

Gale School question continues at annual meeting

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BELMONT — At Monday's annual "spring joint meeting," which touched on various topics, members of four boards discussed the Gale School, a subject that has continued to evade resolution over the years.

The meeting included members of the Planning Board, the Board of Selectmen, the Conservation Commission, and the Shaker Regional School District.

School Board member Summer Dole of Canterbury, also a representative to the Save the Gale School Com-

mittee, said that a vote to establish a trust fund for the eventual renovation and/or relocation of the Gale School was "a message of support for the Gale School at District Meeting."

However, Dole also noted that it took close to 45 minutes to get that vote, while the school's \$18 million operating budget passed "without a question."

Dole's comments led to the consensus that, without public support, the Gale School will continue to deteriorate where it stands.

Board of Selectmen Chairman Ron Cormier echoed

Dole's comments on the public's aversion to capital projects.

"The minute you put a seven-figure warrant article up there that's not in the budget, the answer is no," he said.

School Board member Pret Tuthill commented that with regard to the Gale School, the answer of "no" promotes inaction in all directions, because voters don't want to fix it, and they don't want to demolish it either, he said.

"The only way the Gale School is going to make it is if there is a concerted effort by everyone," said Conserva-

tion Commission member Ken Knowlton. "Do we see that as worth saving, or is it just a pain in the butt that some people can remember the cold wind blowing through the hallway?"

As he did at the annual School District Meeting, Knowlton suggested that the Gale School could be used to address some of the district's space needs.

Tuthill argued that the space needs change from building to building, and housing extra classrooms in the Gale School would result in a loss of instructional time

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as students travel there from their home schools and back again.

Some School Board members hinted that the old building might find a better fate in the town's possession.

"Sitting on the School Board, I sometimes feel like we're sitting on one of Belmont's assets," said Dole.

"We already did the mill," replied Knowlton. "It's your turn."

"You're asking two guys who still have the rope burns from trying to buy the bank," said Selectman Jon Pike, referring to criticism he and Cormier took during the attempt to purchase the former Northway Bank property.

Resident Linda Frawley said that renovating the Gale School ties into the town's recent efforts toward village revitalization. She suggested holding charettes and getting the same people involved who spearheaded the restoration of the Belmont Mill.

"(The Gale School) is the far boundary of the factory village district," she said.