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# Engineer finds Belmont Mill to be in 'good condition'

By TIM CAMERATO | Oct 16, 2014

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**BELMONT** — A structural engineer hired by PortOne Architects found no immediate life safety concerns in the Belmont Mill, after a limited visual inspection of the building on Oct. 10.

Engineer Bob Champagne, with Summit Engineering in Portsmouth, toured the mill with Barry Salta, of Bonnette, Page & Stone, and Code Enforcement Officer Steven Paquin. His visit comes after a previous Board of Selectmen meeting on Oct. 1, where former selectmen Mark Mooney and Donna Cilley suggested that the structural integrity of the mill should be investigated.

According to Champagne's report, he was unable to review the structure of the lower level because parts of the building were occupied.

"The ceilings and walls were covered in gypsum wall board, and would require removal to observe the exterior masonry walls as well as the floor framing," Champagne wrote in his report. "We did review the interior masonry walls (where exposed) at the elevator, and these appeared to be in generally good condition."

Champagne added that the interior walls at the elevator were reviewed and they also appeared to be in "general good condition." He said it doesn't appear that area was affected by the 1992 fire.

"On the second floor we removed a few suspended ceiling tiles to expose the third floor framing," Champagne wrote. "There was no fire damage at this location....the upper floor framing appeared to be in generally good condition."

Champagne also inspected the attic where he was able to see repairs made from previous renovations, as well as deteriorated wooden plank sheathing, which will be removed because of water damage.

"This floor sheathing is the only readily visible sign of structural concern within the building at the time of our walk-through and limited visual inspection," Champagne wrote. "The plank sheathing can easily be removed and replaced."

Champagne wrote that to perform a formal structural evaluation, all of the wall and ceiling finishes would need to be removed. He said that there didn't appear to be any "immediate life safety or structural concerns," based on what he saw.

"Generally speaking however, the building appears to be in good condition. However, with any renovation you are likely to find areas that will require repair/alteration, but this is the nature of any renovation project," Champagne wrote.

During a meeting Wednesday with the Board of Selectmen, PortOne Principal Kelly Davis said Champaigne believed that 90 percent of any structural issues were handled during previous renovations.

“His comments were all positive,” Davis said.

BPS Vice President Keith McBey told the board there was also plans to meet with Scott Whittaker, a masonry restoration expert, on Wednesday morning, but that meeting was delayed until Thursday.

The board is scheduled to meet for another work session on the mill on Wednesday, Oct. 29.

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