



Winnisquam Echo

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SERVING TILTON, NORTHFIELD, BELMONT & SANBORNTON, N.H.

FREE

Deliberative session clarifies intent of Mill-related warrant articles

BY DONNA RHODES

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BELMONT — At Belmont's first deliberative session last Saturday, which afforded local voters the opportunity to discuss and amend the articles that will be presented at the polls in March, the biggest topic of discussion by voters centered around Articles 6, 7 and 8, which pertain to the Belmont Mill building.

Selectman Jon Pike introduced the articles by stating they include no funding requests and are nonbinding. They are simply a "survey of sorts" to give direction

to the board in regards to the future of the Belmont Mill.

After struggling for some time with the topic of space needs for town services and what should be done with the historic mill building, Pike said selectmen are now "looking for direction and we don't seem to have it."

In 2019, the town will have lived out the 20-year Community Development Block Grant that funded the initial restoration process and decisions for the building will need to be made

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DONNA RHODES

Deer, oh deer

No groundhogs were around, but three deer were seen enjoying a sunny morning on the outskirts of Tilton on Ground Hog Day. While they did see their shadow, there is no clear indication as to whether or not that means six more weeks of winter here in the Lakes Region.

Joint effort by local police leads to recovery of stolen equipment from Winner's Circle Auto

BY DONNA RHODES

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TILTON — Employees at Winner's Circle Auto on West Main Street in Tilton reported a burglary on Feb. 1 that resulted in some great teamwork between Tilton and Northfield police that brought about a speedy resolution of the crime.

Tilton Police first learned of the burglary at 9 a.m. last Wednesday, when it the staff at Winner's Circle discovered approximately \$40,000 worth of tools, inspection stickers, temporary license plates, diagnostic equipment and even a new four-wheeler were taken in a break-in at the business.

As detectives were processing the scene and gathering information and evidence, a call from Northfield Police Department advised them of an incident in their town that they felt could have a tie to the Tilton crime.

Northfield Police Chief John Raffaelli said he had responded to a call that morning for a suspicious vehicle on Susan Lane in his community. Upon arrival, he noticed a large amount of tools and a four-wheeler in the bed of the pickup truck in question.

Upon investigation, Northfield Police soon learned that the driver of the vehicle, Scott Angers of Tilton, had as many as five outstanding warrants for his arrest and his driver's license had been suspended. They also discovered that the truck he was operating was not registered and the license plates were from another vehicle.

Angers was then arrested and the vehicle was brought to the Northfield Police Station where the investigation continued.

During an inventory of the truck, North-



COURTESY

As the result of a collaborative investigation by police in Northfield and Tilton last week, 21-year-old Scott Angers of Tilton was arrested for outstanding warrants and felony theft of a four-wheeler, tools and other costly items from Winner's Circle Auto.

field PD officers noticed papers inside with the name of Winner's Circle Auto on them, which led to the call to Tilton Police and a connection between the two incidents.

Police from Tilton

headed to Northfield, where they were able to positively identify all of the items reported as missing from Winner's Circle Auto earlier that morning.

"It was a great job by

the Northfield Police Chief and the follow-up by Tilton's detectives," Tilton Chief Robert Cormier said. "Their investigation on two totally unrelated calls came together and made a huge difference in this major theft case (that) we were able to bring to a close within hours of it occurring."

As a result of the collaborative investigation, Angers, a 21-year-old from 342 Lancaster Hill Road in Tilton, was initially arrested for the five electronic arrest warrants issued in Franklin and Meredith County Jail overnight as he awaited arraignment in Franklin District Court.

Cormier reported that his detectives also plan to seek felony Grand Jury indictments in Laconia Superior Court for the burglary and theft at Winner's Circle Auto in Tilton.

Warrant article seeks to reduce Tilton Select Board to three members

BY DONNA RHODES

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TILTON — In March of 1998, voters in the Town of Tilton approved a measure to move from a three-person Board of Selectmen to a five-member board. This year, however, a petitioned warrant article will ask for reconsideration of that vote and a return to a three-member board.

Those currently holding seats on the Board of Selectmen find that this is not a sound idea however and ask that voters attend a public hearing on Wednesday, Feb. 15, to learn more about the petitioned proposal.

Chairperson Pat Consentino said she began her public service as a selectman on a three-member board at the age of 19 in Atkinson. Members discovered that any time two

of them assembled for a town event or meeting, there was technically a quorum of the board, which is legally required to be posted as a selectmen's meeting. She believes that that predicament that can be resolved by maintaining a five-member board, and that larger board also brings a wider array of opinions to better serves the community as a whole.

"As selectmen we are expected to attend meetings for town committees and commissions as ex-officio's and alternate representatives of the board. There's a lot of time involved in this that three people would have a hard time keeping up with," Consentino said.

Selectmen also spend many hours working closely with the Budget

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Fire displaces Lochmere family

BY DONNA RHODES

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TILTON — The report of an early morning fire at 3:32 a.m. on Feb. 1 began with some tense moments when the initial call alerted Tilton-Northfield Fire & Rescue of a structure fire with persons trapped inside at 15 Hill Rd., located in the Lochmere District of Tilton.

Fortunately, fire-rescue personnel were advised while en route that everyone inside the home had finally been able to make their way out of the one-story structure.

TNFD's Lt. Jon Powell said that other Lakes Region Mutual Aid departments were also alerted under an automatic First Alarm due to the dense concentration of



COURTESY

An early morning fire that started on an outside porch displaced five adults and three children in Lochmere last week.

homes and condos in the lakeside neighborhood. Besides crews from Tilton-Northfield, manpow-

er and equipment from Belmont, Franklin and Laconia also responded to the scene.

Already on patrol in the vicinity, Tilton Police Officer Abe Gilman was one of the first to

arrive at the residence. He, along with one of the occupants, used portable fire extinguishers to keep flames on the porch at bay until fire fighters arrived a few minutes later.

Powell said that due to the distance from the TNFD station to the

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FIRE

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scene, just a few miles from the Belmont and Laconia town lines, equipment from Laconia arrived first on the scene and quickly extinguished all visible flames with their hand lines. Other companies

then overhauled the residence to be certain there was no further fire extension from the porch into the home.

Two occupants were transported to a local hospital for smoke inhalation and minor burns

however.

"It was a great example of the Mutual Aid system's member departments working together along with local PD to bring the situation to its best possible outcome," said Powell in his

press release.

The fire displaced a total of five adults and three children who are being assisted by Red Cross at this time.

The fire was deemed to be accidental, the result of improper disposal

of smoking materials.

Statistics show there are approximately 90,000 fires in the U.S. each year that are smoking related. Safety officials wish to remind those who smoke to be very cautious when it comes

to disposing of cigarette or cigar butts and ashes.

"Dowsing them in water or sand is the safest way to put them out," said Tilton-Northfield Firefighter Luke Wakefield.

TILTON

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Committee along with state representatives, DOT, regional and non-profit agencies and that, she said, takes time as well.

Above all, Consentino pointed out, there would be more of a burden on the Town Administrator in keeping up with all that would be left behind with two less members on the board.

"It would create hours of extra work for

the town administrator and the three selectmen who would be out every night attending meetings for all the matters we need to deal with," she said.

Selectman Katherine Dawson agrees that five people can accomplish more than three when it comes to town government.

"To best serve their constituents, it takes a lot of time and 'boots on

the ground,' so to speak, to learn as much as you can about everything. Five people can spread the volume and breadth of work involved on the numerous standing statutory committees in the town, plus state, local, and private nonprofit committees that need selectmen representation," she said. "With a three-member board, two is a majority, which means that many deci-

sions are made by just two people."

With a five-member board, she continued in a written statement, there is the benefit of more opinions and knowledge pertaining to issues, and therefore there is more of an opportunity to get projects accomplished and problems resolved.

A fifth member of the board, Dawson added, can also break a tie on any four-person vote.

"It's the diversity of five people that makes the difference," Consentino said. "We always come to a resolve and move in the right direction. That's what makes Tilton so special."

Should voters approve the warrant article this year, in 2018 all board members and interested parties would be up for election for the three new seats; one for a three-year term, one

for a two-year term and one for a one-year term in order to start a new rotation of the positions.

Voters in Tilton are urged to attend the hearing next week to learn more about this matter so they can make an informed decision at Tilton Town Meeting, which will be held on Saturday, March 18 in Winnisquam Regional High School's cafeteria.

ARTICLES

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soon. And that, Pike said, has selectmen at an impasse on how to handle the situation.

The town has outgrown their present operating facilities and there is a need for greater space, which the mill could provide, therefore Article 6 will look for a simple "yes" or "no" vote on whether the building should be renovated for use as town offices and other municipal purposes. Due to inadequacies by the contractors who originally renovated the mill nearly 20 years ago, there is both interior and exterior work to be done on the structure though.

Selectman Ron Cormier added that repairs could be done in phases to lessen tax impact if that is the direction voters indicate they would prefer.

Some spoke up to say they feel it is worth the price to maintain a structure that has become an icon in the village.

"When I think of the Town of Belmont, that's

the picture I have of our town," one resident commented.

Article 7 will ask if voters would instead support demolishing the building. Nearly all of the 50 or more residents who attended the deliberative session stood up to speak passionately against that proposition however.

"When you look at all the work in the village that was centered around the mill, I can't believe this is even on the warrant," said resident Ken Knowlton.

It was also pointed out that while voting yes for this non-binding article would not mean the demolition would occur, should it ever be destroyed before the CDB grant expired the town would have to repay whatever amount remained on the agreement.

Budget Committee Chair Ron Mitchell said that considering the amount of the demolition and cleanup costs,

in addition to any CDBG repayment, he would never vote for such an expenditure.

"I don't believe we're going to tear it down, but some want it gone, some want it saved. It's up to you," Pike told residents.

Finally, Article 8 will ask if voters would prefer to simply sell the building and leave its future up to an outside private party once the grant obligations are fulfilled in 2019. The sale would only pertain to the building itself and not the surrounding property, which is encumbered under the Land Water Conservation Fund.

Several people were enthused by resident Donna Hepp's proposal to form a broad-based citizen's committee to assess all the buildings owned by the town, then make a recommendation to the board on how they might best be used or improved for future use.

"We can't keep looking at one building at a time...let's consider the

full picture," Hepp said.

Others spoke up in favor of her suggestion and said they, besides Hepp, would be happy to take part in such a study.

The matter before the town for now however will be the polling of voters through the three articles being presented this March.

Selectmen stressed that they would appreciate it if voters would read through the three proposals carefully and only vote "yes" for whichever one they would prefer the town to consider. The other two articles should get a "no" vote on the ballot.

"We want you to vote

Articles 6, 7 and 8 with your hearts and minds and just tell us what you want us to do," said Pike.

Information on these and all other matters that will appear on the March 14 ballot will be outlined in the town's 2017 Voter Guide, which will be available in the next week.

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