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HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

#####BEGIN HED#####

1 A new brewery opens in downtown Bellows Falls

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2 7 Balls Brewing is labor of love for new business partners  
3 — and old friends — who are returning life to a long-dormant  
4 storefront

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5 TEXT BODY:

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6 Another historic but long-empty building in downtown  
7 Bellows Falls will have a new life as 7 Balls Brewing celebrates its  
8 soft opening this coming weekend at 94 Rockingham St.  
9 The brewery developed from years of home brewing by  
10 four local men: Scott Brandon, Steve Adams, Paul Lawrence, and  
11 Chris Sherwin, good friends since middle school. They graduated

12 from Bellows Falls Union High School together but started home-  
13 brewing beer together only about eight years ago.

14 At first, it was all for fun and friends. Then their friends  
15 started telling them, "We really like this beer. You guys need to  
16 brew this commercially," Sherwin said.

17 Becoming commercial brewmasters was not necessarily  
18 on any of their life to-do lists — all four all had run their own  
19 businesses, and all are now well into their 50s.

20 Sherwin is a well-known glass artist with a studio in  
21 Bellows Falls, while Adams and Lawrence work at Chroma  
22 Technology in Rockingham. Brandon has moved away from the  
23 area and is not involved with the brewery going commercial.

## 24 **'We want to give back'**

25 Becoming a licensed brewpub was not necessarily the  
26 goal when the friends first started brewing.

27 "We're at a point in life where we're thinking more about  
28 retiring than starting a new business!" joked Sherwin. "We all  
29 have other jobs. We don't need to do this."

30 The three men agreed that the overall motivating force  
31 behind the venture is the "opportunity to serve and give back to  
32 the community," Sherwin said.

33 Adams said that the brewing partners all clearly  
34 remember times when downtown Bellows Falls was struggling  
35 and filled with empty storefronts. They said they watched over the  
36 last few decades as people moved to the community and helped  
37 it get back on its feet.

38 They mentioned Robert McBride, who moved to the area  
39 from New York City and established the Rockingham Arts and  
40 Museum Project; Charlie Hunter and Gary Smith, who helped  
41 create a vibrant live music, food, and arts scene; and Michael  
42 Bruno, who helped revive downtown buildings, businesses, and  
43 storefronts.

44        “They brought a good energy to Bellows Falls,” Sherwin  
45    said, “and we want to be part of that. As people who grew up  
46    here, we want to give back and help support our community.”

47        They have no intention of competing with local bars or  
48    restaurants, Lawrence said. In fact, he said, they are working with  
49    bars, restaurants and clubs in town to have some of the 7 Balls  
50    Brewing beers on tap.

51        7 Balls Brewing will have 20 to 25 seats, with some  
52    outdoor seating during the warmer seasons. The business will  
53    offer a limited menu of pizza and food from Jamaican Jewelz, but  
54    the brewery’s main goal is to offer several taps of excellent small-  
55    batch beers and ciders that patrons can purchase to take home by  
56    the growler.

57        “We don’t intend for this to be a place for people to  
58    come, hang out, and drink,” Sherwin said. “There are bars here in  
59    town for that. We won’t be open very late in the evening. We’re  
60    here for tasting and a glass of beer, then the customer can take  
61    home a growler of the draft they like.”

62        Vermont has numerous highly regarded small breweries,  
63    and people often travel to the state to visit them. Lawrence said  
64    that 7 Balls Brewing hopes to become one of the stops on those  
65    brewery tours, drawing more visitors into downtown Bellows  
66    Falls to the benefit of other businesses there as well.

67        It will be one of the few boutique breweries in the  
68    southeastern part of the state, and for many visitors, it will be the  
69    place to start on a brewery tour.

## 70        **Revitalizing an art deco gem**

71        A key part of the owners’ decision to help the  
72    community was picking 94 Rockingham St. as the location for the  
73    brewery. Once a vibrant part of the downtown village businesses,  
74    the building, except for a short time as a martial arts studio, has  
75    been mostly empty or used for storage for the last 25 years.

76        The unique art deco-style building, built in the 1930s,  
77    was originally a gas station next to the Bellows Falls Garage  
78    building.

79        The 92 Rockingham St. structure has in recent decades  
80    been a restaurant; at one time it housed Fat Franks and, more  
81    recently, the Shona Grill. It has now been renovated into a hair  
82    salon and art gallery, Studio 92.

83        Both buildings are owned and operated by Erica Daniels  
84    and Tim Wells, Studio 92's proprietors.

85        From 1982 to 1995, 94 Rockingham Street was famous  
86    as The Real Scoop, an ice cream shop owned by Jim Mort and  
87    Lynn Dooley. Its chocolate banana flavor served there made a  
88    lasting impression on former patrons who have commented on  
89    various Facebook groups.

90        The Real Scoop, with its huge, dripping ice cream cone  
91    hanging on the front of the building, was an unmistakable  
92    landmark in the village for many years. The foam, fiberglass, and  
93    wood cone, according to old newspaper reports, was made  
94    locally and weighed some 300 pounds. It was removed in 1998,  
95    using the Rice Tree Service crane. It was sold in 2018 and may  
96    have a new life decorating another ice cream shop outside of  
97    Vermont.

98        Daniels and Wells upgraded and cleaned the building in  
99    2024, including putting on a new roof, with the goal of renting it  
100   out.

101        "Eventually, one of the things we'd really like to do is to  
102   have a similar style beer mug built for the front of the building,  
103   complete with foam dripping down the side," Adams said — a  
104   direct homage to the iconic but long-gone Real Scoop cone.

105        In their work on the building, the men found an original  
106   Real Scoop sign that had been used to advertise the ice cream  
107   flavors offered. The brewery will reuse the sign for listing their on-  
108   tap offerings.

109

## A lengthy, educational process

110 Adams said that creating 7 Balls Brewing has “been an  
111 educational experience,” while Sherwin added, “and also a  
112 lengthy and thorough one.”

113 Lawrence said 7 Balls Brewing became a limited liability  
114 company at the end of 2024, and the partners have spent the past  
115 year working on setting up the brewery equipment and getting  
116 permits to brew and sell their products.

117 They used local businesses for all of the prep work,  
118 including hiring Vernon Temple to make their table and bar tops,  
119 K.O. Electric Services for wiring, Floyd Lawrence of Floyd’s  
120 Plumbing & Heating for plumbing, and Jim Young for carpentry.  
121 They said they found that getting their wastewater permits has  
122 been the biggest hurdle in trying to open the business, a situation  
123 that may be due to a lack of state personnel dealing with the  
124 permitting.

125 “There is nothing like a flow chart that could show us  
126 how to go about the permitting process,” Sherwin said. “So we  
127 had to rediscover how to do this all on our own.”

128

## ‘Excellent water chemistry’

129 In their years of homebrewing, the three friends said they  
130 learned to brew dozens of beers, ales, and stouts, and they  
131 narrowed those down to the 20 they all agreed were the best.

132 The new brewery has a 3.5-barrel brewing system,  
133 allowing them to make around 105 gallons per batch. They have  
134 eight taps and will be offering around 20 beers and hard ciders.

135 One of the benefits of brewing beer in Bellows Falls is  
136 that the town’s water source, Minards Pond, “has excellent water  
137 chemistry and excellent water service,” Adams said. “We have to  
138 do very little to use the water in brewing.”

139 Unlike in many other parts of the world, Bellows Falls’  
140 very clean and chemical-free water source provides a nearly

141 blank slate for the brewing process, allowing the brewers a lot of  
142 variety in what they can brew with it.

143 The brewers noted that some brews, like Guinness, are  
144 dictated by the limits of the chemical quality of the brewing  
145 water where they are made. The excellent quality of Bellows  
146 Falls' water doesn't put that limitation on this brewery, Sherwin  
147 said.

148 "We can make excellent stouts, red and brown beers or  
149 ales, hard cider, lagers, IPAs, and more," Adams said.

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BIO/COATTAIL:

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150 7 Balls Brewing will be open for Christmas shopping in  
151 the village on Fridays, Dec. 12 and 19 and for the Festival of  
152 Lights on Friday, Sunday, Dec. 14, from 4 to 8 p.m. each evening.  
153 They hope to have an official grand opening by the end of  
154 January. 7 Balls Brewing has a [Facebook page](#) and an [Instagram](#)  
155 [page](#), as well as a website at [7ballsbrewing.com](#), where you can  
156 learn the story behind the unique name of their enterprise.

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