

# Old Home Day will have to relocate due to extensive summer work on Belmont green

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BELMONT — Work to enhance the attractiveness of Belmont Village will hopefully get under way in about a month.

"With any luck we will have shovels in the ground around mid-June," said Selectman Ronald Cormier, who also serves as the head of the town's Revitalization Committee.

The work to be accomplished under Phase 1 of the overall revitalization effort entails improvements to village streets, adding features to make the village more attractive, additional parking, construction of pedestrian walkways, improved street-lighting, plantings and trees, and water and sewer improvements.

The town is now waiting for responses from the requests for proposals from potential bidders, Cormier said.

The total cost of the project phase is roughly estimated to be \$1.5-million, Cormier said. The town has already received some grant funds to cover some of the cost: a \$220,000 federal Community Development Block Grant and \$200,000 from a state revolving loan fund dedicated to water system improvements.

In addition voters this year authorized the town use of a Community Revitalization Tax which gives selectmen the option of granting property owners in the revitalization area short-term property assessment relief to encourage significant reinvestment in their buildings.

As shown in plans prepared the Hoyle, Tanner Associates planning and engineering firm, the project would involved constructing a new road to the right of the Public Library connecting Main Street and that portion of Mill Street which runs in front of the Belmont Mill. The section of Mill Street which currently runs from Main Street along the left side of the library down to the Mill would become a pedestrian walkway and green space. There would also be improvements, including landscaping, to Fuller and Sargent streets, south of Main Street.

Cormier said that because of the extensive construction involved with the project all of the Old Home Day events in August will have to be held outside the downtown area. He said the Old Home Day Committee is currently looking at Bryant Field on Route 106 or the Belmont High School field on Seavey Road as two possible venues for the Aug. 11 event which draws thousands of people who turn out for the children's activities, parade, barbecue, and fireworks, among other activities.

The improvement project also involves moving the town's 103-year-old bandstand. Cormier said that the Revitalization Committee will consult with the town's Heritage Commission before the historic canopied structure is moved. But he noted the despite its age the bandstand is sturdy and so it should be possible to move it without jeopardizing its structural integrity.

Three public listening sessions have been held to get public comment on the project, Cormier said. He said virtually all of the comments from the public were supportive. "They see this as a positive move to given the downtown a fresh look and that will hopefully bring in some visitors," he said.

Efforts to revitalize Belmont Village began 10 years ago when the town adopted its third master plan. In 2003 a federally funded study commissioned by the state concluded Belmont Village was a historic and cultural resource that was worth saving. Three years ago the Heritage Commission (which voters approved at 2004 Town Meeting) recommended that a citizens' group be formed to study possible ways to revitalize the downtown area. Interest in pursuing the downtown revitalization was spurred by a public design brainstorming session — or charrette — held in 2010. The following year Hoyle Tanner was selected to prepare the revitalization plans.