

# Winnisquam Echo

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2018

SERVING TILTON, NORTHFIELD, BELMONT &amp; SANBORNTON, N.H.

FREE

## Belmont Committee recommends investing in building space and feasibility study

BELMONT — The Belmont Facility Strategy Committee, a citizen group studying town buildings, recommends conducting a Space and Feasibility Study to assist in Town decision-making. Since last July, the Committee has reviewed Town buildings, available building studies and reports and conducted public tours and information meetings. Belmont has eight buildings with office space for Town activities. The Committee found there is 16,000 square feet of unused or underused space in Town buildings, while the Police Station, Town Hall and Library need additional space.

Belmont residents have suggested a wide range of ideas for best use of Town buildings ranging from no change to expanding the Police Department, Town Hall and the Library with various options using their existing facilities

and other Town buildings. The Town-owned historic Belmont Mill and Bank Building figure into the options as well. “Clearly, Belmont needs solid information on space needs, feasibility and projected cost for facility options to make informed long-term decisions on all Town buildings. This study is key to determining best use of Town buildings”, said Donna Hepp, Facility Committee member. Based on similar studies conducted in other New Hampshire communities, it is estimated the Space and Feasibility Study will cost \$65,000. To finance the study, voters will be asked to consider using the Municipal Facility Capital Reserve Fund which currently has a balance of \$429,161. No new tax dollars are proposed. Belmont spends about \$330,000 annually to operate, maintain and improve Town buildings. This study will

provide information to help guide investment in Town buildings needed for the future. The study will draw from existing structural studies and reports for the Belmont Mill, Library and other Town buildings.

Belmont’s Feb. 3 Deliberative Session provides citizens an opportunity to review proposed measures to be voted on next March. This session will be held at the Belmont High School Cafeteria at 10AM. The Space and Feasibility Study is included as Article 12 to be discussed at the Session.

Belmont Facility Strategy Committee members include Tom Garfield, Carmen Lorentz, Donna Hepp and Pret Tuthill. For more information about the Committee’s work, contact [dhepp3@gmail.com](mailto:dhepp3@gmail.com).

Attached are a Summary of Facility Committee findings and photos of 6 Belmont Town Buildings which would

be the focus of the Space and Feasibility Study.

### Summary of Belmont Facility Committee Findings and Concerns:

- Belmont citizens value efficient use of Town resources and the historic character of the Belmont Village where most Town buildings are located. The Belmont Library, Belmont Mill, Band Stand and other historic buildings were mentioned by many as a positive asset to the community. There’s also a strong interest in facilities to support community recreation programs.

- Providing a big picture look at the best use of all Town buildings seems to make sense to most Belmont citizens we’ve heard from.

- There is 16,000 feet of unused or underused space in Town buildings, while the Police Station, Town Hall and Library lack sufficient space.

- An independent assessment of Town office space needs is essential for future planning (e.g. how much space is needed for the Police Station? Town Hall?). A study to determine the feasibility of Town facility options (e.g. structural feasibility and cost estimate to expand Police Station with a second story, repair second floor of Town Hall or remodel the Bank Building). These estimates would assist decision-making. They would not be detailed building design proposals.

### Concerns include:

- Safety issues at the Police Station (need space for expanded dispatch, separate interview room, improvements to internal circulation)

- Inadequate space for at the Police station and Town Hall for staff, files, records and evidence, and supplies. Access for people with disabilities

to Town Hall is adequate but not customer friendly.

- Library lacks space for expanding book collection, computer use, office space and meeting rooms for a community of our size. Access for people with disabilities is limited in the Library and currently under study.

- Need a larger indoor space for Recreation Department programs, classes, supplies and equipment.

- Need a long term plan for the Belmont Mill and Bank Building which currently are underused. The Doctor’s Office will be leaving the 3rd floor of the Mill this Spring. Public comments mentioned need to find a use for the Bank Building and improve its appearance.

Other needs for the Fire Department and Public Works should be addressed in the future but are adequate at present.