

## Belmont bank building could be new recreation/community center

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By GAIL OBER, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Selectmen gave the go ahead Monday night to have Code Enforcement Officer Steve Paquin continue getting estimates from contractors about how much it would cost to turn the former Northfield Bank Building into a recreation/community center.

So far, Paquin has learned that it would cost between \$28,000 and \$30,000 to install an ADA-compliant elevator where the curved stairway is, and an additional \$12,300 to replace the floors, including one in a recreation area. He also said it would cost just under \$6,000 to upgrade the alarm system.

Paquin went to selectmen to get their approval before he brings in electrician(s) to give the town estimates on rewiring and bringing all of the wiring including the panel(s) up to current code.

"It would take a couple of days for (companies) to put together a bid," he said, saying he wanted to be sure the project was viable with the select board before he asked the electricians to do the specifications.

He told the board that it could cost \$50,000 to \$60,000 to do the electrical work plus another \$50,000 to do the heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems and that he is getting an estimate from Peter Dutile, who is doing some work on the Belmont Fire Station.

"Why do anything (more) without the electrical?" asked board Chairman Ruth Mooney. "If there's going to be kids in there, yeah (we need electrical estimates.)"

The former Northway Bank was purchased by the town from William and Carolyn McDonough for \$250,000 in 2012 after the town held a special Town Meeting in August. Purchasing the building had failed at Town Meeting twice before, in 2008 and 2009.

Since the town has bought the building, there have been many ideas for using it, as well as tearing it down, as was recommended by a Belmont Village charrette. The town considered using the building for a police department but it was deemed too small and there wasn't enough space for a sally port. Another idea was having LRGHealthcare relocate its offices from the Belmont Mill there.

The town also fought a lengthy court battle with the McDonoughs, who claimed that the town diminished the value of the property by announcing plans to reconfigure the former Mill Street, which would eliminate much of its parking. Ultimately, the town prevailed; however, the case was in the Merrimack County Superior Court for about two years before it was resolved.

Selectman Ron Cormier said that building a new recreation/community center for the town would cost millions and that if they could do one for \$150,000 plus the cost of the building it would make complete sense.

Other board members agreed.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said that if the final estimates are acceptable to the selectmen, the town would use some of the money it has in the capital improvement fund, which has a balance of \$480,000.