

Belmont voters will be polled on the future of the Belknap Mill

By GAIL OBER, LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — Selectmen have decided to decide the future of the Belmont Mill by polling voters in 2017 and asking them a series of non-binding yes-or-no questions on the March ballot.

The first question will seek to if a voter supports a future renovation of the mill building for use as town offices. The second asks whether the voter is in favor of tearing down the building, while the third asks if the voter is in favor of selling the building.

“We will not be asking for any money (for the mill or the bank),” said Selectman Jon Pike on Friday.

The discussion of the mill’s future was triggered about six weeks ago when selectmen had a discussion with Code Enforcement Officer Steve Paquin about \$300,000 in renovations to the former Northway Bank building for a recreation center.

Pike questioned the use, saying that the town offices are overcrowded and some of them should be moved to a renovated bank building. His objection led Selectman Ron Cormier to say that until the town decides what it is going to do with the Belmont Mill, it shouldn’t move any town offices into the bank or spend any money on the bank.

Last March, voters overwhelming rejected a \$3 million bond article that would have renovated the Belmont Mill and converted it into town offices.

However, in a series of public meetings held recently by selectmen since then, the board hasn’t gotten any clear direction from those who attended to see in what direction they should go.

The decision to put the three questions on the ballot will hopefully, said Pike, reach enough Belmont voters so the selectmen will know what direction to take.

“Once we know what the majority of people want, we will decide on a path for the future,” Pike said.