

FIRST SELECTMAN COLUMN

ISSUE DATE 08/10/23

Sherman Summer Camp ended last Friday and proved a big success. The camp served a record 240 campers and a good time was had by all as the youngsters played games and sports, swam,

fished, took several field trips, and enjoyed leisure play in our park facilities. Big thanks to John Wrenn the Park and Rec Director, Jeannie Lynch our Summer Camp Director, and all of the devoted counselors who did such a fine job caring for the campers.

The Sherman School Renovation is coming to some critical decision points in the coming nine weeks. Although it hasn't been officially certified, I am fairly certain that a referendum on the 46 million dollar project to make the Sherman School whole again will be held on Saturday, October 7 in an all-day in-person vote at Charter Hall. If that date, for some reason, changes I will be the first to correct it. Meanwhile, it's important that you as a voter get as educated as you can on this project before you vote. Some strong public outreach is planned for the next 2 months to help with that.

In a joint meeting that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) called with the Board of Education (BOE) and the School Building Committee, it was suggested that at least two public forums be held. You can expect that to happen. The forums will feature a slide show and a thorough explanation of what this project entails, an outline of the costs, and by extension, why it is necessary. A Q&A session will follow. Although dates have not been set, these forums will occur at Charter Hall and one will probably be on a weekend afternoon and another on a weekday night to accommodate as many people as possible.

Meanwhile, an important Town Meeting is already scheduled for Monday, August 14 at 7pm in Charter Hall. The most important item on the warning's agenda is a request for not-to-exceed \$340,000 from the capital-non-recurring fund to pay for more architectural work towards the Sherman School Renovation project. This is an unusual situation and I will explain it here, and I will also explain it at the meeting before we vote on it.

The main question that comes up with this expenditure is, why is it being asked for prior to the referendum being decided? For example, if the referendum is voted down then these architectural renderings, though still possibly useful in a different renovation plan, could conceivably be an unnecessary use of the funding. So why not wait till after the referendum? The answer to that is a timing issue: if this architectural work is delayed past the referendum date, according to a strict and well-examined timeline, it will delay the project by one year. If the project is delayed by a year, every indicator shows that the project will become 3 million dollars more expensive. The construction market on all levels is greatly influenced by inflation, and waiting is expensive. So, to ensure that the project is shovel-ready for this coming summer of 2024 the funding for this architecture work (\$340,000) will be asked of voters on August 14.

The Warning for this meeting containing the rest of the items up for vote is on the Town website. The last item is a vote to discontinue the "Septic-Walk Over" ordinance. This program was funded in 2018 and 2019 as per, at that time, a recently approved ordinance. More than 1000 homes were inspected and not a single violation was recorded. In lieu of it not having been funded again, our Board of Selectmen believes it is time to take this program, which was controversial from the start, off the books.



DON LOWE

TOWN OF SHERMAN