

BANGOR DAILY NEWS

Razing of Howland tannery building to start in a month

By Nick Sambides Jr., BDN Staff

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HOWLAND, Maine — A Brewer contractor will be paid \$259,000 to raze the decrepit former Howland tannery building and thereby begin what town leaders hope will be a revitalization of the town's economy, officials said Friday.

The Board of Selectmen unanimously agreed Friday to hire J.L. Butler of Brewer out of the four companies that bid to take down the three large sections of the building. Surveyors will may begin prep work next week, with Butler beginning work in two to four weeks, Town Manager Jane Jones said.

Selectmen wanted the work to begin as soon as possible to take advantage of the great price Butler offered, Jones said.

"It allows us to do more work and get more done than we had hoped we could," Jones said Friday.

Once home to the town's largest employer, the tannery site is part of the Penobscot River Restoration Trust's plans to build a fish bypass, green some tannery land and dig a channel for the bypass in a project designed to open nearly 1,000 miles of habitat to Atlantic salmon, alewives and other sea-run fish now blocked from migrating upriver.

As part of the project, town officials hope to develop once-contaminated land not occupied by the bypass. The town was awarded a \$600,000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant in May 2009 to pay for the removal of contaminants left on three shoreline spots.

The [cleanup began in March 2010](#). More than 50 tons of contaminated site soil have been taken to the Juniper Ridge Landfill in Old Town for storage.

Redevelopment of the tannery building has been among Jones' top priorities since she became the town's manager, [succeeding the late Glenna Armour](#), in the spring of 2009. Jones has sought several state and federal grants for the work and also worked closely with Maine Department of Transportation engineers [in replacing the town's two bridges over the Penobscot and Piscataquis rivers](#) that are near the tannery site. Several grant applications are pending.

The end goal of both projects is [to leave Howland with a better-functioning town center](#) that attracts new businesses, residents and more jobs and that also takes better advantage of the town's access to the rivers and Interstate 95's exit 217, officials have said. Slightly less than \$600,000, almost all of it state and federal grant money, [has been expended on the tannery site cleanup](#), Jones said.

Jones said she believes the razing of the tannery, an eyesore and town safety hazard for decades, will give residents a psychological boost and help people see how their town can grow and improve.

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