

**Town of Sherman  
Budget Public Hearing  
Wednesday, March 29, 2023 at 7 pm  
Mallory Town Hall**

**Member's Present:** First Selectman Don Lowe, Selectman Joel Bruzinski

**Member's Absent:** Selectman Bob Ostrosky

**Audience & Invited:** Treasurer Eric Holub, Business Manager Liz LaVia, Superintendent Patricia Constantino, Principal Mary Fernand, representatives from boards/committees, and residents from the community.

**Clerk:** Margaret Beatty

First Selectman Don Lowe called the meeting to order promptly at 7pm followed by the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance.

First Selectman Don Lowe opened the meeting by informing the public that this was the time to provide input/questions on specific budget line items and was looking forward to the discussion and/or concerns. First, he offered the floor to Business Manager Liz LaVia to summarize adjustments to budget line items as discussed at the budget workshop.

Business Manager Liz LaVia noted that a new line item for EMT Contracted Services for \$60,000, the REVAL Fund was reduced by \$20,000 and will now be funded at \$16,481.00, the Northwest Conservation District dues of \$1200 will not be funded this term. The 911 service contract, which is Litchfield County Dispatch, has been reduced by \$1200 and Sherman's new share is \$42,252. The BOS requested the BOE to reduce their budget by \$70,000 and the request was fulfilled. Telephone funding was increased by \$1900 to accommodate a system revamp. The Senior Center requested an increase of \$750 for the supply line and another additional \$800 increase for Senior Center activities funding to pay the tech instructor who has become a regular instructor. The new confirmed Town budget is \$5,380,980 and the BOE budget is \$9,509,371 for a total budget of \$14,890,351. The numbers reflect a 2.14% increase with overall combined budgets.

First Selectman Don Lowe opened the meeting to the public for comments/questions.

**Comments:**

Tony Brazil of 3 Rising Sun Trail, who has a son in fifth grade, expressed concern that his son's grade will continue to be a merged grade of 1 as opposed to two separate classes. He feels that a class of 22, for Sherman School standards, is a large class and feels the difference in quality of

a more individualized setting has been felt. He wondered if school budget concessions resulted in the continued merging of this grade.

Superintendent Patricia Constantino replied to the comment stating that the elimination of a teacher in middle school was a result of middle school classroom schedule changes. The loss of the position was not directed at any particular grade. She went on to reassure the parent that having a larger class can help spark intellectual curiosity as well as open dialogue with a larger sample size of peers.

Anne Weisberg of 3 Upland Pastures questioned why the 6,000 sq ft portion of the school up for consideration by the BOS wasn't a viable area to house a Senior Center, as per the letter Frist Selectman Don Lowe submitted in the Citizen News. She also wondered if there was any movement on upgrading the Town website to make it more advantageous to its users.

First Selectman Don Lowe replied that the Town has been working on streamlining the website to make it more user friendly. He concluded that it was a work in progress. He also reiterated that the BOS has not come to any conclusion on the portion of the school that is in question and that a special meeting on April 3, 2023 at 7pm will be held to discuss the topic.

Susan Seeger of Farm Road asked what the actual total of high school students were accounted for in the budget and if private school students were reflected in the numbers. Principal Mary Fernand interjected and commented that the timeline for creating the budget does not align with high school process. Students who apply to private school do not always hear from the desired school when the initial budget is created so all students are initially accounted for prior to his/her approval into private.

Michelle Baird of 62 Route 39 South inquired what the rationale for asking the BOE to make cuts to the school budget. First Selectman Don Lowe replied that based on the presentation done by the BOE there was room, in some line items, to trim the numbers.

James Baird of 62 Route 39 South, who is new to Town, wanted to know at what point the public can weigh in on individual budget line items. First Selectman Don Lowe provided Mr. Baird with the Town of Sherman timeline. He stated the Town has budget intake meetings, workshops, and hearings. The public is allowed to comment during the Public Comment segment of each meeting to provide his/her concerns. Town Meeting provide another opportunity for residents to get involved with their Town legislature. Note: Capital Improvement Projects/Purchases are voted on separately from the overall budget and all done through separate referendums.

Anne Weisberg of 3 Upland Pastures asked if open land acquisition was considered a capital expenditure. First Selectman Don Lowe and Treasurer Eric Holub confirmed that land acquisition is capital expense and would require its own referendum.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:37 pm.

**Motioned by:** Selectman Joel Bruzinski

**Seconded by:** First Selectman Don Lowe      **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Moving forward, the meeting moved into a special meeting to move the Town/BOE budgets to Town Meeting on April 22, 2023.

At 7:38 pm, First Selectman Don Lowe called to order a Board of Selectman Special Meeting for Wednesday, March 29, 2023.

**Motion:** Move the Town budget of \$5,380,980 and the Board of Education budget of \$9,509,371 for a total combined budget of \$14,890,351, to Town Meeting to be held on April 22, 2023, at 10 am at Charter Hall.

**Motioned by:** First Selectman Don Lowe

**Seconded by:** Selectman Joel Bruzinski      **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 pm by First Selectman Don Lowe.

**Motioned by:** First Selectman Don Lowe

**Seconded by:** Selectman Joel Bruzinski      **All in Favor:** Unanimous

Notes respectfully submitted by Margaret Beatty on April 5, 2023.