
Belmont, LRGH in talks over old bank building

By TIM CAMERATO | Jan 22, 2015

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TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN

THE OLD BANK building was purchased by the town after a 2012 special Town Meeting.

BELMONT — The town of Belmont and Lakes Region General Hospital have entered into talks over moving doctors' offices into the old Northway Bank building on Main St.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said she reached out to a hospital official about a week ago to speak about the affiliated practice in the Belmont Mill. If a warrant article is approved by voters this March, Belknap Family Healthcare will be forced to move out of its space in the building.

Beaudin said another meeting was held on Tuesday where the town expressed it might be interesting in allowing the offices to move into the old Northway Bank building.

"It's slightly bigger than what they have right now," Beaudin said.

Beaudin said the building once housed a post office, Provident Bank and Northway Bank branch before being acquired by the McDonough family. The town purchased it for \$250,000 during a special Town Meeting in 2012, when residents approved the sale by a vote of 164 to 156.

The Town Meeting wasn't the first time Belmont tried to purchase the building though. In 2008 and 2009, warrant articles failed by more than 100 votes. Leading up to the 2012 vote, selectmen and town officials said their intention was to use the building for town offices.

Ruth Mooney, chairman of the Board of Selectmen, has advocated for the building to be demolished and made into green space. After a recent budget hearing where residents brought up the building, she said she began to think about looking further into the space.

"What we should do is before we make a final decision on that building, is look at our options," Mooney said, adding that those options include talking to the doctors using the mill.

“It doesn’t cost anything to talk with people and it doesn’t cost anything to listen to all the ideas,” Mooney said.

Mooney said she understands the game plan might have been to move town offices into the building when it was first acquired. She said sometimes circumstances change, and the deterioration of the Belmont Mill affected those plans.

“We didn’t plan on having the things that happened to the mill happen,” Mooney said.

She said they’re trying to make a decision that’s best for the town, and that includes looking at all avenues and listening to people.

Beaudin said Lakes Region General Hospital is hoping to have an architect look at the building within the next week and they hope to hear back within the next few weeks. She said a proposal hasn’t been made and nothing is set in stone yet.

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