

Belmont Voters Grant Mill Reprieve

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BELMONT - A historic mill building here will remain standing through the winter months while townspeople who want to save the mill try to locate funds to rehabilitate the fire-damaged structure. Voters at a special town meeting last night turned down an attempt by selectmen to approve demolition of the 1833 **Belmont** Mill. Instead they voted to direct selectmen to use funds appropriated at town meeting to secure the building in order to prevent further damage from the elements.

The vote in favor of saving the mill was 122-74.

Selectmen had already started with the demolition of several of the mill buildings when a group of townspeople won a court injunction in September which halted the demolition.

Wallace Rhodes, president of the **Belmont** Historical Society and spokesman for the group trying to save the mill, said that the voters' decision bought time in which to explore ways to preserve an important part of the town's history. Selectman Mark Mooney maintained that the restoration costs will prove prohibitive and that allowing the building to remain standing will prevent a senior housing project from being moved to the site.

But Janet Hammond, president of **Belmont** Housing Inc., said the Belknap-Merrimack Community Action Program, the developer of the housing project, has already spent \$113,000 on a Shaker Road site and won't move the housing project to the mill site unless funds are reimbursed by the town. She said an environmental study of the site is also needed.

Warrant articles on moving the senior housing project to the mill site and authorizing selectmen to transfer the property to **Belmont** Housing Inc., never came before the meeting as voters supported a motion to adjourn before those issues were taken up.