

Attorney reviewing Gale School proposal

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Members of the Shaker Regional School Board have asked the district's legal counsel to review a draft request for proposals that would seek bids for building removal and site cleanup at the Gale School property.

School Administrative Unit 80 Superintendent Michael Tursi declined to release the draft document until the district's attorney has had a chance to review it, but he said it calls for the relocation of the historic school building and complete cleanup of the building site.

The school district had hoped to move the building to property at the corner of Memorial and Concord streets, and then to turn it over to the nonprofit Save Our Gale School Committee for \$1, but attorney James O'Shaughnessy ruled that out, saying the \$71,000 expenditure of district money that voters had authorized to move the building could legally be used only for school district purposes, and not for historic preservation.

Residents interested in saving the school have been meeting for years to determine a way to preserve the historic structure, including looking at ways it might be renovated to serve the school district, but they have not come up with a workable plan.

The school board has been trying to divest itself of the building since 2001, calling the building dangerous and saying it would cost too much to renovate it. Citizens have consistently advocated for its preservation, deflecting every attempt to raze the building.

Tursi said the current proposal stipulates that the building would have to be moved to another site, but the district would have no control over what the buyer does with it after that. The new owner might still tear it down.

The school was built in 1894 and later was named after Napoleon B. Gale, who had left \$10,000 to the town. The school ceased operations in 1985 when the new Belmont Elementary School opened.