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## Tioga Bridge again open to motorists

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BELMONT — The \$140,000 repairs and work on the Tioga Bridge on Church St. have been completed, and the bridge is now open after being closed for four months.

Despite weather related delays, the bridge has opened on schedule, as Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin had previously said the bridge would be open by Thanksgiving.

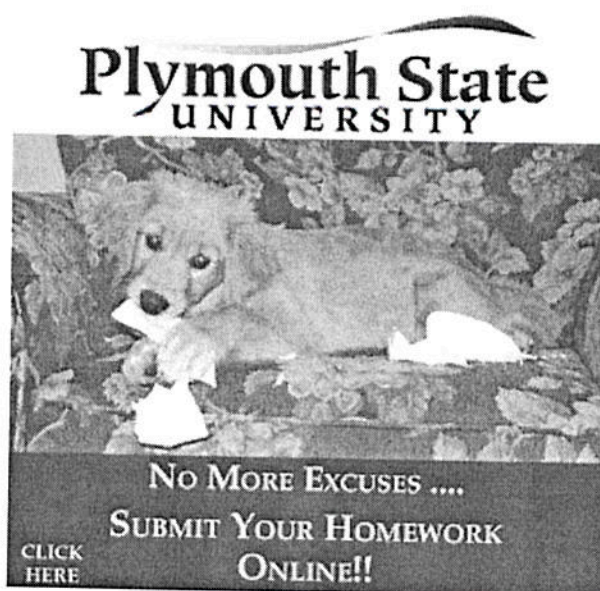
The bridge opening on time was no guarantee, as weather related delays had made construction on the bridge impossible for periods of time; then increased water-flow under the bridge further delayed repair crews.

The bridge, which opened Wednesday, saw construction completed earlier this week. But before the bridge could open, tests on the concrete had to be performed to ensure structural integrity. The opening of the bridge means that bus routes for Belmont High School, that were diverted during the closure of the bridge, can now resume their normal routes.

The work for the bridge repairs were handled by Busby Construction, the construction firm that is also handling the Revitalization Project construction right by the bridge on Main St.

Busby, which was contracted for the project by the town in lieu of going through a bidding process, was chosen because they already had the manpower and equipment in town and were ready to go to work, Beaudin previously explained.

Beaudin previously said that the repairs cost \$125,575 for the work done by Busby, which, along with \$14,000 in engineering costs going to the Hoyle Tanner and Associates engineering firm,



brought the total cost of the repair to \$139,575. Beaudin said that the entire cost of the bridge repair falls on Belmont, with no state or federal assistance of any kind.

The bridge repairs would have been complete much sooner if not for this fall's extreme weather, which included the natural disaster that was Superstorm Sandy. In order to perform the repairs work crews needed at least three straight days of good weather and steady water flow, something that proved hard to come by.

Tioga Bridge was closed after an Aug. 23 inspection by the State Department of Transportation.

Beaudin previously said that inspectors determined that the steel culvert of the bridge had severe corrosion from rust, which is why the town followed the state's recommendation.

"There was pitting and holes in the section that sits in the stream bed," Beaudin previously explained.

DOT spokesman Bill Boynton previously said that the bridge is actually a large pipe that has been paved over, and that water was flowing through holes inside the pipe, which was weakening the surrounding area. He added that if a flood was to occur, or even if the status quo was maintained, the bridge as it was was in danger of washing out.

The problems with the bridge were referenced several times by senatorelect Andrew Hosmer during his campaign for the newly created District 7 Senate seat. Hosmer said during his campaign that the troubles with Tioga Bridge were indicative of infrastructure problems around the Granite State. Hosmer said that to prevent the problems that befell Tioga Bridge, more money must be invested in maintaining and updating the infrastructure in the state.

Boynton previously said that of the one in five of the 1,685 municipal bridges in the state are on a red list – a list naming bridges around the state that have deficiencies and should be inspected more often. Tioga Bridge, which was constructed in 1975, had been on the red list since 2010.

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