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## Mendon battles historic mold

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GHS

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MENDON — The town agreed to spend \$80,000 of Community Preservation funds to preserve records in the basement of the town hall, including a signed copy of the Declaration of Independence, at special town meeting early last week.

The records, which date to the 17th century, include town meeting records, birth and death certificates which have become moldy because of a water drain issue and ineffective vault, said Town Clerk Margaret Bonderenko.

"The vault takes in all of the rain and the water," Bonderenko said. "The books are moldy. You can smell it as soon as you go down there."

The \$80,000 will be used to fix the drain problem, Bonderenko said, and purchase a climate-control system to keep moisture out of the vault.

"There is a dehumidifier down there right now but it isn't doing much," she said. "We need to keep the humidity low."

A wall in the basement is crumbling as a result of the drain problem, Bonderenko said.

"It gets damp and the cement just starts falling apart," she said. "We had a wet fall and the rain and the snow comes in."

Bonderenko said even books next to the wall that were fairly new were covered in mold.

"It's not a good place for the records," she said.

Part of the \$80,000 will also go toward purchasing shelves to double the capacity for records.

"Back when the vault was built, there weren't specifications like there are today," Bonderenko said. "It is a low-grade vault but we have to work with what we have."

Peter Denton of the Community Preservation Committee said he was glad to support the project.

"We need to get the mold out of there to stop the deterioration of the pages," he said. "If they continue to get moldy they will be unreadable."

The project is a worthwhile use of the CPC funds, Denton said.

"It is so important for the town to fix this issue," he said.

Historical Commission Chairman Wayne Wagner said the records represent Mendon's rich history.

"When we were founded in 1667, much of Mendon also included parts of Hopedale, Blackstone, Milford and Millville," he said. "So these records have been kept since that time."

Wagner said he knew the records were in rough shape.

"They especially need to dry that vault and make space down there," he said. "And the records themselves need to be cleaned with an anti-acid substance."

Wagner said he has always supported Bonderenko's fight for the town records.

"It is very important and I'm glad it is getting done," he said.

Selectman Mike Ammendolia said the records in the basement of the town hall would make for interesting reading.

"You'd find stories about Ebenezer Jacob, whose pig got loose and tore down a fence, and his neighbor brought him to a town meeting over it," he said.

"This is the stuff that makes our town a town."

The project will begin sometime this spring, Bonderenko said.

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