

# Shaker board delays vote on Gale School until asbestos costs are known

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**BELMONT** — The Shaker School Board delayed taking action on the possible demolition of the historic, now abandoned Gale School Tuesday until after Building and Grounds Manager Doug Ellis gets the final costs for asbestos removal.

The demolition of the school and the preservation of the bell and steeple would go on a warrant article at the district meeting for voter approval.

The school building is located on a perch behind the Middle School, at the edge of Bryant Field.

Ellis said Tuesday he has budgeted \$65,000 — \$42,500 for the demolition and \$15,000 for preserving the bell and the steeple. He also factored in \$7,500 for contingency and said the school will do the landscaping itself.

The \$65,000 doesn't include preserving, moving or storing the bell or the steeple said Ellis.

The plan now is to preserve the bell and steeple, but at Tuesday's meeting Belmont Board member Richy Bryant said he wasn't willing to support a warrant article to demolish the school unless there was a solid plan for how they will preserve and store the bell and the steeple.

"What do we do with a steeple and a bell?" he asked. "Have we talked to the historical people?"

Bryant also wanted to know how much it would cost to store the steeple and where it would be stored.

Belmont member Donna Cilley noted the Heritage Commission opposes the demolition of the school but she suggested the school district made a formal outreach to the commission to see if it is interested in the bell and the steeple.

Business Administrator Deb Thompson said there is \$5,000 in a trust to preserve the school it its

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entirely and she would have to ask the N.H. Department of Revenue and Administration if it's possible to re-purpose the trust so the money can be used to preserve the steeple and bell.

Superintendent Maria Dreyer said that theoretically, a land mark from a previous school would be incorporated into the next school that is build. There are no plans for building any schools in the district in the foreseeable future.

The Gale School was built in 1894 and was later named for the same Laconia banker — Napoleon B. Gale — whose name is on the city's public library. His will instructed that \$10,000 of his estate was to be donated to the Town of Belmont. Gale represented Belmont in the state legislature in 1868-69.

By the mid 1950s, the school was being used only for administrative office space and its rooms were further relegated to use only for cold storage when the new elementary school opened in 1985.

The demolition of the Gale School has been a hot-button topic in Belmont for years. The Save the Gale School Committee — a non-governmental association of people in Belmont who don't want the school demolished — has repeatedly come up with suggestions to save the school but, to date, no one has come up with the money to do anything.

Additionally, efforts to relocate the school to a different piece of property have never been realized because there has never been a viable option for a relocation site.

