

January 10, 2018 11:41PM

Residents concerned about proposed warrant article regarding Bow Community Center

By MELISSA PROULX

Union Leader Correspondent

BOW — A warrant article will be coming before voters at this year's town meeting calling for the demolition of the town's community building, but that doesn't mean an end for the town's recreation programs.

On Tuesday, residents came out to ask Selectmen to consider other alternatives to help save the building.

Michele Vecchione, a fitness instructor for the town, said that the Community Building and the programs held there are "the heart of Bow". She said there are about 3,000 people who participate in the programs each year.

"I think the people would like the opportunity to choose between demolition and minimal renovation," she said. "...we have people coming in — one lady almost in tears — about losing the building."

The 60-year-old building is in need of some serious improvements and upgrades.

"The building, without upgrades, will have to be closed," said Selectman Chris Nicolopoulos.

In 2013, the State Fire Marshal inspected the building and sent the town a violation letter, saying they had three years to bring the building up to compliance.

Along with community events and clubs, the building also housed the town's Fire Department trucks and equipment until it moved across the street to the new Public Safety building this past summer.

Though the search is underway to find other locations to hold the classes and activities, Vecchione



(/storyimage/UL/20180111/NEWS0606/180119908/AR/0/AR-180119908.jpg?q=100)

The 60-year-old building houses the town's recreation programs, but is in need of some serious life-safety and electrical upgrades. (Melissa Proulx/Union Leader Correspondent)



said she's worried that not all of them will be able to relocate and that the demolition of the building would mean a loss of some.

"It's really hard to find places for that many programs," she said.

The warrant article right now calls to raise \$200,000 for the work, though Town Manager David Stack will be working to refine and most likely lower that number.

However, should the warrant article pass, Selectmen said their intent isn't to leave residents without a space for the programs.

One of the ideas they're exploring is to put aside the cost of running the building each year — about \$50,000 — into a fund for the future construction of a new building.

"I personally think I'd rather us put that money towards a forever plan," Nicolopoulos said.

Residents will also have the option to amend the warrant article or present others at Town Meeting toward another course of action they think would be better.

A page has been set up on the town's website to keep residents up to date on the building and the necessary repairs. It can be found under the "Homepage Highlights" section.