

# Save Our Gale School committee submits last-minute plan to Shaker School Board

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THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

BELMONT – The Shaker School Board received a last-minute plan from the Save Our Gale School Committee Tuesday night showing that the historic school could be relocated and renovated into SAU offices for between \$1-million and \$1.4-million.

Committee member Diane Marden explained the individual costs yesterday.

At no cost to the district, she said architect Chris Williams updated his 2003 plan to save the school to current-day costs.

Marden said it would cost \$78,000 to move the school from where it is currently located to the corner of Concord and Memorial Streets, which is school property. An additional \$10,000 would be needed for a road between the two spots and Marden said she is “pretty sure we can get donated services to decrease the cost of the road.”

She said the school is planning on spending \$67,500, which is on the school district warrant, to demolish it and save the bell and the bell tower. Additionally, she noted there is \$5,000 in a reserve account specifically for renovations to the Gale School and Marden said that those two expenses would nearly pay for moving the school.

She said a 1982 graduate of Belmont High School who lives in town and prefers to remain anonymous has agreed to do all of the site work, which would cost between \$80,000 and \$115,000.

To retrofit the Gale School for use as the SAU Offices would cost \$789,450, including renovations to the exterior, the mechanical systems, the elevator

and the interior.

Marden said the work could be bonded or performed over several budget years.

Advocates for saving the school said the road that would need to be built to move the building corresponds to a district strategic plan for the middle school that calls for an additional bus loop.

Because of pressing space needs and the desire of the parents and taxpayers to have full-day kindergarten and universal pre-school, Marden said the current SAU office building could be converted for use exclusively for the youngest children at a cost of \$55,000.

Moving, restoring and/or demolishing the Gale School has been a topic of discussion for at least 20 years.

While many residents have expressed a desire to see the school saved, there has never been enough will among the taxpayers to pay for moving and renovating it. Yet, the few times the district has put its demolition on the warrant, the article has failed to pass.

Last year, the Save Our Gale School Committee approached the town and asked if selectmen would be interested in taking on the renovation and applying for a restoration grant. Selectmen declined, explaining that with the village revitalization project and the Belmont Mill looming over the taxpayers, the town wasn't in the position to adopt a new project.

The school district's annual meeting is scheduled for March 6 at the Belmont High School. District voting takes place from 6 to 7:30 p.m. and the meeting usually convenes around 7 p.m.