Bargain for a buck: Belmont has offered to buy pedestrian bridge for $1

By Jim Haddadin
jhaddadin@fosters.com

Posted Jun. 29, 2013 at 3:15 AM
Updated Jun 29, 2013 at 7:00 AM

DOVER — The town of Belmont has made an offer to buy Dover’s disused pedestrian bridge, and the wooden structure could be hauled away by the end of the year.

Belmont has offered to pay a nominal $1 fee in order to take ownership of the bridge, which has been languishing on abutments since 2010. City officials have been wrestling with the question of what to do with the bridge since it was removed with a crane and replaced.

The 17-year-old bridge has apparently captured the attention of town officials in Belmont, who...
have provided Dover with a "commitment letter" to buy the bridge, according to Dover City Manager Mike Joyal. Joyal announced Belmont's interest during a meeting of the Dover City Council earlier this week.

Belmont's town administrator could not be reached this week to discuss the town's plan for the bridge.

"They've already extended us an offer," Joyal said Friday. "They wanted to just have an engineer look at it."

The bridge was constructed in 1996 and was originally located on lower Washington Street. The covered pedestrian bridge is now the target of vandalism and graffiti.

For the past three years, a citizens group called the Save our Bridge Committee worked to raise funds to relocate the bridge within Dover. The committee was targeting the Washington Street Crossing, located at the Children's Museum of New Hampshire and the One Washington Street mill building. But the committee chose to disband earlier this year due to a lack of political and community support.

Earle Goodwin, a former citizen of the year recipient who previously served as Strafford County commissioner, also worked on a proposal to keep the bridge in Dover. Goodwin hoped to see the city create a park on 1.9 acres of unused city land near the waterfront and make the bridge the centerpiece.

In February, the City Council voted to give Joyal 90 days to explore what to do with the bridge. One option was to engage a contractor to dismantle it, saving timber to possibly reuse or sell in the future. Another option was to solicit proposals to dismantle and sell the bridge timbers on-site.

The city also considered establishing another committee of residents to continue fundraising efforts for the relocation and reuse of the bridge in Dover. But the offer on the table from Belmont appears to be the most appealing to city officials.

"Obviously we would like for it to be in Dover," Joyal said Friday, "but if the funds are not available, we cannot do that."

Although the sale price has been fixed at $1, Belmont would incur significant expenses dismantling the bridge and transporting it to the Lakes Region. The distance from Dover to Belmont is roughly 40 miles.

"I doubt that they could take it in one piece, just because of the length and the limitations of the roads and bridges," Joyal said.

City councilors could take formal action on Belmont's proposal as early as July. In the meantime, the bridge is sitting on temporary abutments by the waterfront.