

## **Belmont Mill Razing on Hold**

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**BELMONT** -- Demolition of the one remaining structure at the **Belmont** Mill complex will be put on hold until a court decides whether selectmen exceeded their authority in ordering the work. Wallace Rhodes, president of the **Belmont** Historical Society, said the town has agreed to halt demolition until a request for an injunction is heard in Belknap County Superior Court.

Rhodes is also spokesman for a group that hopes to save the four-story 1833 mill building, which was damaged in a fire three years ago. "It's on the town seal. This town wouldn't have been what it was without the mill, which is historically significant in the hosiery industry," said Rhodes. He said a report from Dr. James L. Garvin, state architectural historian, indicates the building is structurally sound and can be rehabilitated. Several other buildings in the fire-damaged complex have already been demolished. Selectmen decided to tear down the buildings after the town's request for \$700,000 in block grant funds to rehabilitate them was turned down earlier this year.

Rhodes questions whether selectmen have the authority to have the buildings torn down, noting that a \$100,000 appropriation the board sought and voters approved at town meeting was for "renovation and rehabilitation of the mill." He did concede that Selectman Mark Mooney said at that meeting that the funds could possibly be used to take down the buildings. Selectmen have been trying to get a 40-unit housing project for senior citizens to switch to the **Belmont** Mill site, maintaining it is more suitable than that project's planned Shaker Road site.

Rhodes said the group has taken no position on the housing project change and that it would like to see the mill building either a part of the project or put to some complementary use. He said selectmen should have hired an engineer to do a thorough study of the mill before deciding to tear it down.

But Mooney, a builder, says he has thoroughly inspected the building and insists the cost of renovating it would be prohibitive.