

For Immediate Release

Mary Brand, President

Belfast Soup Kitchen Board of Directors

mary.brand@roadrunner.com

home: 207 338 3891

Belfast Soup Kitchen Is Building A New Home

The Belfast Soup Kitchen Board of Directors is in the final stages of the design and planning for the construction of a new building at 29 Belmont Avenue, on property they purchased.

The 3400 square foot building is a custom design that will provide a permanent home, with a commercial kitchen, food storage facilities, serving area, and space to implement and expand their mission to “feed the hungry” in Waldo county. Planned space will enable cooperation with other Belfast service groups for programs such as health screenings, adult literacy, and nutrition education.

They are very fortunate to have 2A Architects of Rockport, Gartley & Dorsky Engineering and Surveying of Camden, and Ransom Consulting of Portland as generous and committed development partners in this project.

The BSK has a long history of service to the people in Belfast and surrounding communities in Waldo County. It started as, and remains, almost completely a volunteer organization whose mission is to feed the hungry. The BSK was started (and named) as an outreach program of St Francis church in Belfast. When the church could no longer fund its activities, its imminent closing prompted a group to form a board of directors and solicit community support for its continuation as an independent organization. It was organized as a non-profit 501c(3) charitable organization in 2010. The need, as evidenced by the numbers of guests and meals served, continued to grow. The BSK is open 5 days/week, 12 months/year, and serves all who come from 10:30AM to 12:30AM for a coffee hour, followed by a nutritious hot lunch, including take home bags of produce and baked goods.

In the last two years (2016 and 2017) the BSK served 20,000 meals each year. In 2018 this trend has continued, and the numbers of daily guests have increased from an average of 60 to a peak of 90+. Our guests include (increasingly) the working poor, senior citizens, veterans, the unemployed, mentally and physically handicapped, and a few homeless: those without other recourse.

The daily operation of the BSK is still dependent on dedicated volunteers and two paid staff for all of the cooking, cleaning, and food gathering. The partnership with Good Shepard Food Bank as the source and coordinator of food materials has been essential.

The BSK is now operating from a leased facility in Renys Plaza in Belfast, which provides substantial space that accommodates the increased numbers of guests while the permanent home is constructed.

The decision, and leap of faith in our supportive community, to attempt the very challenging step of a new building was the evolution of a search for a new home over more than 4 years. The BSK board was faced with a need for a home of sufficient size, properly zoned for the use, and in a location accessible by the guests. The cost of leased space has continued to rise rapidly in Belfast, and that cost is the major factor in operating expense. The stock of suitable existing buildings was very limited, and would require costly renovation and installation of a commercial kitchen. There were no good ready solutions. This led to the purchase of land and new building construction.

The new building design criteria are a high degree of energy efficiency, a choice of materials and features that insure low maintenance for decades, and great operational ergonomics. This new building will insure financial security of the BSK with equity and low operating expense.

The present schedule anticipates groundbreaking in the Spring of 2019, contingent upon success with a Capitol Fundraising Campaign to raise the last of the required funding.

The purchase of the land at 29 Belmont Avenue was made possible by a large donation. Additional funds have been obtained by individual and business contributions, and through grants. The BSK Board of Directors is confident that the vision of building this community resource will insure the continuation and expansion of the mission for the people of Belfast and Waldo county, and will be made possible because (as demonstrated many times) "Our Community Cares".

We know that the support of our community will make it possible to raise the money to get us to our goal!

If you would like to make a donation, send: to PO Box 1153, Belfast ME. 04915. You may obtain more information, go to www.belfastsoupkitchen.com