

PAST ISSUES YARD SALES DAILY DEAL

HOME NEWS OPINION OBITUARIES COMMUNITY SPORTS DINING A & E WORK

ABOUT US CONTACT US ADVERTISING CLASSIFIED



Home News Local News Belmont selectmen pull plug on \$500k article

BELMONT SELECTMEN PULL PLUG ON \$500K ARTICLE



Published Date

BELMONT – After considerable discussion and input from residents, selectmen decided to remove from this year's town meeting warrant the \$500,000 warrant article that, if passed, would go toward fixing the Belmont Mill's fourth floor.

Instead, the town decided to hire an engineering firm that would tell them exactly what the historic mill needs before selectmen attempt to commit any money towards the repair.

Selectmen also want a clearer definition of what the purpose the mill would have and mentioned it as a possible location for the town offices.

By means of history, Selectman Chair Jon Pike said the much of the work that should have been done by the contractors who did the mill restoration in 1997 was not done properly.

"This is a terrible shame," Pike said, adding that he is appalled by what happened and, in his mind, the

town was "hookwinked" by the contractors who did the work.

He said the restoration plan called for the contractors to remove much of the fourth floor and instead contractors replaced the only the sub-floor and "maybe five or six" of the main boards.

He also said the matter has been referred to the town attorney to see if there is any chance the town can recoup some of the money it spent on their restoration. Pike said the company who did the bulk of the work is no longer in business but there may be some kind of insurance policy to recoup some of the money.

Pike also said the town was partially to blame for not hiring a clerk of the works – or a person who works for the town and oversees a project to make sure it is being done as required.

Former Town Administrator Don McLelland Sr. was at last night's meeting and said when he first became town administrator, it took him nearly six months to sort through the project and try to figure out what happened prior to him assuming the job.

He said some of the contractors "bailed" on the job and, in his opinion, the building has "a lot more problems than the fourth floor."

"Someone needs to review all of those files," McLelland said.

Building Inspector Steve Paquin said that aside from some brick work on the exterior and the fourth floor, the Mill is structurally sound and is in no danger of collapsing.

The Belmont Mill restoration was done in 1997 using a \$1-million Community Development Block Grant and \$215,000 bond issue approved at town meeting.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said the entire bond has been repaid, but the uses of the mill and the amount of rent the town can charge is limited by the 20- year terms of the CDBG.

Since the restoration was completed, the town has also spent additional tax dollars replacing the roof and doing other repairs as needed.

The mill was nearly destroyed by fire in 1992 and much of the roof was damaged during the blaze. Wallace Rhodes of the Heritage Commission said the roof remained intact however it leaked before the fire and the water damage continued for the five years the mill sat vacant.

The fourth floor deficiencies were noted in early December when representatives from the Lakes Region Community College Culinary Arts Program and the Food for Thought Cafe came to selectmen and asked for a new carpet.

Head Chef and program director Patrick Hall also mentioned that part of the floor in the dining area seemed soft to him or had a dip.

Selectmen asked Building Inspector Steve Paquin to look at the carpet and also to look under it to see what, if anything, was causing the dip.

Two weeks later Paquin reported the wood under the sub-floor had some significant rotting and much of it likely needed replacing. Since then, Paquin noted the floor needed more work than was initially needed and selectmen met last week in an emergency session and told the Culinary Arts Program that it would have to relocate.

Because of the extent of the work that the fourth floor needs, once construction begins, the third floor would also need to be temporarily vacated.