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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

A new brewery opens in downtown Bellows Falls

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7 Balls Brewing is labor of love for new business partners

— and old friends — who are returning life to a long-dormant
storefront

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TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

Another historic but long-empty building in downtown
Bellows Falls will have a new life as 7 Balls Brewing celebrates its
soft opening this coming weekend at 94 Rockingham St.

The brewery developed from years of home brewing by
four local men: Scott Brandon, Steve Adams, Paul Lawrence, and
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.

A lengthy, educational process

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

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

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

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

‘Excellent water chemistry’

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

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

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

Unlike in many other parts of the world, Bellows Falls’ 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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