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Belmont approves Church Street bridge repair

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THE CHURCH Street bridge shortly after it was closed following a Department of Transportation inspection. **BENJAMIN KLEIN/CITIZEN**

BELMONT — Without putting the project through the typical bidding process, Belmont Selectmen unanimously approved Busby Construction to begin work on Church Street/Tioga bridge, bringing the total cost of the project to roughly \$140,000.

Belmont Town Administrator Jeanne Beaudin said that the project is estimated to last three weeks once shovel is put to earth and that she hopes it will be completed by the target date of Thanksgiving.

Beaudin said that the cost of the contract with Busby is \$125,575, which, along with \$14,000 in engineering costs going to the Hoyle Tanner and Associates engineering firm, brings the total cost of the unexpected repair to \$139,575.

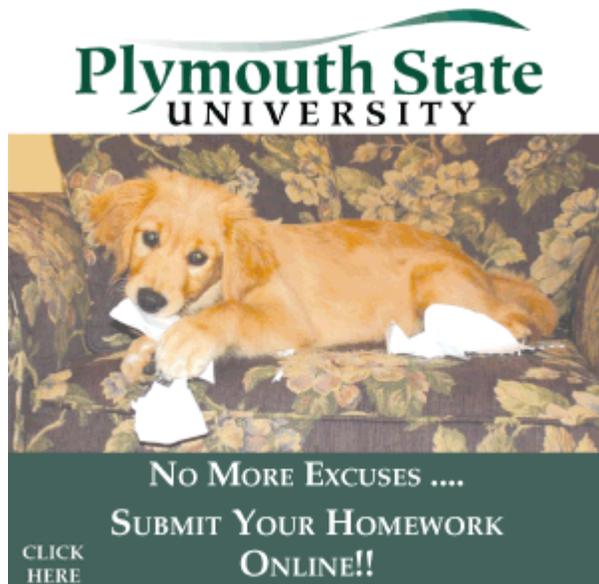
Beaudin said that she is unsure when construction will actually begin because the town is currently undergoing a wetland permitting process with the State Department of Environmental Services, but that she hopes it starts soon.

Tioga bridge was closed in August due to a recommendation by the State Department of Transportation after performing a routine inspection on Aug. 23. Beaudin previously said that it was determined that the steel culvert had severe corrosion due to rust.

“There was pitting and holes in the section that sits in the stream bed,” Beaudin previously explained.

DOT spokesman Bill Boynton previously noted that the bridge is actually a large pipe that has been paved over, and that water was flowing through holes in the pipe, weakening the surrounding area. He added that if a flood were to occur, or even if the status quo was maintained, the bridge would be in danger of washing out.

Beaudin said that the discussion to give the contract to Busby without a bidding process, which is used to ensure the lowest possible price, was made after consulting town selectmen and the engineering firm, who both agreed to ensure the project is finished quickly it would be wise to use a construction firm already mobilized in town. Currently Busby is already working on multiple town projects, such as the village rehabilitation project, water line replacement and downtown road work, which made them the ideal candidate.



The bridge, which is only open to pedestrians, has forced school buses to reroute around it considering the proximity to Belmont High School.

“Nothing has changed with the status of the bridge,” Beaudin said.

Despite the fact that the bridge was scheduled for state-funded maintenance by the Department of Transportation, Beaudin previously said that since the work was scheduled for 2020, the state will not be helping with the cost for repairing the bridge.

Boynton previously said that of the 1,685 municipal bridges in the state, one in five are on a

red list — which means they have deficiencies and should be inspected more often — and that Tioga bridge, which was constructed in 1975, has been on the red list since 2010.

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