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Tuesday, January 14, 2003

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Belmont budget panel to hear proposal for new town hall

By GEOFF CUNNINGHAM Jr.

Staff Writer

BELMONT— The Budget Committee will be presented with a proposal for a new \$2.3 million town hall building at its meeting tonight.

Officials are hoping the budget panel members will endorse the project when they meet at 6:30 p.m. at the Town Hall.

Selectmen have already approved the proposal's placement on this year's Town Warrant, and the item will be brought before voters in March.

The proposal for the new Town Hall calls for an approximate 10,000-square-foot municipal building to be constructed on seven acres of town-owned land next to the Belmont Mill. Conceptual design and floor plans for the new building have already been drafted by architects hired by the town.

A study committee put forward the plan after deeming the current town hall unfit to serve as the town offices. Officials say the building has outlived its use and is not suitable to meet the needs of a growing community.

Plans for the new building will be presented to the Budget Committee by Town Administrator Donald McLelland Sr.

McLelland said he is looking for the endorsement of the project as the town continues to finish up budget proposals for 2003-2004.

Residents will get an explanation of two town hall warrant articles at a public hearing scheduled for Jan. 22 at 6 p.m. at the Corner Meeting House.

In addition to the proposal for the new municipal building, another warrant article has been put forward that would appropriate \$500,000 toward renovating the existing town hall.

The article was put forward by selectmen as an option should voters reject the \$2.3 million proposal.

While selectmen do not recommend putting more money into the existing building, they said voters needed an option so something could be done about the current working conditions of town employees.

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