear:

- Long-term success for this project will require a thoughtful, creative, collaborative approach that draws on best practices for design, construction, zoning, and financing.
- Any new infrastructure required must not compete for resources with existing infrastructure. New projects will need to coordinate closely with the City's schedule for replacing existing water, sewer, and stormwater lines, and repairing and repaving existing roads.
- Cost projections for any new development at this project must include analysis of how both initial development and ongoing maintenance will affect property taxes.

As Yogi Berra once said, "The future ain't what it used to be." There are no easy answers, but we need to start by asking hard questions. If elected, I will work to find solutions that best meet the needs of the whole community.

I welcome your comments and concerns.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'SA', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

AlfanoForCouncil@gmail.com