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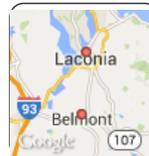
Belmont Mill conversion plan enjoys broad support at SB-2 session

BELMONT MILL CONVERSION PLAN ENJOYS BROAD SUPPORT AT SB-2 SESSION

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BELMONT — About 40 voters came to Saturday's SB-2 deliberative session at the high school on Saturday and most of them had the proposed \$3.4-million renovation of the Belmont Mill on their minds. And in the end, the final hand/voice vote taken showed overwhelmingly in support of the project as proposed.

Where's the story?



2 Points Mentioned

The plan as proposed by selectmen and unanimously supported by the Budget Committee would completely rehabilitate the mill and retrofit it for the town officers. Selectman Ruth Mooney told the gathering that should the project be approved by voters on March 10 her recommendation would be to tear down the current Town Hall for parking and/or green space.

Mooney also said the Parks and Recreation Department would relocate to the Corner Meeting House where it would be closer to Sargent Park and Bryant Field.

Not everyone at Saturday morning's meeting were supportive of the entire project.

Donna Hepp, who has attended the bond hearing and has studied the project, made a motion that the town appropriate \$1 million for fixing the fourth floor and the masonry. Four-hundred thousand dollars of that would come from the Municipal Capital Reserve Fund.



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Her motion was supported by and handful of attendees.

She, along with a few others including George Condemetraky, who is a candidate for selectman, do not want the Historic Mill used for town offices. Both contend that 17,000-square-feet is too much for about 20 employees.

Heritage Commission member Linda Frawley said she supports restoring the mill but does not support gutting it and making into town offices. She said she supported Hebb's amendment because too much has been proposed with what she says in in too little time for people to understand it.

Budget Committee Chair Ron Mitchell said the first proposal was for about \$1.2 million to do the restorations, but at the end of that time there would be no tenants.

He also said one of the proposals included gutting the road construction budget for a couple of years and he absolutely does not support that.

Mitchell said Laconia contractor, Bonnette Page and Stone, is local, is known for doing excellent work and standing behind it, and doesn't want to do a "half-baked" job.

Budget Committee members Tracy LeClair and and Tina Fleming both stood in support of the \$3.4-million project, saying it was one of the most comprehensive and forward thinking thing presented to the town in years.

Selectman Ron Cormier agreed with LeClair and Fleming adding that in the 11 years he's served as selectmen this is the best long term project he's looked at.

When George Condodemetraky asked for a secret ballot vote, Moderator Al Nix asked him if he had five signatures to support a secret vote.

Nix also threatened to have Condodemetraky escorted from the room if he didn't obey the rules of order.

After hearing all of the complaints against the project, former town administrator and Selectman Donald McLelland Sr., said the mill has been problematic since he took over as administrator and maybe the best thing to do would be to tear it down, save the bell tower along with the Gale School bell tower and ring them together.

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