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**Wednesday, December 18, 2002**

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 George

## Belmont eyes new town hall

By GEOFF CUNNINGHAM JR.

Staff Writer

**BELMONT** — A proposal for a new \$2.3 million town hall is on the agenda for tonight's meeting of the Board of Selectmen.

Selectmen will work from a lengthy agenda that includes continuation of budget talks when they meet at 5:45 p.m. at the Corner Meeting House.

The town hall proposal asks the board to support the building of a new 10,000 square foot structure to serve as town offices.

Architects from the firm of Sherman, Greiner, Hallé Ltd. will present board members with schematics and drawings detailing a building that would be built on some seven acres of town-owned land next to the Belmont Mill.

Current plans call for a two-story building that would be designed to match the architectural character of the village area.

A committee made up of local contractors and town officials has spent recent months looking at the issue and investigating whether such a building is necessary.

The architectural firm was hired by the town in July after concerns arose about the adequacy of the current town hall. Town officials say that due to a lack of space and deteriorating physical condition, the present town hall is quickly reaching the end of its lifespan as a suitable home for the municipal offices.

It is for this reason that a proposal has been brought forward to build a new municipal building to meet the growing needs of the town.

Town Administrator Donald McLelland Sr. said the proposal is being pitched to the board in the hopes it can be brought to voters at March town meeting.

Another major item on tonight's agenda is a proposal calling for the construction of a new salt shed for the public works department.

Recent enacted federal regulations require municipal salt supplies be covered to protect the environment.

Bob Bennett, the director of public works, is slated to present the board with a \$118,000 bid from a private firm to construct such an enclosure. Selectmen

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have yet to decide whether they will include the proposal in their recommendations for this coming year's budget.

Other budget requests to be dealt with come from the library and the Planning Board. The library is looking for money to purchase a computer server, while the planning panel is seeking funds to support the implementation of the recently updated Master Plan.

Selectmen will also hear testimony regarding a warrant article being proposed by the Conservation Commission. The article proposes that all revenues generated by the sale of town-owned properties go directly to the commission.

Tonight's meeting will begin with a public hearing on the acceptance of a \$5,965 federal grant that would be used to buy domestic preparedness equipment for the police department.

*Geoffrey Cunningham Jr. can be reached by calling 524-3800 ext. 5931 or by e-mail at [gcunningham@citizen.com](mailto:gcunningham@citizen.com)*

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