

The Citizen of Laconia

The voice of New Hampshire's Lakes Region

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Selectmen set special meeting agenda

By HARRISON HAAS

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BELMONT — The Town of Belmont will hold a special town meeting in August to ask voters to discontinue the use of Mill Street in the Village and to purchase the former Northway Bank building on Main Street.

Selectmen voted unanimously to put both items on the warrant for the special town meeting, scheduled Aug. 21.

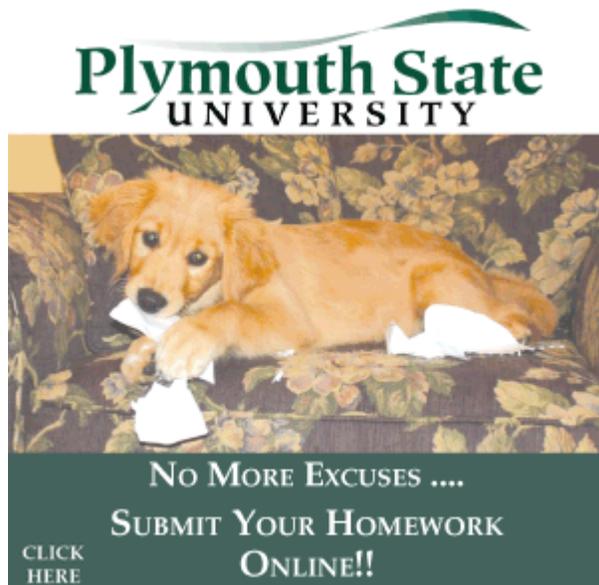
Discontinuing the section of Mill Street next to the library is part of the overall revitalization plan for the Belmont Village. The plan would relocate the one-way section of Mill Street and connect to the parking lot adjacent to the library, across from Fuller Street. That would allow for additional parking in the village and allow for more green space.

With the annual town meeting past, it now will require a special town meeting to discontinue the road.

Selectman Jon Pike wanted to assure residents that the town is not closing Mill Street but, rather, moving its location.

Opposing that plan are the owners of the former Northway Bank building, located at 154 Main St. William and Carol McDonough say that moving Mill Street would devalue their property by \$100,000.

They backed that up with a letter from real estate agent Pete Duval of DuvalTeam Real Estate in Concord, saying the property would lose value because of the loss of parking, the “loss of valuable



visibility to attract new clientel," and noting that lower rent has led to the loss of property value and resale value.

Selectman Ron Cormier said the town has attempted to purchase the property, first in 2008, when the town offered \$300,000, but the residents at town meeting defeated the proposal by a vote of 134-143. In 2009, voters again rejected the proposal when the price was \$275,000, by a vote of 311-421.

In their most recent conversations, the owners reduced the price to \$250,000 for the property, but Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said the town should, and will, consult an appraiser to

determine the actual market price.

"The question is, do we wish to make another attempt to purchase the building for \$250,000?" asked Cormier. "The last few times, the vote was close. We do have the money in the capital reserve [account], with there being no additional funds needed from taxation."

Pike said he favored buying the building and has for several years. He said that, before the town can consider purchasing the building, it needs to be able to why it should make the purchase now.

"We need to tell the residents about what is going to happen," he said. "I like the new price better. I think it's a win-win situation for both parties."

Cormier said the building could house the town offices, moving them across the street from the 100-year-old building where they currently are located.

Beaudin said a simple rendering could be made up to show how the building could be utilized, should residents have questions about the proposed purchase.

"This seems like the right thing to do," said Pike. "Being involved with the charette and getting this revitalization plan started, it would come together very nicely and this would be a key building in the project."

Resident Linda Frawley expressed concern about the timing of the matter, saying there was not much time for the town to explain to residents why it wants to purchase the building.

Cormier said he was concerned about the number of voters who would show up for a special town meeting, based on the turnout of past town meetings.

Selectman Ruth Mooney asked what would be done with the old town hall across the street. Cormier said there would be two options: demolish the building or attempt to sell it.

“We could try selling it during the moving process,” he said. “It will take a while to move the offices into the new location.”

In other business, selectmen voted, 2-1, in favor of accepting the job description for a part-time fire inspector and to publicly post the position.

During their last meeting, selectmen asked Fire Chief David Parenti to draft a job description. Parenti said the position would benefit the town and the department, noting that there is work that needs to be done.

Cormier commented that the position of the fire inspector has been a “gigantic issue” in town and he was not sure why.

“There are hazardous conditions in town and inspections are not being done and they need to be done,” Cormier said.

The fire department member who had been conducting the inspections was injured and only recently returned to work. With that in mind, Mooney said the matter should go through the budget process with the budget committee.

“The budget committee is not responsible for the executive authority to run the town,” said Cormier. “The budget committee is there to offer guidance. It’s up to the board of selectmen to use the money approved as it best sees fit.”

Mooney said that, when someone was injured in her business, other people were asked to step up to take on the extra work.

Parenti said it is not that simple, since people need to be certified to be able to perform inspections.

“Someone suggested using [Lakes Region] Mutual Aid or the call division; mutual aid is for emergency responses,” said Parenti. “Right now, we’re still not getting inspections done.”

Mooney added that it needs to be known that the fire inspector’s position is only part-time, and it is only for a certain period of time.

Lastly, selectmen voted to post Jamestown Road as a “No Through Trucking” road, effective immediately.

During the board’s last meeting, DPW Director Jim Fortin said construction vehicles have severely damaged the road, using it as a shortcut.

Fortin said the police chief is on board with making the road a “No Through Trucking” road. Selectmen will look into having other roads, such as Union Road, hold similar passage restrictions.

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