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An aerial view of the Gale School in Belmont. (File Photo)

Efforts to save Gale School continue as structure gets historic designation

By THOMAS P. CALDWELL
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT — The Save Our Gale School Committee has established an account at Franklin Savings Bank and started a GoFundMe page for donations as it works toward the August 2019 deadline for moving the 1894-era building to a new location. Previously identified as one of the 2017 Seven to Save by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, the Gale School was named to the New Hampshire State Register of Historic Places on July 30.

Built by Cyris Norris, the building that has served generations of Belmont students was named the Gale School after Napoleon B. Gale, a state legislator who served in 1867 and 1868, left \$10,000 to the town.

The school, built in the Queen Anne and Victorian style, remained in use until 1985, when the Shaker Regional School District opened a new elementary school. The district used the building mainly for storage after that, and began discussing other options, including razing the building.

Residents opposed to such a choice formed a committee to preserve the building in 2006, leading to the establishment of the Save Our Gale School Committee which now has official 501(c)(3) status as a federally recognized charitable organization, which allows people to make donations they can write off on their taxes.

Diane Marden serves as the committee chair, with Kenneth Knowlton as vice-chair, Brenda Paquette as treasurer, and Lisa Lord as secretary. Other members include Earl Sweeney, who completed a career with the state Department of Safety; Mark Padula, owner of Padula Landscaping; and Woodbury Fogg, a member of the Village Revitalization Committee.

The Shaker Regional School Board has agreed to let the committee move the Gale School to another property, as long as it fills in the existing lot after removing the building. While the committee had hoped to keep it at its current location, members have identified several other lots where it might be moved, although

see next page



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Committee seeks grant funding

from preceding page

at 2,800 square feet and weighing 250 tons, moving it will not be an easy task.

"We're looking at going over the baseball diamond to the Route 106 area where we have four potential lots," Marden said. "We're working with Eversource to get the line-drop cost down, and figuring out which property works best."

The committee plans to move the historic building, built in 1894, to a new location where it can be converted into agency or professional space. The Laconia Area Land Trust has agreed to purchase the building for \$1 and redevelop it, once it is on a new site.

In order to get to that point, the committee has been applying for grants to help cover the estimated \$395,000 in relocation and land purchase costs. The Shaker Regional School District has agreed to provide \$70,000 toward the moving costs and possibly aggregate materials to fill in the old foundation and assist with its project of creating a bus loop.

Marden said the school district has been supportive in granting access to the building, including for grant-related visits and public tours for those interested in saving the school.

"Everyone is very interested in making the project succeed," she said.

One of the goals is to set up a new website to better explain and promote the project, as well as raise funds, she noted.

Those interested in supporting the initiative may mail donations to: Franklin Savings Bank, PO Box 339, Franklin NH 03235, attn: Save Our Gale School Fund; or donate online at www.gofundme.com/mbgkfs.

Contact Tom Caldwell by email at Tom@laconiadailysun.com

Man convicted of drug trafficking is being held while he awaits sentencing

By **MICHAEL MORTENSEN**
The LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — A Belmont man who has been found guilty of drug possession and trafficking is being held as he awaits sentencing.

A jury found Christopher T. Deware, 35, of 37 Deware Drive, in Belmont, guilty of possession of a controlled drug, possession of a controlled drug with intent to distribute — both felonies — as well as a misdemeanor charge of transportation of drugs in a motor vehicle.

The jury returned the verdict Friday after hearing 2½ days of testimony in Belknap Superior Court.

Deware was arrested March 18, 2017, on Court Street, driving a car which had an invalid registration.

As police were preparing to impound the car, an officer retrieved a pipe believed to contain drug residue, and also seized a backpack in which was a lockbox, later found to contain alprazolam, methamphetamine, and marijuana, as well as \$637.86 in cash in small and large denomination bills.

Deware's attorney, Allison Swartz, sought to have the evidence suppressed because the officer had not followed the Laconia Police Department's policy on the procedure for taking inventory of items in a vehicle which is being impounded. But Superior Court Judge James D. O'Neill III denied the motion on the grounds that while police did not request the search warrant as soon as they should have, they did obtain a

warrant which covered drugs, drug paraphernalia, and other items associated with drug sales.

The defense also unsuccessfully sought to have the case dismissed when a witness who, it argued, would give evidence favorable to Deware, said that if he was compelled to testify he would invoke his Fifth Amendment right not to incriminate himself unless the prosecution granted him immunity, which the County Attorney's Office declined to do.

After the jury returned the guilty verdicts late Friday morning, O'Neill ordered Deware held at the Belknap County County Corrections facility in order to ensure his appearance in court for his sentencing which is expected to take place in about two weeks.



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