

## La Roue Elayne at Cobb's Mill Inn: Alarm thwarts fire in basement

Written by Patricia Gay  
Thursday, 14 June 2012 00:00

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Although La Roue Elayne at Cobb's Mill Inn is the town's newest hot spot, things got a little too hot early Monday morning when a small fire started in the basement.

The Weston Volunteer Fire Department responded quickly to an alarm at 2:43 a.m. on Monday, June 11, and found a pile of rags on top of a dryer in the basement had caught on fire. The fire was quickly extinguished and did not spread. Smoke in the basement and lower level of the restaurant was blown away by fans and the restaurant reopened in the afternoon in time for a luncheon.

It appeared the fire was caused from the spontaneous combustion of greasy rags that were lying on top of a clothes dryer. The dryer was not running at the time of the fire.

Weston Fire Chief John Pokorny, who is also the town's fire marshal, said the fire's cause is still under investigation; however, it appears it was accidental.

Mr. Pokorny said he has seen instances of spontaneous combustion, where a material ignites without the application of external heat or flame. He said fires caused by spontaneous combustion are not uncommon at places that use massage oil and towels, or linseed oil and rags.

"A fire can be caused from cloths that have oil on them, are heated, and then left in a clump," he said.

### Alarm

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When the call came in from the restaurant's alarm company at 2:43 a.m., Mr. Pokorny was the first on the scene, arriving just six minutes later.

Domenic Cocchia, the general manager of La Roue Elayne, credited the alarm system and fast action by the fire department for preventing the fire from spreading.

"The alarm system saved the restaurant. The fire was handled quickly. It could have been bad, really bad," Mr. Cocchia said.

When Mr. Pokorny arrived on the scene, he said there was a burning odor in the main dining room and smoke in the kitchen. He determined the smoke and heat were coming from the basement. Smoke from rags on a clothes dryer had triggered a smoke detector on the ceiling, which, in turn, sent out an alarm to the restaurant's monitoring company.

### **Historic**

A historic wooden building, Cobb's Mill Inn was built in the 1700s and was once a working mill. It became an inn and then a restaurant known for its fine dining, weddings and functions.

After falling into foreclosure, the restaurant was shuttered for the past two years, and was reopened just four weeks ago after extensive remodeling by new owners Drew Friedman and Elayne Cassara.

As part of the remodeling, the alarm system needed major updating to bring it to code, which Mr. Cocchia called "a good thing" because the new system "worked."

"There is a gas line close to the dryer, so it's good that the fire was extinguished quickly before it could spread. I give a lot of credit to the fire marshal and his mandates," Mr. Cocchia said.

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"It's a heavy gas line and I think it would have been OK, but yes, when everything works it makes things easier," Mr. Pokorny responded.