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Councilor Kenney tours Belmont's burgeoning trails

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BELMONT —New Hampshire Executive Councilor Joseph Kenney toured several sites and trails in the central part of the state last Friday to get an update on current recreational programs and progress being made for conservation and outdoor opportunities. Along the way, he even stepped a bit out of his own district's boundaries to visit trails being developed in Belmont village.

"This isn't a part of my district, but everyone wanted me to see a great example of what was being done on a municipal level here in Belmont," Kenney said.

State officials and Belmont's Town Planner, Rick Ball, started the

tour with Kenney at the Tioga Pavilion, where he learned that a Land and Water Conservation Fund helped the town first build a facility that has now been used for community gatherings, farmers' markets and musical events.

Phil Bryce, director of the state's Division on Parks and Recreation, told Kenney, "The reason you're here is not because it's a part of the state park system but because the Town of Belmont has done an awful lot of things here lately that we thought you should see."

Ball explained that a charette held in the town several years ago helped identify a need for such a venue in the town and that grants through state

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New Hampshire's District One Executive Councilor, Joe Kenney (far left), met with Belmont Town Planner Rick Ball (second from left) and other state officials last Friday for a tour of the trails and recreational opportunities now available or in the developmental stages in Belmont Village.

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and federal funds made it a reality. Bryce added that the program that helped build the pavilion was part of a matching grant fund from the federal government and

has aided more than 675

other projects statewide. Kenney, playing Eric Feldbaum, the "devil's advocate" as he Community Recreation termed it, asked if such Specialist for the state, restrictions on the land said one special part would harm a community of the project was the nity down the road if town's commitment to they should ever need keep the land available the land for a police station or some other mu-

nicipal use.

"Can they buy out of the agreement?" he asked.

Feldbaum explained that 25 years from now, should they need to change the use of the pavilion property, the town would still need to make equitable commitments to recreation.

"It would be the town's responsibility to find an acre somewhere else if they decide to build on this property," Feldbaum said.

The visit didn't end with the pavilion, however. Kenney was able to head out on a walk that passed by the historic Belmont Mill and bandstand then continued down over the Tioga River and the newly installed "Slippery Rock" covered bridge.

Chris Gamache, Chief of the Bureau of Trails at the State of New Hampshire's Division of Parks & Recreation, was also along for the tour. He told Kenney that two years ago a recreational trails program was able to provide Belmont with \$23,000 to help with the

costs of installing the bridge and establishing a trail network through the town. Belmont received an additional \$80,000 this year to complete the work.

Crossing over the Tioga River, Kenney was able to look over the start of the wide, mown trail leading along the waterfront and out towards the Route 140 corridor. Ball told him the trail, still in development, will eventually cross the river twice more with additional parts of the covered bridge purchased from the Town of Dover. It will then lead out to Rte. 140 in the vicinity of the Coca Cola plant.

"The potential in the future is this can connect from there with the W.O.W. trail through Laconia, the Winnepesaukee River Trail in Tilton, and even allow people to head west toward Lebanon on the Rail Trail," he said.

Ball further explained to Kenney that the trail through Belmont is all being made possible through a generous donation by res-

idents Dick and Betty Persons who purchased land, once owned by the B&M Railroad, then eventually donated it to the town for the specific use as a recreational trail

Bryce said that what really makes the Belmont trail project stand out is its ability to attract people to the village district through community programs and a multi-use trail system.

"One of the things that draws especially young people to an area is outdoor recreation. It really makes a difference and this is a good example of that," Bryce said.

Kenney said he was very impressed with the not only the trail and the beautiful waterfront as seen from the covered bridge, but all the other outdoor recreational opportunities provided in the refurbished village district. He congratulated all who made it possible, at both the town and state levels, and said it was great news he would take back to Concord.