

Case made for Belmont Mill renovation

By TIM CAMERATO | Jan 21, 2015

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Photo by: TIM CAMERATO/CITIZEN

BELMONT SELECTMEN are hoping to renovate the Belmont Mill and make it a new town hall.

BELMONT — The Belmont Board of Selectmen, town administrator and contractors gathered on Tuesday to make their case to citizens for renovation of the Belmont Mill.

The group meeting was part of a bond hearing on the renovation project, which will be on this year's town warrant.

Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said the project was set in motion in December 2012, when the Board of Selectmen

was considering replacing the carpet in the fourth floor of the mill. At the time, Lakes Region Community College's culinary program reported the existing carpet was sagging.

Beaudin said that resulted in a process of "investigation, discovery and dismay" over the Belmont Mill's 1997 renovation. She said the attempt to save the mill then was pushed forward despite problems identified by several subcontractors working on the job.

"To sum up what happened, 20 years ago there was a lack of oversight by the town, the architect and the contractor, and insufficient funds for such a large project," Beaudin said, adding that a community development block grant "tied the hands of the town" with restrictions of who could then rent the building.

Since the 1997 renovation, Beaudin said the town spent about \$407,000 on repairs to the mill's new roof, lead paint abatement, partial floor replacements, drainage and other projects.

Currently, Belmont makes a total of \$46,730.43 off rent and utility income paid by the mill's tenants, while spending \$62,750.66 to keep the building running. Beaudin said the town also has to pay for expenses in the current Town Hall, which amount to \$23,980.80.

The selectmen's proposal calls for a budget of \$2,677,080 in construction costs. There's also a "soft costs" budget of \$680,170, and \$95,000 set aside to build additional storage at the rear of the building. Together, that creates a bill of \$3,452,250.

Beaudin said the town wants to bond \$2,957,250 of that. Depending on whether the town goes with a 20- or 25-year bond, residents could expect to see their tax rate increase 45 to 48 cents per thousand in property value, according to information provided by the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank.

For a person with a \$200,000 home, that's an increase of \$90 to \$96 dollars a year.

"We would be looking to solicit quotations from all of the Lakes Region banks in addition to the New Hampshire Municipal Bond Bank when we actually get ready to move forward with the project so that we get the best interest rate, the best term and the best repayment schedule," Beaudin said.

Beaudin also presented the proposed layout of the building. The first floor would house a main entrance, employee entrance, and direct entrance to the General Assistance Office. There would also be room for the three employees in the Tax Collector's office, storage space and room for and expanded Tax Assessor's office.

On the second floor, there would be a large meeting room responsible for holding the town's meetings, along with space for the Senior Center to continue operation in the mill.

The third floor would have space to the building inspector, Water and Sewer Department, the town planner, and a large common storage space.

The fourth floor would be home to the town administrator, Finance Department, treasurer and a conference room for the selectmen.

Once the move finishes, there are plans to turn the Corner Meeting House into space for Parks and Recreation programs.

Resident Woodbury Fogg asked if anyone had done an estimate of what it will cost to house the town hall in the mill. Selectman Ruth Mooney replied they have not done that.

"We know what is presently being spent and obviously what is being done. We assume that those costs are going to be less," Mooney said.

Keith McBey, vice president of Bonnette, Page & Stone, said there are "rule of thumb" numbers come out to \$32,000 total, but that's not set in stone.

Budget Committee Chairman Ron Mitchell asked what type of heating system will be used. McBey replied heating oil with an air system.

"I know, in the past, we've had problems with the venting of the fumes from the furnace because the chimney doesn't extend high enough," Mitchell said.

McBey said there is a healthy budget for heating and they could pick accordingly, although most people like the price of oil.

"We're in the 21st century so we want to have the latest technology as far as heating, ventilating and electrical," Mitchell said.

Former Selectman George Condodemetraky asked if the duct work would be changed, and McBey replied they're looking for a new ducting system. He said the current system isn't performing well and is costly to clean.

McBey said there are also no plans to add a humidification system.

“That’s not good because moisture is very important in the heating system,” Condodemetraky said.

After asking about space in the new building and how the fourth floor has to be rebuilt, the meeting was adjourned. The deliberative session of Town Meeting is scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 31, at 10 a.m., at Belmont High School.

The Board of Selectmen also plan on holding another informational meeting on Monday, Feb. 23, at 5:30 p.m., in the Corner Meeting House.

More information on the mill can be found at [http:// belmontnh.org/projectsbelmontmill.asp](http://belmontnh.org/projectsbelmontmill.asp).

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