

FIRST SELECTMAN COLUMN

03/30/23 ISSUE DATE

The 2023/24 budget Public Hearing for the Town and the Education budgets was held on March 29 and after that meeting the budgets are certified for referendum on April 29. (I am writing this on Monday, March 27 and you're reading this on Thursday, March 30 so I will assume that the budgets will be certified and moved to Town Meeting/referendum as is usually the process.) The budget referendum on April 29 starts at 8am and ends at 8pm and will be held in-person in Charter Hall. You will vote YAY or NAY for each budget separately. Absentee ballots will also be available in the Town Clerk's office.

The Town budget, prior to the Budget hearing, is at \$5,377,530. This is an increase of less than 1% at .61% (\$32,671). The Education budget is at \$9,509,371, which is an increase of 2.98% (\$275,506). The two budgets combined make up a total of \$14,886,901, which is an increase of 2.11% (\$308,177). However, due to a higher-than-expected revenue from the Grand List and other revenue streams, the Board of Selectmen/Board of Finance will be able to contain the expenses and have enough to reduce down the mill rate. I am unable to offer you the exact revenue number right now, but your taxes will decrease again, as they have the last four budgets, by between 1.5 and 2%. I will give you a final number in next week's paper.

The biggest issue facing all of us in Sherman is the Sherman School repair/renovation project. This project is historic in scope and cost, and people would do well to pay attention. (I received seven phone calls/emails and long accompanying communications about the "Greening Sherman", but nothing from anyone – except those directly associated with it -- on the school project.) Without this work on the school, we compromise the facility even further and possibly risk losing it altogether. On the other hand, getting the building whole again could be monumentally expensive. The building committee is doing remarkable work on this at great sacrifice to each individual's personal time and, in fairness, I don't want to color in any details here until they are made more firm. But eventually, and right now that date is June 3, Sherman taxpayers will vote on this critical issue. Prior to that referendum, there will be at least two public forums for people to learn more.

Since I did mention it, the "Greening Sherman" group has brought on a lot of attention. This is not a Town-sponsored group, and rather, is a private group of well-meaning and concerned citizens who want to do more for the betterment of the environment. I know the people involved and the individuals who started this and they are terrific people who care about the world we live in. They aren't recommending anything out of the ordinary of good and accepted environmental practices, and there are no mandates or regulations or agendas attached that I have been made aware of. To learn more call 860 354 2466.

On April 6 at 7pm in Mallory Town Hall the Planning and Zoning Commission, as they put the final touches on the document, will be taking more public comments on the Plan of Conservation and Development (PCOD) that we must publish every ten years by order of the State. Unfortunately, this date falls on the second day of Passover so our Jewish friends and neighbors won't be able to attend. This is an unfortunate oversight. However, one can send in comments or questions to PlanZone@townofshermanct.org and they will be read and considered.

This is the season of scholarships for our school children, particularly high school students. The Sherman Veterans sponsor a wonderful scholarship in the name of former Sherman resident extraordinaire, Walter B. Wriston. This is an opportunity for two winners to be awarded \$1,000 each and the application deadline is May 19, 2023. Applications can be obtained at the Sherman School or via the link:

<https://form.jotform.com/230694538312053>. Also, be sure to look over the many scholarship and grant opportunities with The Sherman Higher Education Fund. Google "Sherman Higher Education Fund" and it brings you to the Town website wherein you will find a link to access forms and information on what is available.



DON LOWE

TOWN OF SHERMAN