

FIRST SELECTMAN COLUMN

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My wife Mary Ann and I had the privilege of being invited to the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy Annual Dinner held in Bridgewater at the spectacular Maywood Farm. This is the third year

in a row we've attended and it's wonderful to be reminded of such fruitful efforts on behalf of Connecticut's natural resources as the NCLC continues its commitment to land conservation.

More than a million dollars was raised that evening all of which goes toward preserving land that generations upon generations of people can enjoy into perpetuity. Incidentally, Mother Nature treated us to a spectacular wind and rain storm that nearly compromised the party. But, alas, the storm blew through and most everyone remained for the rest of the evening. (Unfortunately, we suffered power outages in Sherman so Mary Ann and I had to leave early to deal with that.)

Tonight we are holding a Town Meeting that has gained a lot of attention – some of it in the wrong way. In next week's column I will report about the meeting. Meanwhile there have been untoward rumblings about why the town is holding a Town Meeting on a Monday evening. First off, it's not unusual to hold Town Meetings on weekday nights; however, we do try to hold them, when possible, on Saturday mornings. Summer brings along its own set of scheduling issues and availability and there became no immediate Saturday on which to hold this meeting. Too many important stakeholders were unable to attend a Saturday meeting, so we scheduled it when we did.

Another misunderstanding about tonight's meeting is the importance of it. Some people are mistakenly thinking that we are approving (or not) the *entire* Sherman School renovation project. We aren't. The meeting tonight, which will be yesterday's news by the time you read this column, has one very important and unusual expenditure with regard to architectural work needed to keep the renovation plan on schedule. In next week's column I will report on whether that expenditure passed or not.

Meanwhile, the meeting to vote on the approval (or not) of the entire \$46 million school renovation plan will be held on October 7 (it's not an official date yet) in an all-day, in-person referendum vote that also offers absentee ballots for those who might be out-of-town that weekend. When it comes to this big vote, arguably one of the most significant in Sherman history, no one should feel disenfranchised or feel like they haven't been given an opportunity to learn as much as they'd like to about the project. Town forums are being planned and scheduled to give as much opportunity as possible for voter education. Additionally, other outreach about the Sherman school project prior to the vote is being planned.

With sadness I write that Melinda Albert passed away. Melinda served cheerfully as a Town Registrar and was an enthusiastic FISH volunteer. She was a beacon of resiliency, a joy to visit with, and she will be greatly missed. My heart goes out to her husband Gary who served as a Sherman Selectman. I had the pleasure of serving with him. Gary has been a member of our volunteer fire department for more years than I can count and he has been involved with many other successful Sherman efforts. I've known him as a friend, a fellow writer, and watched him as a super devoted husband to Melinda through all that she went through. My thoughts are with Gary and his family this week.



DON LOWE

TOWN OF SHERMAN