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Tempers flair over old bank property

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PETER HARRIS, Denis Carignan, Brian Loanes show off their Community Heritage Awards along with Selectman Ronald Cormier (left) at the Belmont Selectmen meeting last night. Harris was awarded for helping preserve two large pieces of penstock recently, Carignan was awarded for his work at the Carignan Clock Company and Loanes was awarded for his work as Executive Director of the Community Volunteer Excellence program at the Belknap County Youth Services. The awards were given out by the Heritage Commission to people, organizations or businesses that help move Belmont's

BELMONT — While discussing what to do with the old Northway Bank, recently purchased by the town, Selectman Ruth Mooney and Budget Committee Chair Ron Mitchell got into a tiff when discussing rumors that the town plans on tearing the building down.

Mitchell, who appeared before the board, was dressed down by Mooney for addressing the rumors at last Tuesday's budget meeting.

Mooney called addressing the rumors "offensive" and said the rumor was "stupid."

"I found that very offensive, we have been right out strait with the public about the revitalization and the bridge repairs, to refer to us in the manner that you did, it was uncalled for," said Mooney.

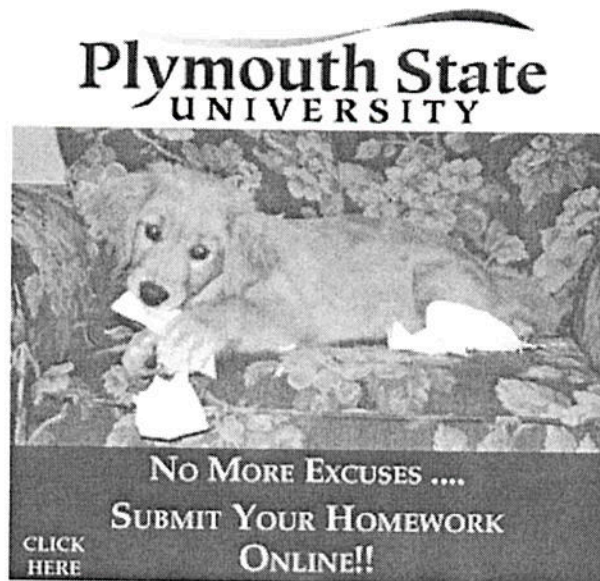
"All I said is that I was going to meet with the Selectmen to address the rumors," Mitchell said after the meeting.

Mooney also disagreed with Mitchell over the potential usage of the old bank, which saw its last tenant vacate Monday morning. Mooney said she is "at the top of the

heritage and aesthetic forward in a positive manner. BENJAMIN KLEIN/CITIZEN list" of people who want to tear down the old bank, which is located on Main Street right in front of the Belmont Mill.

Mitchell said that the Belmont voters would have never approved of buying the old bank for \$250,000 this past summer if the town was just going to tear it down, and he would like to see it become the new town hall.

The current town hall is dilapidated, Mitchell argued, saying that putting any more money into the current town hall would be throwing away money.



"We bought it to renovate it," Mitchell said, adding that the upstairs, which has a vault, would be an excellent location for the town clerk's office.

Ken Ellis, budget committee vice-chair, also attended the meeting, and said afterward that the current town hall is, "inadequate, we are still dumping money into it."

For her part Mooney called the bank an eyesore that does not keep in with the aesthetic of the rest of the area while inhibiting the view of the Mill, which she called the new center of the town.

"I don't like hearing on the street that you are going to tear the building down. I just don't want it

to sit there," Mitchell said, which caused Mooney to respond, "Cut us some slack."

"It is nothing against you, I just don't want it to sit there," Mitchell replied.

Mooney mentioned the economy being poor, causing Mitchell to interrupt her and say, "If that is the case we shouldn't have bought it. I don't want to see the thing just die."

While discussing the possibility of giving voters options of what to do with the old bank the board came up with the idea of putting out a survey to the town asking them what they think the town should do with it.

While no action was taken on the survey, Mooney said after the meeting that, "we'll address the possibility of a survey after the first of the new year."

That statement caused Mitchell to say, "if they don't address it after the first, we will be back."



In other business Thomas Goulette and Patrick Hall went before the board to discuss problems they are experiencing at the Food For Thought Cafe, which is a tenant of the Belmont Mill and run by the Lakes Region Community College Culinary Program.

Specifically they discussed issues with the carpeting, which they both said was frayed and had soft spots that could cause an elderly person to trip and hurt themselves.

The Board instructed Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin to look into different possibilities to replace the carpet, whether with a new stain resistant carpet or tile.

After the meeting Hall said they were happy with the response from the board, and that they expect the carpet to be replaced. The Cafe, which just signed a two-year extension of their lease at the Mill, takes up the fourth floor of the Mill.

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