Final sections of covered bridge put in place in Belmont

BY DONNA RHODES

BELMONT — On Jan. 31, the final two sections of a covered bridge bought from the Town of Dover in 2013 were joined together and set in place at their new home along the Village Spur Rail Trail in Belmont, which will now provide walking, biking and cross country ski opportunities for people from the Tioga Pavilion in Belmont Village out to South Road off Route 140.

The bridge was purchased for $1, and had to be cut into three sections in order to transport it to Belmont. Plans were made to use one portion for a narrow crossing over the Tioga River while the other two sections were earmarked for a wider crossing further down the trail that was once an old railroad bed.

In December of 2015, a small group of volunteers teamed up with the Roberts family of Leslie E. Roberts LLC, which provided the necessary heavy equipment, and placed the first section over the river beside the Belmont Mill building. It allowed people the opportunity to walk along the river behind the mill then cross over to the Village Spur Trail, as the former railroad bed was named. From there, the trail traveled along the banks of the river to the next crossing behind the mill.
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Great Brook housing development but there it came to a dead end for awhile.

A little more than two years later, thanks again to the Roberts family and those same volunteers, Woody and Christine Fogg, Ken Knellhorn and Ron Mitchell, the remaining two portions of the bridge are now joined over the river and the trail continues on out to South Road.

"The intent was to accomplish all this work at very little cost to the taxpayers of Belmont. That was achieved through a combination of state and federal grants, donations of materials and services, and lots of volunteer labor and commitment," Fogg said.

Since the first bridge was put into place, members of the Charles Kilburn American Legion Post 58 have held work sessions each year to clear brush and beautify the trail. With some help provided by volunteers from Belmont High School and the United Way’s annual Day of Caring, they have opened up a view of the river that people can enjoy as they travel across the bridge and along the riverbank.

While the second bridge is in place however, there is still a bit of work to be done when the weather gets a bit warmer. Right now a few wooden planks have been laid down to get onto the structure but soon the land will be graded on both ends to make it safely accessible on foot or by bicycle.

A bit of structural and cosmetic work is also planned. Fogg said they will have some replacement siding milled out for boards that were damaged or removed when the bridge was cut and the two sections were joined together. Gable ends will need to be painted and he hopes they will be able to install some lighting on both bridges in the near future. That work will take a little time but Fogg is excited to see it through to its completion.

"It’s all been a labor of love for us," he said.