

FIRST SELECTMAN COLUMN

07/20/23 ISSUE DATE

Our Dept. of Health had to close our beach at the Town Park on Monday, July 17 due to hazards created by too many geese gathering there. The week previous, the beach was closed for two days due to debris from the high water that washed out Saw Mill Brook. Both are temporary situations

and, overall, there is no water quality issue. Hopefully the beach and swimming area will remain open for the summer.

After much diligent work, the Sherman School Building Committee recently chose a comprehensive renovation plan for the Sherman School. That committee's goal was to address the failing infrastructure in that building and make it fully functional and up to modern standards as far as air quality, water use, temperature control, educational specs, and security. I thank each committee member for his or her commitment to this effort. The members of the building committee are a well-rounded, impartial group and, while their work is not over, what they have done so far is quite impressive. The committee is made up of two successful building professionals, a practicing architect/designer, a security expert, two education professionals, a business manager, and a municipal project manager.

With the assistance of an architectural service, the building committee has comprised a worthy renovation plan that addresses every issue in that important building. The cost is \$46 million, some of which, and this amount is fluid, will be covered by State reimbursement dollars. This plan is now in front of the Board of Selectmen and we will hold a Special Meeting – probably in early August -- to address possible referendum dates and other concerns. If I had to guess, I'd say this referendum will be held possibly in late September or early October. In the meantime, residents should do all that they can to learn as much as possible about this plan before they vote YES or NO.

A project of this cost is historic in Sherman and this referendum will be one for the ages. The Sherman School is an important fixture here, a critical part of our Town's makeup. For me, I would never want to see Sherman without a school and can't fathom us ever closing it. I'd fight hard on that. Yet, there is no question that this cost will create a large tax increase, and that's a tough financial scenario for many people living here. Our Town team has managed to lower taxes more than 12% in the last 5 years, and this renovation would likely make that disappear and raise them a little above that. How one examines a scenario like that is very unique to each taxpayer. There hasn't been a lot of outreach to the public on this renovation – no one to blame there; it hasn't always been possible -- but I will strive to offer what specifics I can in future columns as the referendum approaches. You might also look at the building plans on the School website and write your Sherman School officials and ask their team for information and answers to any questions.

As I mentioned in my last column, the Sherman Volunteer Fire Department is holding its annual Roast Beef Dinner on Saturday, August 5. Some other dates: The Annual Sherman Town Softball Tournament is on for September 23 at Veterans Field. The Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy (formerly Naromi) Annual Picnic is on Saturday, September 30 from Noon to 2pm. And Farm Day up at Happy Acres Farm will be held on Saturday, October 7.

The Town is advertising, in conjunction with Park and Rec, a job opening for a part-time program director. If you are interested, go on the Town website and look over the position's advertisement.

For those who have expressed concern and curiosity, the precious plastic crocodile mentioned in last week's column once was lost, but now is found. It's a miracle! A happy one! I worried that this might be a case of "see ya later alligator" but this crocodile is sticking around for a while.



DON LOWE

TOWN OF SHERMAN