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## Belmont Mill makes it to town warrant

By TIM CAMERATO | Jan 07, 2015

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**BELMONT** — The decision to renovate the Belmont Mill into a town hall now lies with voters on Town Meeting Day, after the Budget Committee voted unanimously to recommend the project.

The final cost recommended by the committee on Tuesday came to \$3,357,250, which is \$300,328 less than an estimate presented to the Board of Selectmen on Dec. 29.

Keith McBey, vice president of Bonnette, Page & Stone, said a lot of the savings came from taking another look at the proposed masonry work. Originally, Building Envelope Specialists of Portland, Maine, quoted a price of \$752,152 to repoint the building and repair a section of wall found to have fire damage.

McBey said BPS began target bidding, or speaking with trusted masons to provide alternate numbers and plans, to estimate a lower cost. They then went back Building Envelope Specialists and brought the costs down to \$485,572.

Chairman Ronald Mitchell said his initial thought was that repointing the building wasn't necessary because of the high cost of masonry work. McBey said repointing allows for water repellent to be applied to the bricks. The mill's first floor has problems with moisture, and new bricks and water repellent would prevent water from getting trapped inside.

"It's going to allow water to penetrate much like does now, but it doesn't penetrate as deeply," McBey said. "So it inhibits the flow of moisture into it, but it doesn't lock it out."

Selectman Jon Pike said Belmont deserves a town hall. He said he didn't know if the mill's the right building for it, but the town seal says it should be.

"I don't care whether you pass it. I don't care what you do. But you're going to live with it," Pike said, adding the town should be allowed to decide.

"They all like downtown. You've created a downtown that they all like," Pike said.

Committee member Tonyel Mitchell-Berry asked if the Corner Meeting House could become a community center, if town offices moved.

Selectman Ruth Mooney said the vision of the selectmen is to move town offices into the mill, keep the senior center there and make the meeting house a community center. She said they don't yet know what to do with Town Hall.

"Our vision is, I would think, just get rid of it," Mooney said. "Get rid of it, turn it into a parking area."

Member Tracey LeClair asked what happens if a vote fails, and Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin replied nothing would happen to the building.

Building Inspector Steven Paquin said he inspects the fourth floor weekly and there is no immediate threat to any of the tenants.

“The longer the building sits with lack of heat, humidity controlling, everything else, the rot is just going to continue to progress,” Paquin said. “When that board gives way, your guess is as good as mine.”

After discussion about the village’s other buildings, the committee moved and voted to recommend the project.

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